

Advanced Study in the History of Modern India: Volume One: 1707 - 1813

By J. L. Mehta

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In the present volume, the author gives an analytical and critical account of the political history of early modern India from A D 1707 to 1813. The study begins with the death of Aurangzeb, the last imperial ruler of the Mughal Dynasty, and carries the story of political and military developments through the eighteenth century, which comprises 'an epoch of transition' from the medieval to the modern period of Indian history. The narrative shatters the contention of contemporary European writers that it was 'the dark age' of Indian history, characterized by 'political anarchy and misgovernment', until the British brought it under their sway. The main thesis of the author is that the political developments of the period were marked by two distinct phases; the first phase, which lasted from 1707 to 1760, saw the rapid disintegration of the Mughal power and its replacement by the Maratha hegemony. Delhi became the hub of Maratha activities from 1752 and fell under their complete control by 1760. The Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, gave a serious blow to the Maratha power in the third battle of Panipat (1761), albeit, their Afghan and Mughal adversaries were also ruined within a decade. On the other hand, the Marathas effected phenomenal revival of their power under their fourth Peshwa Madhav Rao (1761-72). Meanwhile, the English traders turned colonialists, after consolidating their hold along the Indian seacoasts and conquest of 'Carnatic' and Bengal, challenged the Maratha hegemony. The second phase of developments was thus marked by the struggle for supremacy between these two powers almost exclusively. Nevertheless, for full 31 years after 1772, the Marathas were in absolute control of Delhi, and wielded imperial powers as de facto as well as de jure rulers of the country in the name of the phantom Mughal emperor until they were dislodged from there in 1803. The Marathas were defeated but not yet out by the year 1813. The author makes a judicious use of the contemporary English and Marathi sources and liberally utilizes the intensive researches done by modern historians to portray a compact picture of their findings in an extensive treatment of the subject matter in the form of a text book for the benefit of the degree students of colleges and universities. Historical facts have been reorganized and reinterpreted through clear and illuminating expositions, refreshing characterization of historic personalities, and objective assessment of

events and movements. Together with maps, a select bibliography, glossary and an elaborate index, the volume makes a rich contribution to the advancement of modern historical literature.

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
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