



Chapter

3

The Delhi Sultanate



In this chapter you will learn about :

- 🌀 Sultanate Period
- 🌀 The Slave Dynasty
- 🌀 The Khilji Dynasty
- 🌀 The Tughlaq Dynasty
- 🌀 The Sayyid Dynasty
- 🌀 The Lodi Dynasty
- 🌀 Economic and Social Life
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After the death of Mahmud of Ghazni, India did not face any major invasion for more than 150 years. During this period, the Rajput rulers promoted trade with the Muslims. Some Muslim traders even settled in India. The sufis also began to enter India around this time.

Sultanate Period

The period from 1206 to 1526 A.D. is known as the **Sultanate** period. The early Turks and the Afghan rulers were known as Sultans.

When Prithviraj Chauhan was defeated by Muhammad Ghori in the year 1192, the control passed on to his Turk general and trusted slave Qutb-ud-din Aibak as Ghori returned to Ghor.

Qutb-ud-din Aibak conquered the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, Aligarh, Kalinjar, Bihar and Bengal along with the Turkish generals between 1194 and 1206.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Delhi was transformed into a capital with the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate, which controlled vast areas in the subcontinent. There were five dynasties that together made the Delhi Sultanate.

- ❑ The Slave Dynasty (1206-1290 CE)
- ❑ The Khilji Dynasty (1290-1320 CE)
- ❑ The Tughlaq Dynasty (1320-1414 CE)
- ❑ The Sayyid Dynasty (1414-1451 CE)
- ❑ The Lodi Dynasty (1451-1526 CE)

The Slave Dynasty (1206-1290 CE)

The Slave Dynasty was also known as the **Mamluk** Dynasty. Mamluk in Arabic means 'Slave'. Qutbuddin Aibak, the founder of this dynasty, was originally Muhammad Ghori's slave. Some other rulers of this dynasty like Iltutmish and Balban were slaves of Qutbuddin Aibak.

Qutbuddin Aibak (1206-1290 CE)

Qutbuddin Aibak was the founder and first ruler of the Delhi Sultanate. Under him, the modern day Afghanistan and a large part of the northern Indian subcontinent formed the Delhi Sultanate. He initially ruled from Lahore, but he shifted his capital to



Qutbuddin Aibak



Delhi later. Aibak was nicknamed 'Lakhabaksh' or the giver of lakhs due to his generosity. The **Quwwat ul Islam** mosque in Delhi and the **Adhai-din ka Jhonpara** in Ajmer were built during his reign. He also initiated the construction of the Qutb Minar but was unable to complete it. He died in an accident in 1210 CE while playing chaugan, a kind of polo played on horseback.

Ilutmish (1210-36 CE)

Ilutmish was the son-in-law of Qutbuddin Aibak. He is regarded by historians as the real architect of Turkish rule in North India. He ascended the throne in 1210 CE despite great opposition from the Turkish nobility and external revolts. He conquered Ranthambore; Bayana, Mandor and Jalore while crushing the revolts in Bengal and Bihar and annexing them in his empire. He also strengthened the north-western frontier to safeguard it against Mongol invasions. To make his administration efficient, Ilutmish organised the Turkish nobility into a select group of forty nobles called **chalisa** or **chahalgani**.



Ilutmish

He organised the currency of the Sultanate. He granted lands, called **iqtas**, to members of his army and granted them the right to collect land tax from their regions. Qutb Minar's construction started by his father-in-law was completed by him.

Ilutmish declared his daughter Raziya as his successor as he did not consider any of his sons capable enough to govern the Sultanate. However after the death of Ilutmish, his nobles placed his son Rukhn-ud-din Firoz Shah on the throne, but he proved to be an incapable ruler.

After seven months of his reign, Rukhn-ud-din was murdered in November, 1236. Raziya gathered the support of the people and succeeded her to the throne of Delhi.

Razia Sultan (1236-39 CE)

Razia Sultan, the daughter of Ilutmish, was the only Muslim woman ruler of Delhi. She was a great monarch, wise, dispenser of justice and protector of her subjects but born of the wrong gender.



Razia Sultan

She wore male attire and appeared in public without any veil. She established law and order throughout the empire. Her rule triggered a power struggle between the sultan and the chahalgani (chalisa). The nobility opposed her rule and also disapproved of the high position she granted to her Ethiopian slave, Yakut. Eventually, they revolted against her. She was killed as part of a conspiracy by the nobles while she was on her way to reclaim her empire.

Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246-66 CE) and Ghiyasuddin Balban (1266-87 CE)

Razia was succeeded by her brother Nasiruddin Mahmud. He died in 1266 and was succeeded by Ghiyasuddin Balban, his prime minister and a former member of the chahalgani. After ascending the throne, Balban faced opposition from the Turkish chief.



Coins issued by Balban

His policy is called the policy of 'blood and iron'. Adopting this policy, he laid the foundation of centralised government and asserted the need for noble origin and prestige of the monarchy. Balban established an efficient spy system to keep people towards the throne. The Ganga-Yamuna Doab was cleared of all robbers. Similarly, the Mewatis, were suppressed ruthlessly. Balban also started the Persian customs of **sijda** and **paibos** intended to show loyalty towards the sultan. He took important measures to ensure impartiality in the administration of justice. During his reign the powerful group of the chahalgani nobles was



completely broken. In all, Balban strengthened the Delhi Sultanate, in particular its form of government and institutions, thereby paving the way for its expansion.

Balban died in 1287. His successors were weak rulers, so the Slave Dynasty came to an end in 1290 and a new dynasty, the Khiljis, came to power.

The Khilji Dynasty (1290-1320 CE)

Jalaluddin Khilji killed Balban's grandson Kaiqubad and established the Khilji dynasty. The end of Turkish rule is referred to as the Khilji Revolution.

▼ Jalaluddin Khilji (1290-96 CE)

Jalaluddin Khilji whose real name was Malik Firoj suppressed the revolts of Balban's successors and overcame the external threat of the Mongols. His brief rule was based on the participation of people in the process of governance and tolerance towards different religious communities.

▼ Alauddin Khilji (1296-1316 CE)

Jalaluddin Khilji was killed and succeeded by his nephew and son-in-law, Ali Gurshap known as Alauddin Khilji. Alauddin was ambitious. He established a vast empire in India by conquering Gujarat, Malwa and parts of Rajasthan. He had great administrative skills and military genius. His first military campaign against Gujarat enabled him to have an access to its ports and overseas trade. He also undertook military campaigns to conquer Ranthambore, Chittor, Malwa and Jalore in Rajasthan. He sent his trusted commander Malik Kafur to acquire control of the Deccan; and thus became the first Delhi sultan to cross the Vindhya region. Malik Kafur was entrusted the charge of all southern campaigns. By 1313 CE, the Yadavas of Devagiri, the Kakatiyas of Warangal, the



Alauddin Khilji

Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra and the Pandyas of Madurai accepted the overlordship of Alauddin. In Delhi, he built the famous **Alai Darwaza**, in the Qutb Minar complex to commemorate his Deccan conquests.



India Under Alauddin Khilji

Economic Reforms

Alauddin Khilji ordered the measurement of all lands under cultivation. These lands were divided into different categories according to their fertility and the land tax (kharaj) was fixed accordingly. He raised the tax on the wealthy people of the Doab. He kept a strict check on the nobles and did not allow them to collect additional tax from the peasants. He also regulated the prices of commodities and no one was allowed to sell goods above the fixed price. Weights and measures were standardised and cheating was severely punished.

Surplus grain were stored in granaries to meet crisis like floods and famine.

Military Reforms

Alauddin Khilji kept a permanent well equipped standing army. He paid his soldiers in cash. He gave them branded (dagh) horses to prevent their substitution with inferior quality horses.



After his death, a war of succession broke out. His general, Malik Kafur, tried to put Alauddin's minor son on throne, but both were killed by the rebels. Later the last Khilji ruler, Khusrau Malik was also killed by Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq in 1320. Thus, the Khilji Dynasty came to an end.

The Tughlaq Dynasty

Alauddin Khilji died in 1316 CE. His death was followed by a brief period of political unrest. In 1320, the last Khilji ruler Khusrau Khan was killed by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq.

▼ Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1320-25 CE)

An able statesman and administrator, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq laid the foundation of the Tughlaq dynasty. He believed that the state should be based on the support of the people. He carried out many works of public utility and built the famous **Tughlaqabad Fort** in Delhi. He died in 1324 CE. He was succeeded by his son Jauna Khan who assumed the name, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq after becoming the sultan.



Tughlaqabad Fort in Delhi built by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq

▼ Muhammad Bin Tughlaq (1325-51 CE)

Muhammad Bin Tughlaq's empire included the southern states, present day Odisha, Bengal and the Deccan. Shortly after his accession to the throne, he decided to transfer the capital from Delhi to Devagiri (renamed Daulatabad) in the Deccan. Historians think that



Muhammad Bin Tughlaq

he ordered not only the transfer of his court and officials but the entire population. Extensive arrangements were made for the long journey that covered a distance of around 1500 km. Temporary shelters were set up along the way and free food and drinks were supplied. Nevertheless, many people did not survive the long and arduous journey and the operation turned out to be a total failure. As his ministers, countries and soldiers were not keen to stay at the new location, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq ordered their return to Delhi.

Another daring experiment undertaken by Muhammad Bin Tughlaq was the issuing of bronze and copper token currency. This measure aimed to overcome the financial crisis owing to the drain on the royal treasury as a result of his schemes. Such coins had the same value as the gold and silver coins (known as tanka). People were encouraged to use them in their transaction. Soon new coins began to be forged at an alarming rate and all the token currency had to be withdrawn from the market. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq also increased the land tax in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab region in order to meet the expenses of the army. Unfortunately, this measure was taken at a time when the region was passing through a famine. So, the peasants of the region strongly opposed it.

Muhammad Bin Tughlaq was a very learned man. He was well-versed in Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian. He also had a good command over religion, philosophy, science and literature. He tried to resolve disputes through secular measures. He undertook numerous experimental projects. Despite being innovative, these projects failed since they lacked prudence.

Due to these failed experiments, he lost support of his nobles, the **ulema** and the people of his empire. Revolts broke out in Bengal, Warangal, Gujarat and other places. During the period two regional kingdoms—Vijaynagar and Bahmani came into force in southern India and the Deccan respectively. In 1351 AD, he fell ill and



died while on a mission to suppress a revolt in Sind.

▼ **Firoz Shah Tughlaq (1351-88 CE)**

Muhammad Bin Tughlaq died in 1351 CE and was succeeded by his cousin, Firoz Shah Tughlaq. He had inherited an empty treasure and hostile nobles. To win support of the nobles and the ulema he tried to win them over by giving them bigger **iqtas** and made them hereditary. He also ruled according to Islamic laws and imposed the Jaziya, a special tax to be paid by the non-Muslims. All this made the nobles and ulema very powerful and they started influencing the sultan.

He aimed to consolidate his empire and took a number of measures to reform the administration. He built many tanks, canals and wells for irrigation. He built new hospitals and rest houses. He set up many educational institutions and got several Sanskrit texts translated into Persian and Arabic. He founded several new towns like Hissar, Ferozpur, Jaunpur and Ferozabad. He also abolished many taxes, wrote off several loans and reduced the rates of land revenue.

He undertook many welfare measures such as banning the practice of inhuman punishments establishment of hospitals for the poor, etc. Firoz founded the city of Ferozabad. People were happy during his reign. When he died in 1388, a series of rebellions broke out which hastened the end of the Tughlaq rule. His successors were incompetent.

Administration in the Sultanate Period

The Tughlaq rulers ruled for almost a century. They made many changes during their reign.

▼ **Administration**

The Sultan had all the powers in the empire. He needed support of the nobles (ulema), yet had to keep a check on them. There was a constant struggle between ulema and the sultan.

The **wazir (minister)** and his deputies looked after income, expenditure, collection of revenues and other finances.

The **Ariz-i-mumalik** and his deputies looked after the needs of the army.

Chief Qazi was the head of the justice department.

The **Diwan-i-risalat** looked after the charities and religious matters.

The **Dabir-i-Khas** and his assistants looked after all the correspondences between the sultan and the other rulers.

The **Barid-i-mumalik** was the head of the state news agency. He kept the sultan informed of the latest happenings in the empire. Barids were his reporters who were spread all over the empire.

The **Amir-i-hajib** was the master of ceremonies. Only his assistants could allow anyone to meet the sultan.

The **Wakil-i-dar** looked after the sultan's household, bodyguards and personal assistants. He also supervised the workshops where things, for the royal family like furniture, jewellery, vessels, etc. were made.

▼ **The Nobles**

The man who held both military and civilian posts in the government were called nobles. The **khans** were of the highest rank, followed by **maliks** and **amirs**. They were assigned to keep a track on lands called **iqtas**. They maintained soldiers under them with the help of the tax collected from peasants in their villages. A part of tax collected was paid to the sultan. Initially, the sultan could take back the **iqta** and on the death of the **iqtadar** noble, the region came back to the sultan. However, from Firoz Shah Tughlaq's reign, the transfer of **iqta** became hereditary and got transferred from father to son.

▼ **The Court**

The sultan's court was ceremonial. **Sijdah** (prostration) and **paibos** (kissing the king's feet)



were performed before the sultan. The sultan sat on a throne which was on a raised platform. The princes, other ministers, ambassadors from foreign countries and other officials were assigned a fixed place to stand. The officials reported matters to the sultan and a scribe wrote down the sultan's orders.

▼ The Empire

The empire was divided into **subas** or provinces which were controlled by **muqti** or the governor.

Subas were further divided into **shiqs** which were controlled by **shiqdar**.

The shiqs were divided into **paraganas** and **amil** was the head of a pargana.

The praganas were further divided into **villages**. The most important officers in a village were the landowners called **khuts** and **muqaddam** or headman. An accountant called **patwari** kept records of land, crops and taxes to be paid.

▼ Army

The army had Turks, Afghans, Persians, Mongols and Indians as soldiers. They consisted of infantry or foot soldiers along with elephants, archers, cavalry or horse soldiers and **sappers**. The horses were important and mostly imported from Arabia. The cavalrymen were much faster than the elephant soldiers and hence, they were given the best treatment. The soldiers were paid salaries in cash.

Timur Invasion (1398 CE)

Timur Lang (Timur the Lame) rose to power in Central Asia. In 1398, Timur Lang attacked Delhi and did not face much resistance as the Delhi Sultanate was very weak. Like other Turk and Mongol invaders, he started looting and terrorising people. When they resisted, he ordered their massacre. On his way back, Timur looted many other cities and carried away enormous wealth with him. He also took skilled artisans to work on monuments in Samarkand.

Before leaving Delhi, which was in a state of

shock after his invasion, Timur appointed Khizr Khan as the viceroy of his Indian territories.

The Sayyid Dynasty (1414-1451 CE)

When Timur left Delhi, he appointed Khizr Khan as his viceroy. Khizr Khan went on to establish the Sayyid dynasty and took over as the Sultan of Delhi in 1414. He was succeeded by his son, Mubarak Shah in 1421. Yahya-bin-Ahmed Sirhindi's book **Tarikh-i-Mubark Shahi** gives a detailed account of Mubarak Shah's reign. Mubarak Shah was succeeded by his nephew Muhammad Shah. He was succeeded by his son and the last ruler of the dynasty, Alauddin Alam Shah. He surrendered Delhi to Bahlol Lodi.

The Lodi Dynasty (1451-1526 CE)

In 1451, Alauddin Alam Shah abdicated the throne. This gave Bahlol Lodi, the governor of Sirhind (Punjab) the opportunity to become the new sultan of Delhi. He founded the Lodi dynasty. It was the first Afghan dynasty that came to power during the Sultanate period.



Ibrahim Lodi

He made attempts to consolidate the sultanate and curb the power of rebellious governors. He appointed loyal Afghan nobles in their place. He extended his rule from Punjab to the Western borders of Bihar.

Bahlol died in 1489 and was succeeded by his son Sikandar Lodi. He founded the city of Agra in 1503 CE. He annexed Jaunpur and Bihar and signed a treaty of friendship with the ruler of Bengal. He also introduced many public welfare schemes like lowering the prices of essential goods and digging canals and wells, etc.

He was succeeded by his son Ibrahim Lodi in 1517 CE. He faced a tough time. The Afghan nobles rebelled against him. With great difficulty, he defeated them. To prevent such revolts in future, he replaced the rebellious



nobles with younger loyal officers. The displaced nobles conspired against him. Ibrahim Lodi's own uncle Daulat Khan, who was the governor of Punjab, conspired with other nobles and sought the help of Babur by inviting him to come to India. Babur's army defeated Ibrahim Lodi in the First Battle of Panipat in 1526. With this, the Sultanate period came to an end. Therefore, Babur established the Mughal Empire.

Economic and Social life

Economy

The sultan relied heavily on regular income from the land in order to pay the officials, maintain the army and construct buildings. Different types of taxes such as **kharaj** or land tax, house tax, etc. were levied to extract revenue. Alauddin Khilji is known for the unique market reforms policy he introduced during his reign. The prices of essential commodities like food grains, sugar, cooking oil, cloth, cattle and slaves were fixed by him. As a result of commodity price regulation, the sultan earned the support of the people. The market were under the control of an officer known as **Shahna**. He maintained a register of merchants and controlled the shopkeepers and prices. The revenue payable depended on the measurement of the land and its yield. The khuts and muqaddams also had to pay taxes. Muhammad bin Tughlaq introduced new cesses or local taxes. He continued the demand one half of the produce as tax from the peasants. However, lack

of rainfall and famine led to the farmer's inability to pay taxes, which resulted in rebellions against the Sultan. His successor Firoz Shah Tughlaq introduced significant modifications in the tax structure.

Society

All the administrative posts in the Sultanate were reserved for the nobles who constituted the ruling class in society. The distinctions of the caste system permitted to all regions. Slaves were bought and sold in huge numbers in the market. At times, they rose up to high posts in the administration structure and army.

The peasants lived in conditions of abject poverty. They were subjected to oppression from revenue officials and their demands for heavy taxes.

Decline of the Delhi Sultanate

1. The major cause of the downfall of Delhi Sultanate was that the rulers ruled only with sword and could not win the confidence of the people.
2. The vastness of the empire was also the reason to make it difficult to control.
3. The Mongols also made the Delhi Sultanate weak by their continuous invasions.
4. Most of the sultans were pleasure loving and weak rulers.
5. Most of the sultans were intolerant towards Hindus. Hindus were forced to pay Jazia, a religious tax, for the practice of their religion. Even their temples were destroyed by the sultans.

Terminology

sultanate	:	a kingdom of a muslim ruler (Sultan)
mamluk	:	earlier rulers of the slave dynasty
chahalgani	:	a group of forty turkish nobles
sijda	:	a custom in which a person had to knelt and touch the ground with his forehead before the sultan
paibos	:	the custom of bending before the sultan and kissing his feet
ulema	:	scholars of Islamic learning who were orthodox in their outlook
sappers	:	soldiers who build and repair roads



Recap

- ❖ The period from the 1206-1526 AD is known as the Sultanate period.
- ❖ There were five dynasties that together made the Delhi Sultanate.
- ❖ Qutbuddin Aibak was the founder and the first ruler of the Delhi Sultanate and the Slave (Mamluk) Dynasty (1206-1290 CE).
- ❖ Iltutmish, Razia Sultan, Nasiruddin Mahmud and Ghiyasuddin Balban were the rulers of the Slave Dynasty.
- ❖ Jalaluddin Khilji and Alauddin Khilji were the important rulers of the Khilji Dynasty.
- ❖ Muhammad Bin Tughlaq's empire included the southern states, present day Odisha, Bengal and the Deccan.
- ❖ Timur Lang attacked Delhi and looted many cities and carried away enormous wealth with him.
- ❖ Lodi Dynasty was the first Afghan dynasty that came to power during the Sultanate period.
- ❖ The main cause of the downfall of the Delhi Sultanate was that the rulers failed to win the confidence of the people.



Objective Type Questions

A. Tick (✓) the correct option :

1. The period of the Delhi Sultanate :
(a) 1206-1526 AD (b) 1206-1506 AD (c) 1205-1526 AD (d) 1205-1506 AD
2. The Delhi Sultanate consists of _____ dynasties.
(a) 4 (b) 5 (c) 6 (d) 8
3. The founder of the Slave Dynasty was :
(a) Qutbuddin Aibak (b) Iltutmish
(c) Razia Sultan (d) none of these
4. The real name of Jalaluddin Khilji was :
(a) Malik Kafur (b) Malik Firoz (c) Malik Kasim (d) Malik
5. Sikandar Lodi founded the city of :
(a) Mathura (b) Agra (c) Delhi (d) none of these

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. Under the Qutbuddin Aibak, the modern day _____ and a large part of the _____ Indian subcontinent formed the _____.
2. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq was well versed in _____, _____ and _____.
3. _____ was the only muslim women ruler of Delhi.
4. Balban took important measures to ensure impartiality in the administration of _____.
5. The _____ was the first Afghan dynasty that came to power during the Sultanate period.



C. State true or false :

1. The Slave Dynasty was known as the Mamluk Dynasty.
2. Qutbuddin Aibak died in 1220 CE while playing Chaugan, a kind of polo played on horseback.
3. Alauddin Khilji ordered the measurement of all lands under cultivation.
4. In 1330, the last Khilji ruler Khusro Khan was killed by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq.
5. Firoz Shah Tughlaq introduced significant modification in the tax structure.

D. Match the following :

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. The Slave Dynasty | (a) 1451-1526 CE |
| 2. The Khilji Dynasty | (b) 1414-1451 CE |
| 3. The Tughlaq Dynasty | (c) 1290-1320 CE |
| 4. The Sayyid Dynasty | (d) 1320-1414 CE |
| 5. The Lodi Dynasty | (e) 1206-1290 CE |

 **Subjective Type Questions**

E. Very short answer type questions :

1. What is the meaning of Mamluk?
2. Who was Iltutmish?
3. What is Sijda?
4. Who founded the Lodi Dynasty?
5. Who was the head of the pargana?

F. Short answer type questions :

1. Write a note on Qutbuddin Aibak.
2. What do you know about Rajia Sultan.
3. What was the policy of Ghiyasuddin Balban?
4. Describe the Lodi Dynasty briefly.
5. Write a note on Timur's invasion.

G. Long answer type questions :

1. Write about the Tughlaq Dynasty in detail.
2. What were the economic measures introduced by Alauddin Khilji?
3. Write about the administration of the Delhi Sultanate.
4. What were the causes of the downfall of the Delhi Sultanate?



To Do Hour

Make a collage of historical monuments built during the Delhi Sultanate.



Net Check

Browse the internet and know about the architecture of the Delhi Sultanate.

<http://www.britannica.com>place>Delhi sultanate>



Think and Answer

How did the second Battle of Tarain give way to the inception of the Delhi sultanate?

