



## DEBATE ON 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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### ABSTRACT :

18<sup>th</sup> Century in the India, history marks its relevance by two crucial developments. It is the decline of the Mughal Empire and the consolidation or expansion of the British Empire in India. These are the most crucial changes which promoted the social, economical and political structure of India but there is so much diverse opinion about these two phases. Some traditional Marxist historians opined that 18<sup>th</sup> Century was 'Dark Age', for that they have given blame to the economical and social condition of India after the decline of the Mughal Empire not the orthodox religious Policy of Aurangzeb but Imperialistic and Nationalistic historians denied above traditional views they claimed that 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of economic prosperity moreover these historians stress on the changing and evolutionary pattern and also a sustainable continuity.

**KEYWORDS :** crucial developments , Mughal Empire , evolutionary pattern.

### INTRODUCTION :

18<sup>th</sup> century was classified as a period of struggle for England, for France it was a struggle period of their bourgeois leaders. In Asia it was a period of downfall of Arab, Turkey, Mughal and Manchu dynasties in China. It was a transition period for Asia specially for India.

The division of the 18<sup>th</sup> century into two periods of transition by Seema Aliavia in her book '18<sup>th</sup> century debate.' These transformations affected the structure of political power, social and economical formation of India.

- 1] Disintegration and decline of Mughal Empire in 18<sup>th</sup> century and its impact to transfer political power from center (Delhi) to region
- 2] Emergence, consolidation and Expansion of British power in India and their implementation of new revenue system in Bengal region.

These two changes have been analyzed by researchers of History and Economics. They have done ample research and analysis to enlighten the real situation of 18<sup>th</sup> century, this insists to rethink and re-write the history of 18th century by various angles.

### Adverse Views on Decline of Mughal Empire

In 1707 death of Aurangzeb began the decline of Mughal Empire. In 18<sup>th</sup> century Mughal empire had been broken up into large number of independent and semi-independent smaller states or units, those were of the three distinct types

- 1] The warrior state- established by Sikhs, Jats and Marathas who did revolt against ascendancy of Mughal and adopt military fiscalism.
  - 2] Independent kingdom where Subhedars asserted their independence that is Nawab of Bengal and Nizam of Hyderabad.
  - 3] Local kingdoms whose sovereignty acquired more substance in 18<sup>th</sup> century such as the Rajput state, Mysore which resorted to military fiscalism within compact domains.
- These all regional powers are known as Successor states of Mughal Empire.

### 1] Disintegration and Decline of Mughal Empire and transfer its political power to regional power A] Nationalist and imperialist Historian's opinions:-

These historians focused on the weakness of individual Mughal rulers for the decline of the Mughal empire.

**Jadhunath Sarkar** claimed that "the Maratha, Jat and Sikh resistance was evidence of a strong Hindu opposition against Aurangzeb's orthodox religious policy and that was ultimate collapse of the Mughal empire".

The Nationalist historians argue that "Hindu rulers such as Marathas should have been the legitimate successors of Mughal Empire, Battle of Third Panipat, Battle of Plassey and Buxar were very important events in 18<sup>th</sup> century".

Maratha historians claimed that '18<sup>th</sup> century was century of Maratha Power'.

According to Maratha historian **Jadunath Sarkar** 'orthodox religious policy of Aurangzeb was responsible to decline the Mughal empire in 18<sup>th</sup> century not economical condition or administrative structure of Mughal'.

### B] Marxist Historians express their view by materialistic approach.

**Irfan Habib** said "Great increase of land revenue, agrarian crisis and its economical factors were responsible for disintegration of Mughal Empire, after disintegration of Mughal Empire so many regional states were emerged, there were continuous conflict between them so remarkable stagnation took place in domestic and external trade and commerce of India, therefore financially India got set back, so Irfan Habib claimed that 18<sup>th</sup> century was 'Dark Age' for Indians.

**Ather Ali** said, "Scarcity of Jahagiri (land) specially after conquering Deccan unrest took place in Mughal empire so disintegration and decline was happened in 18<sup>th</sup> century".

According to **Satish Chandra** "Shortage of Jahagiri was responsible for disintegration and decline of Mughal empire in 18<sup>th</sup> century."

### 2] Expansion and Consolidation of British Power in India.

After disintegration of Mughal Empire British became successful to establish and consolidate their rule in India. East India Company emerged as political power in Bengal after won the Battle of Plassey (1757) and Battle of Buxar (1764) so economical, political and social condition has been changed tremendously, whether these changes promote poverty or prosperity for Indians, this is the main issue to debate on this phase. There is intensive diverse opinion or views

of historians about what kind of remarkable changes been done in social, economical and Political life of India.

Imperialistic Historian **James Mills** opined that the coming of the British rescued India from its gloomy existence. However, the recent historiography has refuted this structure of overall gloom and opined that the period was infact marked by the rise of regional power and reconfiguration of economic and political equation.

**Erisk Stokes** wrote an article "First century of British Colonial rule"

In this Book he claimed that "There was interaction between pre-colonial and post –colonial institutions in India even there was hormonal conjunction without any noticeable conflict.

**Revisionist historian Christper Beyly** challenged to all previous theories about 18<sup>th</sup> century . He claimed that 18<sup>th</sup> century was not 'Dark Age' or there was no decline of trade and Commerce in India , even there was economical prosperity and social harmony. he said "The key note of Mughal rule had been size and centralization decline of Mughal Empire in position of light. 'Corporate groups' or 'Social classes' played a major role to decentralization and commercialization of Mughal Polity in extending agriculture and intensifying commerce, and later shifting their allegiance to the British for beneficial power. Performance of regional elites becomes major reason to transform the power in 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Above theory of **Christper Beyly** was supported by Muzaffer Alam he Believes that ' The glorification of the permanent Jagir and revenue forming were indicate of regionalization, Commercialization and growth, not of collapse of government and equity'.

**Devid Washbook** argues that closing decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a 'Golden Age' for low ritual status, non specialized workers. The wars of the period increased demand for labour , competition among mercantilist increased the trade and started to use cash to feed their armies also created the spaces within which labour could negotiate better condition and finally the drain of labour away from agriculture activities enhanced the bargaining power of those that did remain, thus at least for labour in some region the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of relative prosperity.

Neo-revisionist like **prasannan Parthasarathi** shows that labours of in south India had higher earning and better standard of living than their British counterparts. This was due to the high agricultural productivity that enabled articians to survive on a lesser wage and gave the industry a competitive edge.

## CONCLUSION

The 18<sup>th</sup> century reflected the political transformation from Mughal decline to British colonialism but the socio-economic forces at the local level continued to operate as before but the local group shifted their political allegiance. With the decline of Mughal Empire the virtual independence Zamindars performed the task of collection of revenue and the local ruler used these sources for sustaining court and armies. Several types of political formation emerged in this period ranging from successor states to Zamindaris which later got absorbed into the category of Princely states under the British.

New research has been proved that north Indian states like Aundh, Punjab and all part of north India continuously run their all political, religious and economical progress in the 18<sup>th</sup> century so there were no 'Dark Age' even there was economical prosperity therefore theory of Irfan Habib and Auther Ali about 'Dark Age' in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was denied by present historians by new research.

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There were no stagnation in agriculture, Non-agriculture, Banking sector and Craft which are the most important part of Indian economy even stagnation did not took place before or after disintegration of Mughal Empire.

Battle of Plassey did not change any ser up of India, it never change frame-work of India. There was continuity of peace and progress so development has been done in every field, Modernization of India is not revolutionary process., it is evolutionary process.Under the cover of Marxism Irfan Habib and Auther Ali tried to defend orthodox religious policy of Aurangzeb.

#### REFERENCE BOOK

- 1] 18<sup>th</sup> Century evolution or revolution
- 2] 18<sup>th</sup> century debate

P.G.Marshal  
Seema Aliavia