

HISTORY

Chapter 3: The Delhi Sultans



The Delhi Sultans

Making of Delhi- A Capital City

Delhi developed as a centre of the country only in the twelfth century C.E. The city first became the capital under the Tomara Rajputs who were later defeated by the Chauhans of Ajmer. Under these two dynasties, Delhi became a commercial centre. Apart from the common people, the city was inhabited by the Jain merchants and traders who constructed many temples. Coins called *dehliwals* were minted and came to be widely used.

The city further rose to prominence under the rule of the Delhi Sultanate in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Delhi Sultanate- Prominent Rulers and Their Policies

Following is the list of the various dynasties and important rulers of the Delhi Sultanate who ruled over Delhi and the surrounding areas.

Name of the King	Dynasty	Time
Qutbuddin Aibak	Slave	1206-1210
Shamsuddin Iltutmish		1210-1236
Raziyya		1236-1240
Ghiyasuddin Balban		1266-1287
Jalaluddin Khalji	Khalji	1290-1296
Alauddin Khalji		1296-1316
Ghiyasuddin Tughluq	Tughluq	1320-1324
Muhammad Tughluq		1324-1351
Firoz Shah Tughluq		1351-1388
Khizr Khan	Sayyid	1414-1421
Bahlul Lodi	Lodi	1451-1489

Sources of the Rule of the Delhi Sultans

- The main sources of this period are coins, inscriptions and architecture. An important source of this period is the history written in the Persian language (official language under the Delhi Sultanate) known as tarikh or the tawarikh.
- The tawarikh were written by learned men who often occupied important posts in the administration.
- Many of them praised the policies of the kings in order to earn rich rewards from him.
- The authors of the tawarikh lived in cities and believed in the principles of birthright and gender discrimination.
- When in 1236, Razia (daughter of Iltutmish), became the Sultan, Minhaj-i- Siraj wrote that though Razia was a capable ruler, she was a woman who should not have the authority to rule independently. She was finally deposed in 1240.



**Razia Sultana, the first
woman ruler of Delhi**

The Expansion of the Delhi Sultanate

Initially, the Delhi sultans did not control of the areas lying beyond the city of Delhi. This was due to many factors such as:

- It was very difficult for the sultans to gain control of the garrison towns (a fortified settlement with soldiers) of Bengal and Sind as bad weather, the long route and constant rebellions could threaten the stability of the Empire.
- The Empire was also threatened by the attacks of the Mongols who came from Afghanistan.
- Strong governors were always on a look out for opportunities to capture power or

rebel whenever the powers of the sultans weakened at the centre.

Consolidation of the Empire

It was during the rule of Balban, Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq that the empire was consolidated and expanded in the following ways:

- At the beginning, the sultans captured the garrison towns and hinterlands (a land or a port adjacent to a city which supplies it with goods and services). The forests in the Ganga Doab area which were cleared during these campaigns were given to the peasants for cultivation.
- Many new forts and towns were made to protect the trade routes and to promote regional trade.
- Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq undertook large military expeditions to annex the southern territories.
- By the end of the rule of Muhammad Tughluq, the Delhi Sultanate was ruling most parts of the Indian subcontinent.



Ghiyasuddin Balban

Administration of the Empire

In order to manage the vast territories of the Delhi Sultanate, sound administrative policies were followed. Some main features of the administration were:

- In the initial years, many slaves were appointed to important administrative posts. These were known as bandagan in Persian and were generally trusted by the sultans.
- The Khaljis and the Tughluqs also appointed many slaves to important positions. However, this also created the element of instability since the slaves were loyal to their masters but not to his successors.

- This also created a rift between the old nobility and the newly appointed nobility.
- The military commanders were also appointed as the governors of various territories.
- Sometimes, they were also given lands known as the iqtas and the land holder was known as the iqtadar or the muqti.
- The muqtis maintained an army and law and order in their iqtas.
- Various accountants were appointed to check the revenues which were collected. An iqtadar could maintain soldiers up to a certain number only.
- Under the Delhi Sultanate, the powers of the rich and the wealthy landowners were reduced and they were forced to pay taxes.
- Under Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq, taxes were claimed on cultivated land called Kharajl, which was fifty percent of the produce.
- Taxes were also levied on cattle and houses.

Many kingdoms in Sind, South India and Bengal repeatedly gained their independence from the Delhi Sultanate soon after their conquests. It was difficult for the sultans to manage them due to their far off locations.

An Estimate of the Policies of Alauddin Khalji

Alauddin Khalji was an efficient ruler who successfully administered the Sultanate. Some of his policies were:

- He raised a large army to tackle the Mongol invasions. He also built a heavy garrison town known as Siri for his soldiers.
- To maintain his army, he collected taxes from the fertile lands between the River Ganga and the River Yamuna.
- Alauddin Khalji paid his soldiers in cash. In order to enable his soldiers to buy products at cheap rates, he fixed the prices of commodities in and around Delhi. The markets were closely supervised and shopkeepers and traders charging above the fixed price were severely punished.
- Alauddin Khalji's reign is remembered for various economic measures such as cheap prices and efficient supplies of goods. He also saved his empire from the persistent

Mongol threats.



Alauddin Khalji

An Estimate of the Policies of Mohammad Tughluq

- Mohammad Tughluq defeated the Mongol army in the early years of his rule. Impressed by the victory of his army, he planned an attack on Transoxiana and raised a huge army for the purpose.
- Instead of constructing a garrison town in Delhi, he shifted his capital to Daulatabad in the South. There he was met with stiff resistance from the people.
- To maintain his large army, he increased the taxes. As a famine occurred at the same time, many peasants when forced to pay taxes fled to forests or to other parts of the country.
- Mohammad Tughluq paid his soldiers in cash. Instead of fixing prices, he introduced token currency made up of copper (not gold and silver).

People did not believe in this currency and further they minted fake coins in their houses. This led to a huge loss of revenues.

- His administrative measures were not successful. His military campaign to Kashmir turned out to be disastrous. The people who were forced to shift to Daulatabad resented the actions of the sultan. The increase in taxes in the Ganga and Yamuna areas resulted in several rebellions. He also had to finally abandon the token currency.



Muhammad Tughluq

Delhi Sultanate in the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries

In last few hundred years of the Delhi Sultanate, many states such as Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Jaunpur had become independent. The later Tughluqs, Sayyid and Lodi dynasties ruled from Delhi and Agra. During this period, there was an emergence of the Rajputs and the Afghan nobles. At this time many small states became powerful. Sher Shah Sur who was managing a small territory in Bihar later defeated the Mughal emperor Humanyu. Sher Shah Sur was a brilliant administrator whose administrative policies were followed by Akbar.



Sher Shah Sur

Religious and Architectural Endeavours

The rulers of the Delhi Sultanate constructed several mosques and buildings. This made them claim that they were the protectors of Islam and Muslims. A mosque is called a 'masjid' in Arabic and is the place where a Muslim prays. During the prayers, a Muslim stands facing Mecca. In India this is to the west. This is called *qibla*.

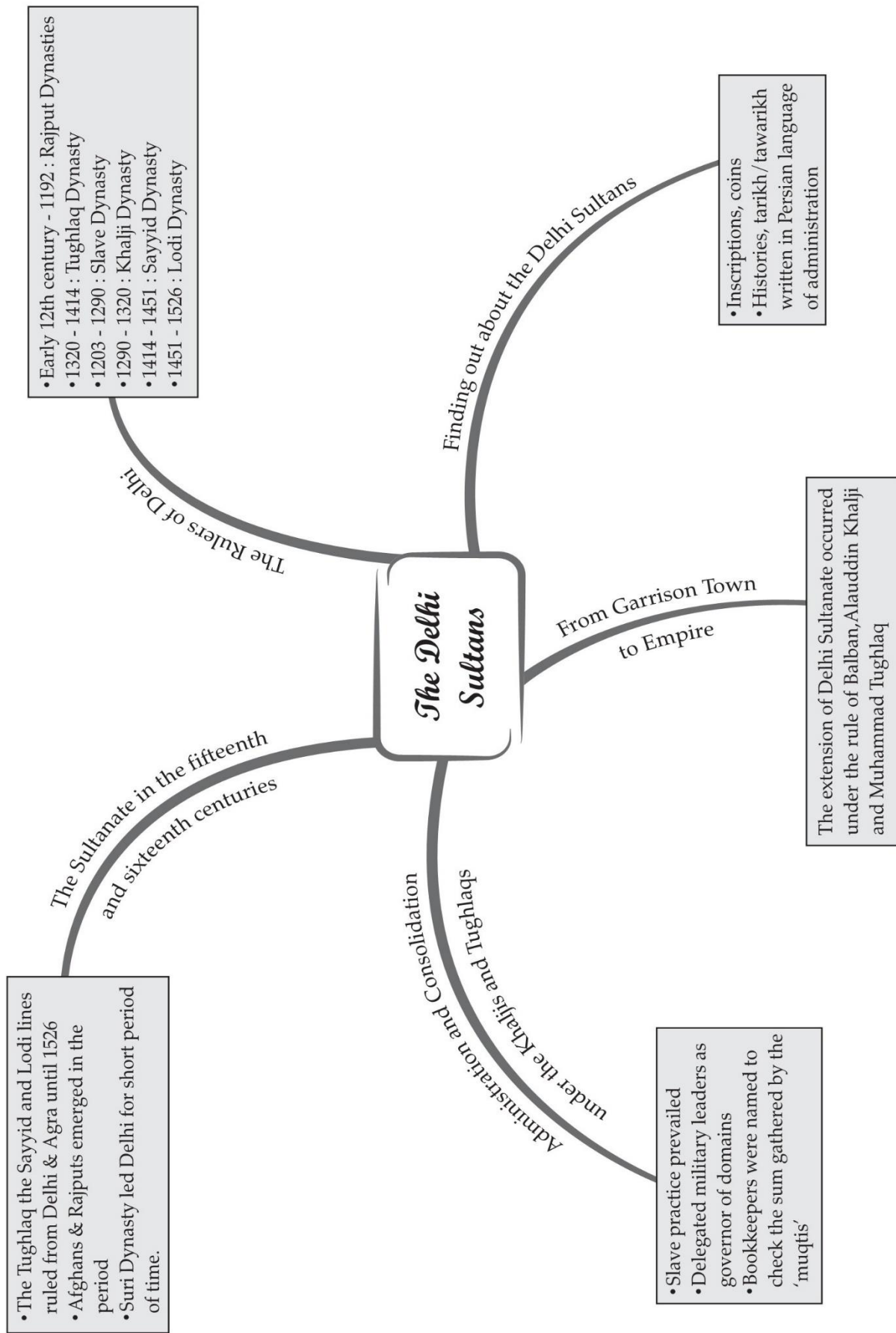
One of the famous architectural pieces of this time was the Qutb Minar. Its construction was started by Aibak but was completed by Iltutmish.



The Qutb Minar

MIND MAP : LEARNING MADE SIMPLE

CHAPTER-15



Important Questions

➤ Multiple Choice Questions :

Question 1. Rudrama devi ruled Kakatiya dynasty from:

- (a) 1262 to 1289
- (b) 1130-1145
- (c) 1165-1192
- (d) 1414-1451

Question 2. The Delhi Sultans were dependent upon:

- (a) Trade, tribute or plunder for supplies
- (b) Taxes from tourists
- (c) Taxes from Artisans
- (d) None

Question 3. Name of the first mosque built by Sultans in Delhi is:

- (a) Jama Masjid
- (b) Moth ki Masjid
- (c) Quwwat al-Islam
- (d) Jamali Kamali Masjid

Question 4. Who built the mosque Quwwat al-Islam?

- (a) Ghiyasuddin Balban
- (b) Iltutmish
- (c) Raziyya Sultan
- (d) Alauddin Khalji

Question 5. Which mosque is “Sanctuary of the World”?

- (a) Begumpuri Mosque
- (b) Moth Mosque
- (c) Neeli Mosque
- (d) Jamali Kamali Mosque

Question 6. Ziyauddin Barani was:

- (a) An archaeologist;
- (b) A warrior;
- (c) Sultan

(d) A Muslim political thinker of the Delhi Sultanate

Question 7. Ibn Battuta belonged from:

- (a) Iran
- (b) Morocco
- (c) Afghanistan
- (d) China

Question 8. Sher Shah Suri started his career as:

- (a) Accountant
- (b) Soldier
- (c) Manager
- (d) Traveller

Question 9. Ghiyasuddin Balban was Sultan of dynasty:

- (a) Khalji
- (b) Tughluq
- (c) Sayyid
- (d) Turkish

Question 10. A Garrison town is:

- (a) A fortified settlement, with soldiers
- (b) A settlement of peasants
- (c) A settlement of ruler
- (d) A settlement of town where special river was carried

Question 11. What was the duty of the muqtis?

- (a) To lead rulers
- (b) To lead military campaigns
- (c) To lead country
- (d) None of these

Question 12. Kharaj was a type of tax imposed on what?

- (a) Houses
- (b) Trade
- (c) Cattle
- (d) Cultivation

Question 13. Who introduced token currency?

- (a) Muhammad-bin-Tughluq
- (b) Alauddin Khalji
- (c) Raziyya
- (d) Khizr Khan

Question 14. What is the direction that the Muslims face during prayer?

- (a) Khutba
- (b) Ulema
- (c) Kharaj
- (d) Qibla

Question 15. What is fortified settlement of soldiers is known as?

- (a) Hinterland
- (b) Garrison town
- (c) The Masjid
- (d) None of these

➤ **Fill in the blanks :**

1. Raziyya was removed from the throne in _____.
2. In _____ Sultan Iltutmish's daughter, _____, became Sultan.
3. Delhi first became the capital of a kingdom under the _____.
4. Kakatiya dynasty of Warangal is a part of modern _____.
5. Delhi became an important city only in the _____ century.
6. Mughal emperor Humayun, was defeated by _____.

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. Coins minted in Delhi, called dehlwal.
2. Raziyya is from the Rajput dynasty.
3. Kharaj was a tax on cultivation.
4. Ibn Battuta, a fourteenth-century traveller was from Morocco, Africa.
5. Alauddin used a "token" currency, somewhat like present-day paper currency.

➤ **Very Short Questions :**

1. Who was the founder of the Sayyid dynasty?
2. How many taxes were levied by the Delhi Sultans?

3. Name the Three types of taxes imposed by the Sultans of Delhi.
4. Why did the authors of tawarikh write their histories for Sultans?
5. W/u/ was Raziyya removed from the throne?
6. What is the literal meaning of mosque?
7. What is called the qibla?
8. Why did the early Delhi Sultans favour their slaves?
9. What was the duty of the muqtis?
10. Why were accountants appointed by the state?

➤ Short Questions :

1. Who were the bandagans and what was their role in the Delhi Sultanate?
2. Who were the iqtadars or the muqti and what was their role?
3. What forced the two rulers Allauddin Khilji and Muhammed Tughluq to mobilise a large standing army in Delhi?
4. Why do you think Barani criticised Sultan Muhammed Tughluq?
5. What did the Iqtadar or Muqtis do with the revenue they collected from the region?

➤ Long Questions :

1. Who was Sher Shah Sur? What do you know about his administration?
2. Who were the authors of tawarikh? Write in brief about them.
3. Why did large parts of the subcontinent remain outside the control of the Delhi Sultans? What were the repercussions?
4. How did the chieftains arrange for their defence?
5. Write a brief note on the administration of Delhi Sultanate provinces under the Tughlaqs and the Khaljis.

ANSWER KEY –

➤ Multiple Choice Answer :

1. (a) 1262 to 1289
2. (a) Trade, tribute or plunder for supplies
3. (c) Quwwat al-Islam
4. (b) Iltutmish
5. (a) Begumpuri Mosque
6. (d) A Muslim political thinker of the Delhi Sultanate
7. (b) Morocco

8. (c) Manager
9. (b) Tughluq
10. (a) A fortified settlement, with soldiers
11. (b) To lead military campaigns
12. (d) Cultivation
13. (a) Muhammad-bin-Tughluq
14. (d) Qibla
15. (b) Garrison town

➤ **Fill in the blanks :**

1. 1240.
2. 1236, Raziyya
3. Tomara Rajputs
4. Andhra Pradesh
5. Twelfth
6. Sher Shah

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False

➤ **Very Short Answer :**

1. Khizr Khan.
2. Three types of taxes were levied by the Delhi Sultans.

They were:

- On cultivation (Kharaj) 50% of the produce.
 - On cattle
 - On houses.
3. Three types of taxes imposed by the Sultans of Delhi were kharaj, ghari and chari.
 4. They did so in the hope of rich rewards.
 5. Being a woman ruler she was not favoured by anyone. She ruled just for four years and

was finally dethroned in 1240.

6. It refers to a place where a Muslim prostrates in reverence to Allah.
7. The direction towards which Muslims turn while offering prayer or namaz.
8. The slaves were totally dependent on their master. Therefore the Sultan could trust and rely upon them.
9. The duty of the muqtis was to lead military campaigns and maintain law and order in their iqtas. Some of the technological changes associated with this period were the Persian wheel in irrigation, the spinning wheel in weaving, and firearms in combat.
10. Pan regional empire means empire spanning diverse regions. Dynasties like the Cholas, Khaljis, Tughluqs and Mughals were able to build an empire that was pan-regional.

➤ Short Answer :

1. The Bandagans were special slaves purchased for military service by the early sultans especially Iltutmish. They were carefully trained to man important political offices in the kingdom. They were totally dependent on the masters and the Sultan could trust them implicitly.
2. The Khalji and the Tughlaq monarchs appointed military commanders as governors of territories. These lands were called the Iqta and the landholders were called Iqtadars or the muqti. The role of the muqti was to lead military campaigns and to maintain peace and order in their Iqtas.
3. The Mongols under Genghis Khan attacked the Delhi Sultanate repeatedly after 1219. This forced the two rulers to mobilise a large standing army in Delhi because the attacks increased during the reign of Alauddin Khalji and in the early years of Muhammed Tughluq's rule.
4. Sultan Muhammed Tughluq appointed Aziz Khummar, a wine distiller, Firuj Hajjam, a barber, Manka tabbakh, a cook and two gardeners Ladh and Pira to high administrative posts. Ziyauddin Barani, a fourteenth century chronicler reported the appointments as a sign of the sultan's loss of judgement and his incapacity to rule.
5. The duty of Iqtadar or Muqti was to maintain law and order in their iqtas. In exchange of their services, they collected revenues of their assignments as salary. They also paid the soldiers from the revenue they collected. These muqti's were assigned iqtas for a short period of time to maintain control.

➤ Long Answer :

1. Sher Shah Sur (1540—1545) established a powerful state. He started his career as the manager of a small territory for his uncle in Bihar and eventually challenged and defeated the Mughal Emperor Humayun. Sher Shah captured Delhi and established his own dynasty known as the Suri dynasty. Although the Suri dynasty ruled for only a short period i.e. 15 years, it introduced an administration that borrowed elements from Alauddin Khalji and made them more efficient. The great emperor Akbar followed the

techniques of Sher Shah's administration while consolidating the Mughal Empire.

2. The authors of tawarikh were learned men. They were secretaries, administrators, poets and courtiers who recounted events as well as advised rulers on governance, emphasising the importance of just rule. The authors of tawarikh lived in cities mainly in Delhi and therefore they were cut off from the village. They used to write histories in praise of the Sultans and in return got rich rewards. These authors advised rulers that they should follow an ideal social order based on birthright and gender distinctions. Common mass had nothing to do with their ideas.
3. Large parts of the subcontinent remained outside the control of the Delhi Sultans because they were very far from Delhi. For example, it was difficult to control Bengal from Delhi. This helplessness of the Delhi Sultans paved the way for distant provinces to get independence. Even in the Gangetic plain there were forested areas that Sultanate forces could not penetrate. It was a golden opportunity for the local chieftains to establish their rule in these regions.
4. The chieftains fortified themselves in mountains, in rocky, uneven and rugged places as well as in bamboo groves. The bamboo had unique features. It was strong and even fire could not affect it because its several parties were intertwined making them very strong. The chieftains lived in these forests which served them as rampart. They had everything necessary for life such as cattle, crops, water, etc. inside the forests. Thus, they were safe. Only powerful armies could subdue them.
5. The Khaljis and the Tughlaq monarchs appointed military commanders as governors of the territories of various sizes. These territories or land were called iqtas and their landholder was called iqtadars or muqtis. They provided military services to the sultan of Delhi. In return, they could collect revenue from these lands and keep a part of it as their salary. They also paid their soldiers from these revenues. Accountants were appointed by the state to check the amount of revenue collected by the muqtis. Care was taken that muqtis collected only the taxes prescribed by the state and also maintained a required number of soldiers. The kings forced the samanta aristocrats to accept their authority.