

## UNIT 72 – UPSC - Medieval India

The Rajput period was an era of chivalry and feudalism. The Rajputs weakened each other by constant fighting. This allowed the foreigners (Turks) to embark on victorious campaigns using duplicity and deceit wherever military strength failed against Rajputs.

Mohammad Ghori defeated Prithviraj Chauhan, the Tomar ruler of Delhi, at the battle of Tarain in 1192 and left the Indian territories in the charge of his deputy, Qutubudin (reign - 1206 - 1210), who had started life as a slave. Khiljis, Tughlaqs, Sayyids and Lodis followed and this period is known as the Sultanate. When the power of the Sultans declined, the outlying provinces once again became important and the process of Hindu Islamic synthesis continued almost without any interruption.

Babur (reign - 1526-30), the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, was the descendant of Timur as well as Changez Khan. Ousted by his cousins, he came to India and defeated Ibrahim, the last Lodi Sultan in 1526 at the First Battle of Panipat. There was a brief interruption to Mughal rule when Babur's son Humayun (reign - 1530-40) was ousted from Delhi, by Sher Shah, an Afghan chieftain.

Sher Shah (reign - 1540-55), assumed power in the imperial capital for a short while. He is remembered as the builder of the Grand Trunk road that spanned the distance from Peshawar to Patna and also one who introduced major reforms in the revenue system, gratefully retained by the Mughals.

It was Babur's grandson Akbar (reign - 1556-1605), who consolidated political power and extended his empire over practically the whole of north India and parts of the south. Jahangir (reign - 1605-27) who succeeded Akbar was a pleasure loving man of refined taste. Shah Jahan (1628-58) his son, ascended the throne next. Shah Jahan's fame rests on the majestic buildings he has left behind - the Taj Mahal, the Red Fort and the Jama Masjid. Aurangzeb (reign - 1658-1707) was the last Mughal ruler.

In western India, Shivaji (1637-80) had forged the Marathas into an efficient military machine and given them a sense of national identity. They adopted guerrilla tactics to maul the Mughals and put a severe drain on their economic resources.

The contenders for political supremacy in the 17th and 18th Centuries included besides the Marathas, the Sikhs in Punjab and Hyder Ali (reign - 1721 - 1782) in Mysore. Tipu Sultan (reign - 1782 - 1799) - Hyder Ali's son and successor allied himself with the French against the British and strove to introduce the latest technical knowledge from Europe.