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## **MARATHAS AND THE FALL OF MUGHALS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Mughal Empire fell during the 18th century in the subcontinent, and in its wake, several successor governments emerged, one of which was the Maratha Empire. The Marathas were one of these successor empires. On the other hand, rather than examining the Maratha state in a context, I have researched it in regard to the parallels and contrasts that exist between the Mughal Empire and the Maratha state. This dissertation makes an attempt to identify the loss of the imperial power within the context of the profound changes that have taken place in the provinces that have passed from the control of the Mughals to the Marathas. It also says that even though the empire is in a period of decline, certain of its institutions continue to exist and are given new life in these successor states. This is despite the fact that the empire is in a state of collapse.*

**Key Words: Mughal empire, Maratha empire, Marathas**

### **INTRODUCTION**

India's Mughal era ran from 1526 until 1857. Perhaps the Mughal era was the Golden Era of India. By the use of a sound administrative system, the Mughals were able to establish a robust economy and flourishing trade. Babur built the Mughal Empire in India. Babur was the first Mughal emperor to acquire territory in India. He was a descendent of Taimur and Genghis Khan, two of history's most famous figures. The Mughal Empire was officially created by his grandson Akbar. The empire of Humayun, the son of Babur, was lost for more than 15 years before being reclaimed with the help of the Shah of Persia. Babur and Humayun both failed to establish Mughal rule over the country. Under Akbar's leadership, the Mughal Empire expanded and eventually took over most of India.

Strong and well-known for his tolerance of all religions, Akbar was an emperor. He appointed officials without taking into account a person's religious affiliation. According to legend, Akbar praised his victorious opponents by appointing them to the Mughal court. In order to establish political ties with Rajput kings, he wed Rajput princesses and appointed his



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in-laws to various high-ranking positions in his court. Akbar is well renowned for having invited scholars from all major religions to speak at his court about topics in philosophy, religion, and divinity. He founded Din-i-Ilahi, a religion that included elements of Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. His particular confidant was a Hindu Brahmin named Mahesh Das, also known as Birbal.

Following Akbar's demise, Jahangir, the king who succeeded him, was renowned for his appreciation of the arts. Painting gained prominence under his direction, and he helped many painters. It is said that his wife Nur Jahan presided on his behalf when the emperor began to ignore his court issues. It is known that coins with her name on them were produced while he was in power. Jahangir was an unbiased monarch, much like his father.

Shah Jahan, Jahangir's successor, wasn't as innovative as Akbar or Jahangir, but he also wasn't traditional. The arts were supported by Shah Jahan. During his presidency, India flourished as a centre for arts, crafts, and architecture. Trade and the economy both remained very stable. He was placed under house arrest by his son Aurangzeb after winning a struggle for the throne that took place when Shah Jahan was ill. As Shah Jahan was confined to his home, he gave the order to build the Taj Mahal.

Aurangzeb was recognised for having an orthodox outlook. He reinstated the jiziya, a levy that had previously been abolished by Akbar but which non-Muslims in a Muslim kingdom were obligated to pay. Aurangzeb travelled widely in an effort to expand his domain. He frequently fought against the Maratha warrior Shivaji. Aurangzeb's death signalled the beginning of the Great Mughal Empire's decline. The successors of Aurangzeb, known as the Later Mughals, are less well-known in the history of the Mughal Empire in India than the Great Mughals.

## **FALL OF MUHALS**

The end of Emperor Aurangzeb's (1658–1797) reign is typically seen as the beginning of the Mughal Empire's demise. Circles or even spirals, frequently vicious in form, are the go-to explanations. One significant explanation attributes the decline to the peasantry's widespread revolt against higher taxes, which ultimately succeeded to the extent that the empire was crippled. More harsh taxation resulted in more revolts since more money was required to put down more uprisings. This is not very compelling because peasant revolts were more or less a constant in Mughal India, whether or not they were headed by zamindars (locally important land-holders). Gujarat and Bengal were notably affected, although Hindustan was far from immune. We definitely need to make an effort to quantify how many revolts there were and how many people took part in them during the whole seventeenth century.



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According to a second perspective, which is notably linked with the work of M. Athar Ali, the relocation south's effects were essential since it caused more nobles to compete for a virtually unchanging supply of resources. The Mughals used bribery, primarily in the form of high man sabs (ranks) in the Mughal nobility, in order to overcome their Maratha adversaries in the south. There were a lot more new nobles as a result, but there weren't enough decent rangiri (land revenue allocations) to support them. They were unable to support their (military) ranks because they had to be provided land in unconquered or unproductive regions. As a result, the military's performance continued to suffer, bribery had to be utilized more frequently, and so forth. The two eras into which Athar Ali divides Aurangzeb's reign are of unequal duration, and he makes no attempt to take into account nobles who carried over from the previous reign or period, which are two faults in Athar Ali's computation of the rate of increase in the aristocracy under Aurangzeb. Even with his estimations being revised, it is still obvious that there was a significant increase in the number of nobility by the end of the seventeenth century. Finding out what funds were available to pay them and their troops is a more pressing issue, and Professor Richards' accompanying study significantly contributes to this effort.

We are no longer held hostage by these questions. Instead, it would seem more productive to refer back to the arguments of those who, like us, think that the empire was in crisis at the end of Aurangzeb's rule; our disagreement is over the specific causes. Spirals and circles, particularly vicious ones, are obviously visually appealing, but they do not begin at zero; something must occur somewhere to cause the empire to enter the spiral. Several hypotheses are put forth here, but they all locate the source of the issue in Aurangzeb's migration to the south. This occurred in 1681–1682 and is variously attributed to his desire to expel the semi-infidel or heretical rulers of Golconda and Bijapur to the south of his empire, to the "imperatives" of Indian history, which view every powerful ruler of north India as desirous of ruling the entire subcontinent, or to a desire to put down the Maratha revolt.

It is necessary to briefly elaborate on the interpretation of the "imperatives of Indian history." When Percival Spear asserts that "It [geography] has inspired dreams of empire," he is expressing a widely held viewpoint. This appears to be tempting at first. What could be more natural than for an established kingdom, often in the north, to attempt to complete the conquest by marching south? The subcontinent is obviously a well-defined geographic unit. The subcontinent is a manageable region that resembles an island, thus it makes sense to hold it all. There is a location to stop, in contrast to a powerful empire in Eurasia.

The problem is that this perspective is based on what we know about South Asian topography today. Nearly every day, many of us encounter a relief map of South Asia. We provide an overview of South Asian geography at the beginning of our history classes, highlighting the mountains and illustrating the region's geographic cohesion. However, it is doubtful that a

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Mughal monarch ever had such an idea in this specific geographical meaning. We do know that geography was probably not a significant component of a Mughal prince's education. Although uncommon at court in the seventeenth century, maps and globes were prized presents among Europeans. 'We must be careful to avoid influencing the Mughal emperors' understanding of South Asian geography, at the very least.

Of course, there is another side to this issue. The idea of Chabravartin, the supreme king, has roots in Hindu culture. It's not obvious what kind of territory a Chabravartin should govern; it might or might not be contiguous with South Asia. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the Muslim kings had inherited any such mental baggage from their Hindu forebears. It's unclear, but I suppose they largely considered Hindustan and considered the northwest to be a reasonable location for expansion.

Given that the circle spins out from the downward movement, it is obvious that the circles and spirals are at least implicitly viewed as symptoms or consequences rather than as causes of the decline. Hence, it is asserted that this movement south is the primary reason for the collapse. In this essay, we want to demonstrate how the Mughal Empire's southward expansion was in fact a symptom of a larger weakness. There was no choice but to react hastily to a military challenge due to the importance of military issues in the higher echelons of the state. So, the drive south was a last-ditch effort to annihilate a powerful foe who had already dealt the empire humiliating losses. The action was essentially defensive and not expansionist; it was the result of Mughal desperation rather than free will.

Naturally, after arriving in the south, the Mughals were unable to beat the Marathas with ease. Late in the century, the strains of a protracted war led to glaring indicators of decline: an increase in the gap between the number of jagirdars and the funds available to pay them; peasant revolts in several regions; and a disillusioned and growingly disloyal nobility. But the shift south and the ensuing military disaster were the root of all of these. Hence, the actual query is, "Why the migration south?" The Mughal nobility's makeup, the nature of their links to the empire, and the effects of Maratha victories up until 1666 all hold the key to the solutions. Two assumptions about the Mughal state and its nobles are made in the following, and it is important to make them explicit.

### **NOBILITY AND THE MUGHAL STATE**

First, we consider Mughal rule to be quite deceptive. The people who make up the state's subjects should be seen as members of one or more groups based on their ancestry, caste, profession, location, religion, or other factors. Each group had a leader of some kind, such as a seth (merchant head), pir (Muslim saint), zamindar, street chief, village headman, or council, who served as the group's liaison with the Mughal government on the infrequent occasions when the group or a member of it needed to be in contact with this administration. Yet, most Mughal emperor's subjects managed their own business on their own, within their own group or groups, and had no dealings with any official.

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A small group of men who were tied to the emperor through patron-client relationships made up the majority of the empire, the only ones who were directly related to him, and the only ones who cared about his fate. Mechanically speaking, these guys can be categorized as anyone who holds a mansab (rank) conferred by the emperor. Throughout an empire with sixty or seventy million citizens, they numbered no more than 8,800 men. The troops, the artists, and the household officials of the mroJn6dnrJ were all tied to the empire only indirectly through their patrons, and many others sprang out from these mansabdars (rank-holders) via their own patron-client ties. The 8,800 men made up the core of Mughal India's more fully integrated members, giving it a "level of integration or solidarity and a distinctive membership status. They were the only individuals with direct patronage ties to the emperor, the only individuals for whom the idea of the Mughal Empire could have precedence over other primal attachments.

In fact, because it encompasses everyone with any rank, the number 800 is pretty nearly the absolute maximum for individuals who are directly linked to the empire. Only maitinfidori with ranks of 18,000 or higher are considered "noble" by Athar Ali; up to the latter part of the seventeenth century, there were fewer than 5,000 males in this group. Men with a rank of merely too could have responsible roles, therefore the restriction of a rank of 100 is quite arbitrary. It may be best to state simply and arbitrarily that the core nobility of Mughal India consisted of roughly 18,000 persons given our lack of understanding about the lower-ranked mansabdars.

The continuation of the patronage between the emperor and this tiny group of 1800 nobility was based solely on military accomplishment, according to our second fundamental claim. According to Aurangzeb's top mansabdors (those with mansabs of 5,000 or more), just 4% of them were Hindu or were born outside of India, yet an incredible 82% were. This proves that neither race nor religion served as a basis for loyalty. Even within categories like "foreign-born," there may be significant variability. His foreign-born nobles at the end of Shah Jahan's rule (reigned 1628—58) came from seventeen various countries, not simply Persia or Central Asia. Hence, neither between the emperor and his nobles nor among the nobility towards the emperor was there any ethnically based solidarity. There was also no such thing as an abstract allegiance to Aurangzeb as the head of an impersonal continuous state.

Ultimately, temporal rulers were always viewed with suspicion in Islamic law. The potential of living a good Muslim life was, at least theoretically, thought to be excluded by an association with courts and rulers. This probably had little practical impact, but it did prevent certain religious groups from actively supporting the government. The emperor was only followed by the nobles as a person, as a man who, at least temporarily, held the reins of power and was in a position to provide favors thanks to military victory.

Some intriguing information from Shah Jahan's reign serves as a reminder of the significance of military concerns. A. Jan Qaisar provides data to demonstrate that 77% of Shah Jahan's top 445 nobles' total salary claim in 1647 came from their Tamar (military) rank and was therefore—at least in theory—spent on military concerns. Even more telling is Qaisar's

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assertion that the salaries of the top 445 nobles accounted for 47% of the empire's overall standard land revenue assessment. Although Qaisar is right to be wary of these statistics, they nonetheless show a tremendous strain on military operations and a significant diversion of resources in this direction.

The emperors and their nobility gave adequate expression to the military ethic's supremacy in their words and deeds. As a result, Akbar (r. 1556–r. 1653) believed that a monarch should even be keen on conquest. Although the greatest conquerors are not always the greatest Kings, Aurangzeb allegedly said to his overthrown father, "I am indeed far from denying that conquests ought to distinguish the reign of a great Monarch, and that I would disgrace the blood of the great Taimur, our honoured progenitor, if I did not seek to extend the bounds of my present territories." "Based on the latter assumption, he engaged in a frenzied military campaign in an effort to strengthen the tenuous legitimacy of his early rule. He was merely adhering to accepted Mughal procedure in this case since the Mughal empire "was built by conquest and attuned to perpetual war activity," has been recently noted. "According to P. Hardy, "Muslim monarchs [in mediaeval India] never presided over a demilitarised society."

As a result, the nobles were tied to a specific individual, who had to be victorious. All nobility at court were required to see the emperor twice daily, which served as evidence for the first claim. The benefit of this condition, on the other hand, was that the nobility could continuously verify that the emperor was still alive and well. Shah Jahan's deposition served as the ultimate demonstration that a Mughal emperor had to be alive and in charge since even the slightest hint of his demise or incompetence caused loyalties to be broken. In order for everyone to see that the empire still existed, Aurangzeb would drag himself out once a day, even though he was in grave condition.

It was necessary to project more than simply a successful exterior; this divine commandment for war may be incredibly cruel. In the fight for Shah Jahan's succession in 638, Aurangzeb and his brother Murad Bakhsh, who were only temporary allies, beat Dara Shukoh. This was plenty for the nobles, and they knew what they should do. With just two exceptions, they sided with Aurangzeb without hesitation and left Dara Shukoh and his father Shah Jahan. The senior grandees and other imperial officials arrived at the Court of Aurangzeb in troops in the hopes of receiving favours appropriate to their station. Shah Jahan was still alive and would actually live for seven more years at Aurangzeb's formal coronation a year later. "The courtiers bowed to give honour, and chanted the praises of and prayed for the Emperor," wrote one of the courtiers. "Although Dara Shukoh may have had the support of the majority of Delhi's citizens, Bernier remarked that the close confinement of Shah Jahan [in June 1658] appeared to be the cue for virtually the entire body of Omrahs to pay their court to Aurangzeb and Morad Bakche. Even though the Omrahs who bowed the knee to his oppressors were entitled his rank and wealth, I can hardly contain my outrage when I consider that not a single movement or even a voice was raised in support of the elderly and injured Monarch.



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"Because to this emphasis on combat, almost all nobles, regardless of their talents, possessed both sawar (military) and personal ranks. No matter how a noble came to hold his position—whether it was due to artistic talent, academic achievement, or his capacity to amuse the emperor—military ranks were still in place. Danishmand Khan, who supported Bernier, was essentially a scholar and diplomat. In fact, Aurangzeb prized Danishmand Khan's accomplishments and intellect so highly that he was excused from twice-daily court attendance so he could continue his studies. Yet, he was also in charge of 1300 troops. "Those non-martial nobles frequently had to live up to the expectations of their military ranks; Raja Birbal and Abu'l Fazl both lost their lives while participating in military operations. The nobles didn't seem to complain either, as promotion and control over more resources typically came from military victory. Promotions that went above and above the norm frequently followed wins.

An important consequence emerges from these two characteristics of the Mughal system: in such a system, the mansabdars were loyal to the empire because only they were a part of it. All other subjects of the empire were faithful to the social group to which they belonged, not to the empire or the emperor, with the exception of a mansabdar's dependents, who may have been loyal at one distance through the mediation of the mansabdar. As a result, becoming a mansabdar was the only way to change a man into an emperor's faithful subject. As a result, the emperor had to decide whether to crush a rebel or include him into the nobility in order to bind him to the monarch. With this context, we may now think about the nature and consequences of the defeats that this tiny, militarily focused group of nobles experienced.

## **THE MARATHA REVOLT**

Our primary concern is with the outcomes of the Maratha uprising, not with its origins or with the reasons for its early triumphs, both of which are plain to see. According to Dr. Naqvi's analysis of the 144 revolts against Akbar, there were always zamindars in India who were prepared to rise up. "Most frequently, they started by reducing the amount of money they gave to the imperial authorities. The zamindar conceded, realising he had misunderstood the situation, in case the latter responded with force. The zamindar used his additional funds to buy men and then land if no penalty was forthcoming, and he kept doing this until the imperial power awoke and reacted. According to Abu'l Fazl, "The custom of the bulk of the zamindars of Hindustan is to quit the path of single-mindedness, to look to every side, and to join anyone who is powerful or who is someone who is making an increasing commotion." "Specific particularly, around the years 663–64, a man claiming to be Dara Shukoh, the late older brother of Aurangzeb, showed up in Gujarat. The Kolis, who "always had the wind of revolt and passion of uprising in their heads," turned that lowlife into a handle of insurrection and sowed discord. "Similar to today, Shah Jahan travelled to Bengal in 1624 to rebel against his father, and "The suppressed unruly forces once more raised their heads." '0



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After the middle of the 1660s, the Maratha prosperity was self-sustaining and continued in a self-generating manner. Several well-known variables contributed to the early successes: the terrain of the Maratha army (hometown), which was extremely challenging for a heavy Bijapuri or Mughal army; Shivaji's tactical prowess, particularly the use of light fast horses and the strong yet inexpensive hill forts; the presence of happy hunting grounds in the weak sultanate of Bijapur; and Aurangzeb's involvement in the war of succession just when it seemed that he could and would turn against Shivaji and nip

Shivaji was able to increase his strength as a result of this fortunate beginning. He was so much more by the time of his death in 1680 than just another rebel. He ruled over a territory that was roughly 50,000 square miles in size, or 4.1% of the entire subcontinent. 2 He made between one-fifth and one-sixth as much money as Aurangzeb." He had established a relatively complex administrative system in his realm. None of the other contemporary rebel groups, including the Satnamis, Sikhs, Yusufzais, Jats, and Afridis, were able to accomplish anything even close to this. Shivaji had become the leader of a rival state, no longer just a rebel. The impact of Shivaji's victories is harder to pin down, but our main tenet is that by 1666, he had achieved such success that the Mughals had no choice but to massively retaliate by moving south to Shivaji's native region. This was followed by the fall. As a result, the entrance to the circle and the start of the decline may be found as early as 1666.

Aurangzeb had reportedly intended to destroy Bijapur and then deal with Shivaji till he summoned himself away for the fight of succession. Nonetheless, the Marathas continued to be on his mind because one of his first actions after defeating his brothers was to appoint Shaista Khan viceroy of the Deccan, whose primary duty was to challenge Shivaji, in July 1655. Shaista Khan wasn't just another troop leader. Third in the noble hierarchy and holding the honorific title of Amir-ul-umara, he was Aurangzeb's maternal uncle and the great Asaf Khan's son. Shaista Khan typically did not do much. Prior to Shivaji's daring raid in April 1663, he spent more than two and a half years in camp in and around Poona. Shaista Khan suffered the loss of a son, a thumb, several servants, and a lot of respect. There was uproar at court over the attack on such a distinguished and well-connected noble, and Aurangzeb was shocked. Without even being given the opportunity for the customary interview with Aurangzeb, Shaista Khan was humiliatingly dispatched to the prison province of Bengal.

## **MUGHAL RESPONSE**

The attack on Shaista Khan and the first raid on Surat were two coups that forced Aurangzeb to launch a huge defense. He could no longer put up with Shiva Ji's taunts, as Manucci put it. 33 Jai Singh, the highest ranking general and noble in the empire, was dispatched to the south in 1669 with a sizable and well-equipped army as well as complete diplomatic authority. The outcome was a stunning victory: Shivaji was vanquished and in





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June 665, he signed a pact with Jai Singh. By signing the Purandar Treaty, Shivaji was compelled to give up 23 of his 35 forts as well as 80% of his fort-related income. However, Shivaji kept several of his forts, and the Mughals made other concessions, so this was only a partial success. A high maniab was handed to Shivaji's kid. Shivaji was invited to participate in the destruction of Bijapur, and he was not required to appear in court and honor Aurangzeb at this time. Even though it was obviously far from a full eradication, the court received the news with a little hysterical sense of excitement. Jai Singh, his family, and his retainers received opulent rewards. What went wrong in 1666 at the court? The forecast must have appeared favorable for the Mughals. After all, Shivaji had only barely prevailed in his battle with the Mughals over Bijapur after losing to Jai Singh. His fortunes were at a low point in May 1666, and it seemed like a good moment to adopt Akbar's Rajput strategy of defeating and then purchasing opponents. This was the critical time since it was then that Shivaji might possibly be included in the zamindari system and connected to the empire.

Failure was imposed by several circumstances. Shivaji, unlike Rajputs, was more of a barbarian in the affluent Mughal court; his disorderly behavior may have been a reflexive attempt to hide his embarrassment at not being able to conform to Mughal courtly protocol. More importantly, he was aware that he wasn't utterly defeated. A compromise might have been struck if Aurangzeb had proposed a fairly sizable bribe, such as a very high wage combined with some freedom of action for Shivaji in the Deccan. But Aurangzeb was unable to do so and did not offer it. He and his nobles were not ready to present Shivaji with a situation that he could accept. How, for instance, would a low-caste brigand, a "mountain rat," feel if he were placed above the top Rajputs or the affluent Persians? Aurangzeb was aware of this and likely probably understood that giving out excessively generous prizes to a successful brigand would set a very hazardous precedent. But, it is doubtful that Aurangzeb was personally inclined to handle Shivaji kindly. Even though he was welcomed at court and given a robe of honfir, he was still going beyond what he wanted to do and what some powerful people in his vicinity believed he ought to do.

These persons included Jafar Khan, Raid Khan, Jaswant Singh, who was merely envious of Jai Singh, a few of the women in his harem, and others who opposed Shivaji for various reasons. Two powerful women have specific complaints: Jafar Khan, the wazir's wife, was Shaista Khan's sister. Jahanara, Aurangzeb's favorite sister, had been getting the customs taxes from Surat, therefore Shivaji's raid was an immediate slight. All of these individuals objected to Aurangzeb's feeble attempt to court the assailant of Shaista Khan and the plunderer of the Hajj Gate. They were able to take advantage of Aurangzeb's underlying animosity to lock Shivaji up while they continued to discuss his destiny. Shivaji was too influential at the top levels of the Mughal court by 1666 and had achieved too much success for Aurangzeb to be able to purchase him."



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Only the last straw was Shivaji's escape in August. Jai Singh's victory the year before was entirely wiped out, and it further diminished the stature of an emperor who seemed incapable of either appeasing or eliminating a dissident at his court. It once again demonstrated how dreaded Shivaji had grown to be by this point. Within a month, the English in Surat were informed of the escape and worriedly remarked that "the fears of the countries hereabout begin again to be considerable." Two months later, they stated that "everyone is waiting for some horrible retribution against the nation and its citizens. We recently were very alarmed over a rumor that he had arrived with a flying army, causing everyone to start flying once more. Nevertheless, the rumor turned out to be false. But, let him arrive whenever he pleases because no one will face him or stay in the area. "Contemporary writers concur that the failure of reconciliation and the subsequent panic were decisive "As well as Aurangzeb did, both then and later. Some historical thoughts on the events of 1666 were mentioned in his will: "Negligence for even a brief period of time can bring years of shame. Carelessness allowed the wretch Shiva to escape, and I will have to toil until the end of my days.

Where exactly these three accomplishments' harm, as well as that did caused by less noteworthy Maratha incursions in the Deccan, lie? There was essentially little threat to the empire's core or to the immediate economic interests of the nobility. Maratha bands did not arrive in Hindustan till the seventeenth century. The state's administrative Centre gave little thought to the looting in Malwa. With the exception of a few modest businesses in Surat, the majority of nobility were not also immediately impacted financially. There is no indication that Jahanara ever ran out of money, and Shaista Khan went on to have a lengthy and personally lucrative tenure as governor of Bengal. Surat remained India's most important port throughout the seventeenth century after surviving the assaults.

We now know that the empire might have migrated inside to Hindustan and remained safe and unharmed there. But, the sociology of the Mughal nobility's knowledge of Shivaji's operations prior to 1666 required a totally different response. The issue for Aurangzeb—and the empire—was that, in Robert Berkhofer's thought-provoking words, "Behavior is not a direct reaction to the stimuli, but a response made in line with ideational mediation." There was no other option than to respond militarily, which meant moving to the south, given the open challenge and the nobility's attitude.

## **THE MARATHA IMPACT**

How may the devastating effects of Shivaji's early triumphs and the essential inability to bond him in 1666\* be shown more clearly? As Sarkar emphasizes the insignificance of the Deccan and the Maratha insurrection until Aurangzeb himself travelled south in 1681, we might possibly start by demonstrating that most—or at least many—nobles were well aware of Shivaji and his challenge. We have calculated the number of the top nobles of this era who



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had considerable interaction with Shivaji using Athar Ali's list of the top nobility from Or 16-7 and added one—Abul Muhammad, who he seems to have missed. For this reason, we have taken into account everyone who participated in Shivaji's military campaigns, everyone who played significant roles in the court debates of 1666, and everyone who joined the Maratha and Decani aristocracy. The outcomes are shocking. Despite the fact that the numbers we have for people connected to Shivaji are undoubtedly low, by the time of his death in 1680, thirty-one of the top fifty and fifty-seven of the top one hundred had been in close contact with him. Even more significant, the figures are 19 out of 50 and 32 out of 100 as of Shivaji's flight from Agra in 1666. About 35% of the highest nobles had been directly concerned in the Marathas' issue as early as 1666. By 1666, he and his accomplishments were still very much present in the nobility's thoughts.

Other, less quantifiable evidence shows how well-known and feared Shivaji had become by the 1660s. Shivaji "is exercising all the powers of an independent sovereign; laughs at the threats both of the Mogul and of the King of Visapur," according to Bernier, who departed India in 1667. He diverts Aurangzeb attention with his audacious and persistent endeavors. How to put down Shivaji has become of utmost significance. 'Clearly, Aurangzeb shared this viewpoint, not just in 1682 when he relocated to the south but also much earlier. ' The Emperor read a dispatch from the Deccan, repeated certain Shiva incursions, and then "remained mute," according to a major remark in a newsletter of his court published in year seven. He frequently fretted in the secret council of the Court about who he should send next against Shivaji, given that almost all of his famous generals had failed in the Deccan. He was made fun of by Shah Abbas ii of Persia, his fierce adversary, as early as 1666: "You name yourself a Padishah, but you cannot defeat an ordinary zamindar like Shiva." I'm taking an army to Indonesia to educate you how to run a business. ” On the other hand, lords like Jai Singh and his allies in 1665 or Khan Jahan Bahadur in 1667 who did defeat the Marathas were handsomely rewarded.

Even the official endorsement of calling Shivaji a "wild animal," "mountain rat," or "knave" shows more fear than confidence. The ominous "The infidel gone to hell" was the courtly chronogram commemorating Shivaji's passing.

The significance of Shivaji's early triumphs is demonstrated by two other groupings of numbers, including those for immigration to India and revenue collections. There is no doubt that the nations that bordered Mughal India kept a watchful eye on events there. There were many embassies, which also served as communication hubs: at least seven in the early 1660s, representing nations as different as Ethiopia, Mecca, and the begs. As early as 1666, Shah Abbas ii of Persia mocked Aurangzeb by pointing out his defeats to Shivaji. Given this outside knowledge of what happened in Mughal India, we may anticipate that Aurangzeb's egregious losses would cause people to have a less positive opinion of India as a destination for immigration. Indeed, this is the situation. When we follow Athar Ali's comparisons of I658-78 and I670-7, all the indicators support this. The proportion of nobility born



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outside of India decreased from 3% to 8%. Iranians and Turkish made up 34.4% of the nobility, down from 41.3 percent. Iranians alone saw a decline from 28% to 22%. '7

It is necessary to take into account two common explanations for this drop. According to Athar Ali, the decline in emigration might be attributed to the Uzbek and Safavid empires' weakness in the latter half of the seventeenth century. But if a better-looking empire were available, it stands to reason that a waning local dominion would encourage emigration. Second, the decline in Shia Iranian immigration has occasionally been attributed to Aurangzeb's religious policy. Additionally, this lacks merit. In fact, Sarkar believes Aurangzeb to have been especially eager to have Persians and Turks join his army. Aurangzeb was always willing to use skilled Shias. In addition, Athar Ali eliminates Aurangzeb more frequently than Shah Jahan by appointing Persians as governors at the highest ranks. In any event, throughout the latter period, both the percentage of Persians and the percentage of all people born outside of India decreased. The real reason for this must be that Mughal India was no longer regarded as the Golden Dorado that it once was. Even visitors from other countries noticed that its star was fading and decided not to move in that direction.

### **A REACTION FROM THE NOBLES**

Lastly, the behavior of the Mughal nobility seemed to reflect the devastating consequences of Shivaji's victories. When the battle broke out again in the 1670s, it became evident that some of them had apparently lost heart during the 1660s. As we are attempting to characterize a Mughal noble's way of thinking in the absence of contemporaneous diaries and letters, this is still another challenging task, with only tentative results. It was well known that the Mughal nobility did not always put up the best fights before Shivaji even emerged. They refrained from winning too soon for extremely pragmatic reasons. Control over resources, most especially land and people, was the basis of power in India. When a noble was recruiting soldiers, his power was at its height. As a result, both the population he controlled and the amount of land used to support these additional people increased. It was therefore ideal to appear to be fighting bravely against a powerful foe in a non-critical situation, with victory always just around the corner but never quite firmly gained. Shaista Khan best expressed it. The cunning noble responded when encouraged to fight Shivaji directly that if the Deccan campaign ended so fast, an attack on Qandahar would be authorized, and if that too was successful, the contingents would be dissolved. On this issue, the distinction mentioned earlier regarding who initiated the conflict is significant, as is the development of the specific war. So, it was natural for Mughal nobility to move slowly, delay, accept bribes from the enemy, and generally show less than complete martial bravery while they were engaged in battle against a non-essential outpost like Qandahar. Similar to this, in the first third of the seventeenth century, to hasten slowly against the Decanis of Ahmednagar was just to protect one's own interests. But, up until 1663, Shivaji was the last person against whom this could be done. Shaista Khan, who

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spent 32 months at peace in Poona, was just upholding the status quo; it is obvious that he never thought it would be difficult for him to smash Shivaji, whether Aurangzeb ordered it or not. It didn't seem to be in his best interests to do it.

By attacking the same Shaista Khan and robbing Surat nine months later, Shivaji turned the situation around. The Mughals were now being opposed. Up until this point, they had always met such challenges with decisive action: Akbar's second conquest of Gujarat in 1573; his suppression of the uprisings of 1580–81; the annihilation of the mock Khusrau in 1610; the efficient responses when Malik Ambar ventured too far outside of Ahmednagar; and a number of other Mughal victories. The triumph of Jai Singh in 1665 continued along the same lines, demonstrating once more the Mughals' capacity to meet any threat swiftly and forcefully. The issue was that Shivaji's flight from Agra swiftly nullified both the victory and the pact. The scenario was entirely unfamiliar to the nobility, and some of them reacted by engaging in less than honorable behavior when active fighting resumed in 1670 (significantly, this time under Shivaji, not the Mughals).

It's evident that not all nobility were as hopeless as they appeared to be. After all, it was Aurangzeb's empire that was in trouble, not theirs. So why be concerned if Shivaji attacked? Large contingents and hence more authority went to those who opposed him. Yet, it seemed that some nobility were not acting strategically; rather, they had just given up. Only eight years out of the twenty-three years starting in 1638 saw Shivaji face fierce opposition. Reports of nobility accepting bribes, making concessions, and acting cowardly in the face of Maratha attacks are frequently heard. The sieges of Bijapur and Golconda in the middle of the 1680s may have been the time when the demoralization of many nobles was maybe most visibly manifest. For eighteen months, the city of Bijapur was besieged by Aurangzeb, two princes, and a sizable Mughal army. Even though there were only 2,800 soldiers left in the garrison at the end of the siege, the city eventually chose to surrender rather than be captured. The Mughals next proceeded on to Golconda, where they eventually managed to capture the fort by treachery after a shameful seven-month siege. These careless wonderful deeds strike Athar Ali as "peculiar," yet, they were not. They were only anticipated, given Shivaji's extraordinary achievements.

When was the last opportunity for redemption missed, finally? Two chances to put a stop to Shivaji's menace had been lost by the middle of the 1660s. When Aurangzeb was vice-roy of the Deccan in 1657, it appeared likely that he would soon destroy Bijapur and then turn on its rebellious vassal. He was preoccupied, and paradoxically, his triumph in the fight of succession was hollow since Shivaji skillfully took use of the chance to expand diametrically. So, one opportunity had been squandered as a result of the Mughals' failure to develop an organized system of throne succession. It is true that the succession wars during the Mughals were routine. The engagements are frequently simulated wars, and the nobility is free to assist their princely sponsors, confident that a miscalculation won't be used against them by the eventual winner. Nonetheless, these wars did have detrimental effects elsewhere. While the cat was absent in 1600–05 and 1627–28, but most

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significantly and fatally in 1637–58, the mice on the boundaries played. As degraded and defeated as Shivaji would ever be, he was in 1666. He was willing to consider an offer, so long as it was extremely substantial. We have already established that by this point, Aurangzeb was unable to pay a bribe large enough to appease Shivaji due to both personal and political considerations. The only way Shivaji could have been defeated by Aurangzeb was if he had killed him or at the very least imprisoned him. This would have probably been successful; the Maratha challenge could have been destroyed if it had been beheaded first, though obviously not afterwards. Yet Shivaji's escape meant that this opportunity was also lost.

What allowed Shivaji to live? It's possible that Aurangzeb wanted to kill him, but believed it was first important to secure the allegiance of all of his nobles, notably Jai Singh, who had ensured Shivaji's safety. But, it's more possible that Aurangzeb was genuinely unsure about what to do. At least at this period, the Mughals didn't have a practice of assassinating persons who were loosely or potentially noble. Rebels who opposed the empire were put down swiftly, frequently with brutality, including two Sikhs (Arjun in 1606, Tegh Bahdur in 17), among a plethora of others. Yet, Shivaji was not a persistent insurgent as of 1666. His son was a mansabdar, Aurangzeb had signed a treaty with him, and Shivaji himself was still subject to cooptation. Mughal monarchs in this position did not murder anyone.

What little chance there was of persuading Shivaji vanished when he fled. Disheartened by Shivaji's escape and preoccupied with other uprisings, the Mughals were happy to see Shivaji remain quiet until 1667. They probably anticipated that by impressing him with his small escape, he would become subdued. Shivaji did not, though. How effectively he had utilized his break was made clear by the 1670's attacks. It was required on Aurangzeb and his nobility to answer. This led to the revelation of the terrible effects of his departure as well as the repercussions of his attacks on Shaista Khan and Surat; the genuine "Tragedy of Aurangzeb" (pace Dryden), tragic as it was inevitable, then started to play out in the Deccan.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is important to emphasise that the defeats only forced such a reaction because of the relationship between the emperor and aristocracy. Due to the empire's military focus and the desire for victory to result in more spoils, such an empire has to meet every military obstacle head-on. It had to pull off the incredible accomplishment of never being humiliated militarily in order to prevent decline. So, on a more abstract—and maybe tautological—level, the empire fell because it was unable to develop to a level where factors other than specific military considerations might be permitted to have more influence. It is at least possible to argue that, had such a development taken place, the empire would have been able to retire to India in the mid-1660s or a little later. But because of its core nature, the empire could only respond militarily to a military challenge.



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