

Failure to Reform as a Reason for Decline

One of the central reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire was the failure to introduce necessary reforms. The empire under Aurangzeb and his successors faced enormous challenges in administration, economy, military, and society. However, the rulers failed to adapt their policies to the changing conditions, which gradually weakened imperial control.

Administrative Weakness

The Mughal bureaucracy became corrupt and inefficient during Aurangzeb's later rule. The revenue system was highly complicated and burdensome, causing suffering among peasants. Nobles and jagirdars used their positions for personal gain instead of serving the empire. The emperors did not reform provincial administration or introduce measures of accountability, which allowed regional governors to grow more autonomous. Court politics and factional rivalries further destabilized the empire.

Military Decline

The military system also suffered from neglect and lack of modernization. The Mughal army still depended heavily on cavalry and artillery methods that had become outdated by the late seventeenth century. Aurangzeb's long wars drained the treasury and manpower, while his successors failed to introduce reforms like professional standing armies or naval power. This left the empire vulnerable to Maratha, Sikh, Persian, and Afghan attacks.

Economic and Revenue Crisis

Economic problems worsened because no reforms were made to adjust the revenue system to agricultural decline. The jagirdari system collapsed, as more land assignments were given than the actual revenue of provinces could bear. Corruption became common, and peasants suffered under heavy taxation. Costly wars and mismanagement drained the treasury, while trade remained underdeveloped compared to European powers. The absence of reforms deepened resentment in both rural and urban societies.

Conclusion

The Mughal Empire failed to reform at the right time. Aurangzeb's successors lacked vision, indulged in luxury, and ignored the need for institutional change. Without reforms, the empire became weak, divided, and unable to meet internal and external challenges. Thus, the failure to reform was one of the most decisive reasons for the decline and eventual breakup of the Mughal Empire.