

* Socio-Economic Conditions before the foundation of the Mughal Empire:

Before the foundation of the Mughal Empire in 1526, India was under the rule of the Delhi Sultanate and various regional kingdoms. The country's social and economic conditions were marked by political instability, feudalism, agrarian economy and class divisions.

* Social Conditions:

Indian society was divided into distinct classes: nobility, clergy, traders, artisans and peasants. The ruling class, mainly Turks, Afghans and Persians, enjoyed privileges, while the majority of the population, including farmers and artisans, faced hardships.

→ The caste system was rigid among Hindus, with Brahmins at the top and Shudras at the bottom.

* Religious Diversity and Conflict:

The Delhi Sultanate was an Islamic rule, but the majority of the population was Hindu.

There was religious discrimination, and jizya (a tax on non-Muslims) was imposed on Hindus. However, Sufi saints and Bhakti movement leaders tried to promote social harmony.

* Condition of Women:

Women had a low social status, especially among Hindus. Practices like purdah (veil system)

and Sati (self-immolation of widows) were prevalent. Among the nobility, women had some rights, but in general, they had limited freedom.

* Economic Conditions:

a) Agrarian Economy:

Agriculture was the backbone of the economy, but farmers suffered due to heavy taxes and feudal oppression. The land revenue system under the Delhi Sultanate was harsh, and peasants often lived in poverty.

b) Trade & Commerce:

India was a hub of international trade, exporting spices, textiles, and precious stones. Major trade centres

included Delhi, Gujarat, Bengal and Malwa. However, frequent wars and political instability disrupted trade routes.

* Currency and Taxation:

The economy was based on gold, silver, and copper coins. Taxes were heavy on farmers and traders, with land tax (kharaj) and other levies burdening the common people.

* Political Instability:

The Delhi Sultanate was in decline due to weak rulers and constant revolts. Ibrahim Lodi, the last ruler, faced opposition from Rajputs, Afghans, and nobles. Regional kingdoms like Mewar, Bengal and Vijayanagara were powerful and resisted Delhi's authority.

• Before Babur's invasion, India was politically fragmented, socially divided and economically burdened. The instability of the Delhi Sultanate created a power vacuum, making it easier for Babur to defeat Ibrahim Lodi in 1526 and establish the Mughal empire.