

## The Delhi Sultanate

The defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan by Muhammad Ghori in 1192 CE was a turning point in the history of India. It inaugurated an era of Muslim rule in India. In fact, Prithviraj was the last Hindu ruler to sit on the throne of Delhi. The advent of the second millennium brought in Muslim rule in India. This had a deep and everlasting impact on the Indian culture. Five Muslim dynasties ruled India from Delhi and they called their empire-The Sultanate.

The Delhi Sultanate refers to the Muslim rulers who ruled India through Delhi. The Sultanate began in Lahore, but subsequent rulers extended their territory eastwards and Delhi became the capital. The five dynasties of the Sultanate ruled for more than 300 years. The Sultanate came into existence after Muhammad Ghori captured Delhi by defeating Prithviraj Chauhan. When Muhammad Ghori went back, he appointed Qutb-ud-din Aybak as the viceroy of his territories in India. Qutb-ud-din Aybak was a Turkic slave who was appointed as the Viceroy to Delhi based on his qualities. He was a sharp warrior and Ghori awarded him the title of 'Malik'. When Muhammad Ghori died, Qutb-ud-din Aybak was quick to grab the opportunity to ascend the throne in 1206 CE.

### Sources of Information

'Tarikh-i-Firozshahi', 'Fatahi-i-Jahandari' and 'Prithviraj Raso' are most prominent literary sources of information for this Sultanate period. **Ziauddin Barani** was the writer of first two works and **Chand Bardai** wrote the third one. First two books give detailed account of Tughluq period while Prithviraj Raso deals with the class and society structure of Rajput period. Some indirect references from other contemporary historians like Badauni, Nizam-ud-din, etc. are also found. Indo-Islamic, Indo-Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Arabic and bilingual inscriptions are also found on various archaeological sources like **Qutb Minor, Atala Masjid, Jami Masjid** and **Adina Masjid**, etc.

The Delhi Sultanate		
1	Slave Dynasty	
	Qutb-ud-din Aybak Iltutmish	1206-1210
	Iltutmish	1210-1236
	Raziyya	1236-1240
	Giyasuddin Balban	1266-1287
2	Khalji Dynasty	
	Jalal-ud-din Khalji	1290-1296
	Alauddin Khalji	1296-1316
3	Tughluq Dynasty	
	Giyasuddin Tughluq	1320-1324
	Muhammad Tughluq	1324-1351
	Firuz Shah Tughluq	1351-1388
4	Sayyid Dynasty	1414-1451
5	Lodi Dynasty	1451-1526

### SLAVE DYNASTY (MAMLUKS) (1206-1290 CE)

The dynasty established by Qutb-ud-din Aybak was known as the Slave Dynasty since many of the rulers had originally been military slaves themselves or the descendants of these slave rulers. That is why the rulers belonging to this dynasty are generally known as the "Slave Rulers" or the 'Mamluk Sultans'.

## **QUTB-UD-DIN AYBAK (1206-1210 CE)**

Qutb-ud-din Aybak established his capital first at Lahore, and later at Delhi. He was a great general and an able administrator. He was just and generous and was given the title of 'Lakshbaksh' or 'the giver of lakhs'. He started the construction of Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque at Delhi. He also laid the foundation of Qutb Minar. Unfortunately, he could not complete it because of his sudden demise. Qutb-ud-Din Aybak died in Lahore in 1210 C.E., while playing polo.

### **History Reveals**

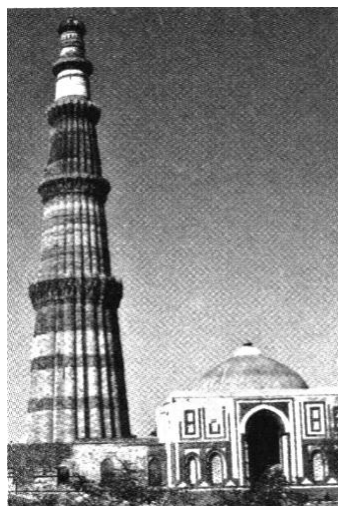
Qutb-ud-din Aybak's original tomb was destroyed during the Mongol attack on Lahore in 1241, but was reconstructed during Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's tenure in 1971.

## **SHAMS-UD-DIN ILTUTMISH (1210-1236 CE)**

Iltutmish was a slave and later son-in-law of Qutb-ud-din Aybak. He was a very competent ruler and is regarded as 'the real founder' of the Delhi Sultanate. After ascending the throne, he had to face many problems. After securing his position, he extended his empire and brought the whole of north India under his control. He also averted the attack of famous Mongol **Genghis Khan**. He also received the title of Sovereign Sultan of Delhi from the Caliph of Baghdad.

**Q.** why do you think Iltutmish is regarded as the real founder of the Delhi Sultanate?

Iltutmish introduced many administrative reforms. He also introduced new coins—the silver tanka and the copper jital. He set up a group of 40 loyal slaves known as 'Chalaghans' to look after the conditions of the people. Iltutmish was a patron of art and architecture. The construction of Qutb Minar in Delhi was completed by him. He also built the magnificent Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. He was a deeply religious man and constructed a mosque at Ajmer. Iltutmish died in 1236 CE and was buried in the Qutb complex.



**Qutb Minar**

### **History Reveals**

The foundation of Qutb Minar was laid by the Rajputs and the present Qutb complex was a complex of temples built by Tomaras and Chauhans. The temples were destroyed by Qutb-ud-din who used the same material to build the Qutb Minar.

## **RAZIYYA SULTAN (1236-1240 CE)**

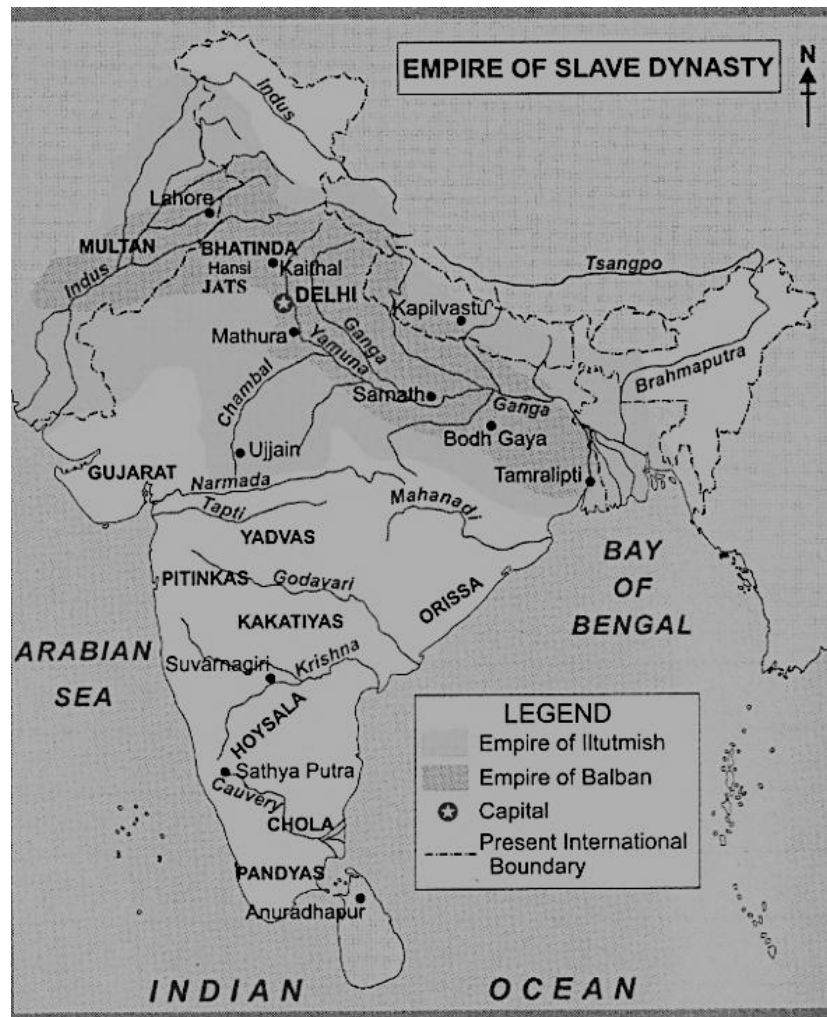


**Raziyya Sultan**

Ilutmish had groomed and nominated his daughter, Raziyya, as his successor. Though her brother Froze ascended the throne first, but he proved to be a failure and soon Raziyya took over as the first female sultan in 1236 CE.

Raziyya Sultan has the unique distinction of being the only woman to occupy the throne of Delhi. She was brave, wise and a great warrior and efficient administrator. Though she had a very short reign, she succeeded in setting up complete law and order in her empire. She encouraged trade, established schools and public libraries. During her reign, roads were built and wells were dug.

However, Raziyya faced many problems. She dressed up in masculine attire and sat on the throne without a veil. This was against Muslim rules. The traditional Muslims were against her public appearances without a veil. Also, the



**Mop no. 3.1 the slave Dynasty**

Nobles did not like to be subservient to a woman and conspired against her. She tried to check their power but the 'Chalghan', a group of forty nobles, wanted power in their hands. She failed to control them. They revolted and succeeded in deposing her. Raziyya married Malik Altunia, the governor of Bhatinda, and with his help tried to reoccupy the throne. However/ they were both killed.

### **History Reveals**

According to Minhaj-i-Siraj, a chronicler, Raziyya was more capable than all her brothers.

### **GIYASUDDIN BALBAN (1266-1287 CE)**

Initially a slave of Iltutmish, Balban became a very powerful noble in his court. He was one of the most powerful amongst the 'Chalghan' nobles. He used to look after the affairs of the Sultanate. He seized power and became the sultan soon after Raziyya.

Balban was a shrewd politician. He crushed many rebellions. He ruled the empire with an iron hand. He introduced the practice of 'sijda' or kneeling before the king with the head touching the ground. He curbed the power of the chalghan nobles. They now had to wear a special dress and bow down before the sultan. Drinking was prohibited. Balban had a good network of spies who informed him about any political developments. He reorganized the army and managed to curb the Mongol attacks. Instead of

expanding the empire, he set about consolidating it. He had an excellent administrative system and restored peace and order. Muslim rule became firmly established under him.

## **KHALJI DYNASTY (1290-1320 CE)**

### **JALAL-UD-DIN KHALJI (1290-1296 CE)**

Balban's successors were weak and the Sultanate became even more fragile. Amidst internal aggression, **Malik Firuz** (a noble in the court) occupied the throne. He adopted the title of Jalal-ud-din Khalji and began the Khalji dynasty. The Khalji were of Afghan origin. Jalal-ud-din was a generous and pious man and ascended the throne at the age of 70. He realized that India had a large Hindu population and could not be an Islamic state. He defended the policy of allowing Hindus to preach their beliefs and idol-worship. His reign was short and assisted by his nephew and son-in-law Alauddin Khalji. Ultimately, Alauddin killed him and proclaimed himself as the sultan.

### **ALAUDDIN KHALJI (1296-1316 CE)**

Alauddin consolidated his position first and then pursued a policy of expansion. He conquered Ranthambore, Chittor, Mandu, Gujarat and Malwa. His general, Malik Kafur, plundered the kingdom of Devagiri and fended off Mongol raids. Alauddin had asserted his supremacy over entire north India and his empire was the largest since the time of Asoka.

#### **History Reveals**

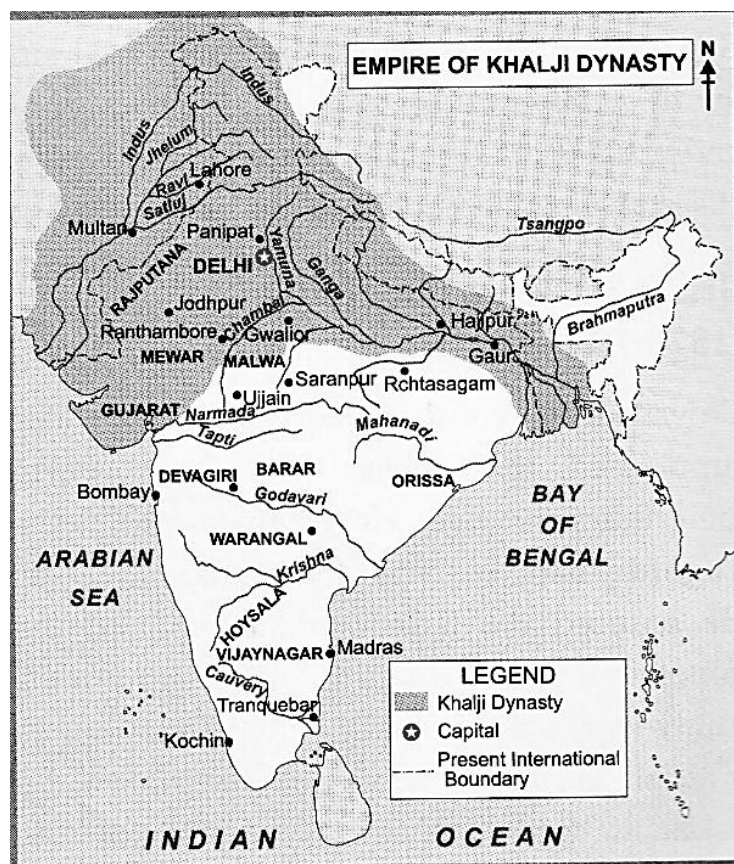
Alauddin was the first to attack Chittor, overcome by a fanatical desire to acquire the beautiful Queen Padmini, who committed jauhar according to the Rajput tradition.

Alauddin was an orthodox Muslim and was intolerant towards other religions. He plundered and demolished many Hindu temples. The Hindus had to pay more tax as compared to the Muslims. Many Hindus were forced to convert to Islam.

#### **History Reveals**

Alauddin was so overwhelmed by his success at conquests that he dubbed himself as the 'Second Alexander'. He assumed the title of 'Sikandar-i-Sani'.

Alauddin was a shrewd politician. He had an excellent espionage system to keep him well-informed. He introduced many innovative reforms. He introduced a market control policy and fixed the prices of all essential items. He also established separate markets for food grains, cloth, horses, fruits, etc. Very strict punishments



**Mop no. 3.2 the Khalji Dynasty**

Were prescribed for cheating and under weighing. He controlled taxation and fixed the rate of land revenue. He also curbed the powers of the nobles and banned alcohol and parties. He confiscated the lands given to the nobles. Also, he introduced the first permanent standing army of India. He reorganized the army and directly appointed the soldiers. The salaries were given in cash. Horses were also branded.

**Q.** Write down three innovative reforms introduced by Alauddin Khalji.

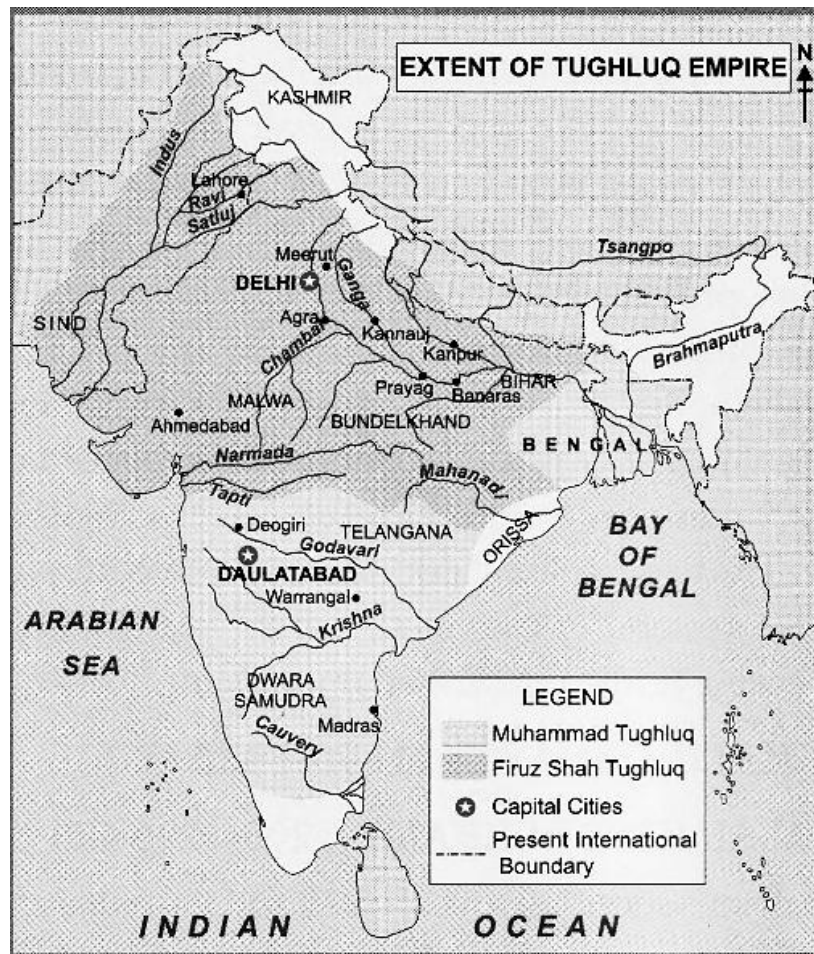
Alauddin was one of the ambitious builders of that time. He built the **Alai Darwaza**, the **Siri Fort** (the second city of Delhi) and the **Hazar Sutun** (the palace of thousand pillars). He also built the magnificent tank, Hauz-i-Khas. He was also a patron of arts and learning. Amir **Khusrau**, who is known for his contribution to literature and music, lived in his court.

## **TUGHLUQ DYNASTY (1320-1414 CE)**

The last king of the Khalji Dynasty was killed by Ghazi Malik who ascended the throne assuming the title Ghiyasuddin Tughluq. He had served under Alauddin Khalji as a provincial governor. He established the Tughluq dynasty.

## **GHIYASUDDIN TUGHLUQ (1320-1324 CE)**

Ghiyasuddin consolidated his power and suppressed the nobles who had asserted their independence. He founded the city of **Tughluqabad**. He was a good administrator. He reduced the land revenue and recruited honest officers. During his reign, many public utility works were carried out. He reformed the judicial system. He had a short reign and died in an accident when he was returning from. An expedition.



**Mop No.3.3 Empire of the Tughluq Dynasty**

### **MUHAMMAD TUGHLUQ (1324-1351 CE)**

Muhammad Tughluq, the son of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, ascended the throne in 1324. He was the most controversial sultan. He was a capable administrator/ commander and a good scholar. He was accommodative towards other religions and people could follow any religion during his rule. However, he was a man who thought 'ahead of times'. His plans and intentions were good but were carried out without proper planning/ which resulted in their failure. As soon as he ascended the throne, he embarked on the policy of conquest. His empire stretched from Peshawar in the north to Madurai in the south and from Sindh in the west to Assam in the east. He also led unsuccessful expeditions to conquer Khurasan, Iraq and China.

### **Contribution of Muhammad Tughluq**

#### **Transfer of capital**

One of the experiments was the transfer of capital from Delhi to Devagiri, in the Deccan 1327. He renamed it Daulatabad (the house of prosperity). The reason for this change was Devagiri's central location and proximity to south India. Also, he wanted to protect the capital from Mongol attacks. Besides, there was a temptation of utilizing the rich resources of the south. When people showed reluctance to move so far away, the sultan resorted to brutal force. However, this project failed due to many reasons like

- a. The entire population was ordered to shift, which caused great misery to the people.

- b. It was impossible to control North India from there.
- c. The North-Western frontiers were more susceptible to Mongol attacks.
- d. The transfer was ordered during summers. The hot weather and long journey caused untold misery. Consequently, the capital shifted back to Delhi causing even greater hardships once again. The sultan became very unpopular.

### **Token Currency**

His second project was the introduction of token currency. The innovative scheme was good but it also ended in a failure. This was because there was shortage of gold and silver. He introduced the currency of copper and brass coins in place of gold and silver coins. The plan in itself was good but the Sultan could not take any step to check forgery and the result was that people began to mint coins in their houses. As a result, foreign trade suffered. The state treasury was thus flooded with forged coins. At last, the Sultan decided to withdraw the copper coins and people were paid back in gold and silver coins. The royal treasury suffered immense losses and it ruined the economy.

### **Doab Tax**



**The Fort of Daulatabad**

The third experiment was his decision to increase Taxes in the ganga-yamuna doab<sup>2</sup> region. Unfortunately, the very same year, this fertile region suffered a famine. The discontent among the peasants led to the eventual withdrawal of his order. However, it was too late. The damage was already done. Agriculture suffered extensively. His unsuccessful experiments made him quite detested. Poor administration in his empire led to internal aggression and revolts. This weakened his empire. He ruled for nearly 26 years and died due to illness when he went to suppress a revolt in Gujarat.

**Q.** Do you think Mohammad Tughluq was a wise man? Support your answer with reasons.

### **FIRUZ SHAH TUGHLUQ (1351-1388 CE)**





**Firuz Shah's tomb at Hua Khan**

Firuz Shah was the cousin of Muhammad Tughluq and succeeded him in a remarkable bloodless manner. He inherited a ruined economy and discontented people. Instead of expansion of the empire, he concentrated on stabilizing the economy and the empire. He ruled for nearly 37 years. His tomb is located at Hua Khas in New Delhi.

## **Contribution of Firuz Shah Tughluq**

### **New Revenue Policy**

His revised revenue policy encouraged agriculture and brought prosperity to the people. There was rapid growth of trade and commerce. The reduction in the prices of commodities of daily use made the life of common people easy. He also introduced certain judicial reforms and improved the penal system. Torture was abolished. Firuz Shah set up an employment Bureau for the unemployed and many hospitals for providing free treatment to the poor. He had also improved the currency system by introducing new coins of mixed metal.

### **Welfare of Poor**

A special department was established to help the poor and needy. It also helped poor Muslims in arranging the marriages of their daughters by providing them with the state help. Many 'Sarais' were established and trees were planted on both sides of the roads.

### **Developmental Works**

Firuz Shah Tughluq is credited with building numerous towns. Among these some prominent towns were Hissar, Jaunpur, Firozabad, etc. He constructed irrigation canals and dams. He also set up one of the two Asokan pillars at Firozabad which he had removed from their original location.

Firuz Shah was a great patron of learning. He welcomed and rewarded scholars and established many schools, colleges and madarsa. He got many Hindu books translated into Persian.

### **Religious Policy**

However, he followed a very orthodox religious policy and ruled according to Islamic laws. He consulted the ulemas in all matters. For the first time he imposed 'Jazia' tax on non-Muslims. He demolished Hindu temples and built mosques in their places. He destroyed the Jagannath Puri temples in Orissa (now Odisha), and killed a large number of priests.

## **DECLINE OF TUGHLUQS**

### **Mangol Invasion**

All the Tughluq rulers who succeeded Firuz Shah were incompetent and mere puppets in the hands of their corrupt nobles. The empire shrank in size and there was political chaos. It was during the reign of the last king of the Tughluq dynasty that the Mongol king **Tibur or Tamerlane** invaded India in 1398 CE. His intention was to loot and plunder Delhi. The sultan and his wazir fled. He plundered the city for many days and many people were massacred and thousands were taken as slaves. Great buildings and works of art were destroyed. He destroyed the prosperity of India. The invasion of Timur gave a death-blow to the tottering Tughluq dynasty.

## LATER SULTANS

### SAYYID DYNASTY (1414 -1450 CE)

When Timur went back, he appointed Khizr Khan as the viceroy of his territories in India. He founded the Sayyid dynasty. He was a good administrator and was respected by all his subjects. This dynasty had four rulers.

### LODI DYNASTY (1451-1526 CE)

Bahlul Khan Lodi was the founder of the Lodi dynasty. He was succeeded by Sikandar Lodi and finally Ibrahim Lodi. It was during his reign that the Mughal ruler, Babur, attacked. The armies of Ibrahim Lodi and Babur fought the 1st battle of Panipat. The Lodi dynasty came to an end and the Delhi Sultanate gave way to the Mughal Empire.

**Q.** can you name two Muslim invaders who had attacked India in the beginning of the medieval period?

The Mongols led by Genghis Khan attacked the Delhi Sultanate during the rule of Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq. They both had to organize a large standing army. However they dealt with the challenge differently, as can be seen in the table given below:

ALAUDDIN KHALJI	MUHAMMAD TUGHLUQ
During his reign, the Mongols attacked twice. To defend his empire, alauddin had to raise a large standing army .	He defeated the mongol army and planned an attack on the mongols, for which he raised a large standing army.
To accommodate his soldiers, he constructed a town called siri.	He ordered the entire population to shift to daulatabad. The soldiers were stationed in Delhi. This caused great misery to the people.
The soldiers were paid salaries in cash. This led to high inflation. To control inflation, the price of all essential commodities was fixed. Strict action was taken against merchants who sold at higher prices.	The soldiers were paid in cash. He did not control the prices in the market. He introduced the currency of copper and brass coins in place of gold and silver coins. However, the sultan could not take any step to check forgery. As a result, foreign trade suffered. The state treasury was flooded with forged coins because people paid taxes in the form of forged currency.
The Doab region was taxed at high rate, almost 50% of the produce, in order to bear the additional burden of feeding the soldiers.	He levied extra taxes in the doab region. Unfortunately, The very same year, this fertile region suffered a famine. This caused discontent among the peasants which led to the eventual withdrawal of his order. However, the withdrawal came at that time when the damage was already done and as a result agriculture suffered extensively.

The measures taken by him were very successful.	His measures were a complete failure. He had to disband his army. The people were shifted back to Delhi from Daulatabad. The sultan decided to withdraw the copper coins and people were paid back in gold and silver coins. The royal treasury suffered immense losses and it ruined the economy. The peasants in the doab were discontented and agriculture suffered immensely. His unsuccessful experiments made him very unpopular. Poor administration in his empire led to internal aggression and revolts. This weakened his empire.
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## **LIFE IN THE SULTANATE PERIOD**

### **ADMINISTRATION**

The sultans were autocrats and ruled the kingdom with an iron fist. They lived in great splendour and their word was law. The sultan had many officials to assist him. The highest was the wazir. He also appointed officials who looked after finances. The nobles led a life of luxury.

The empire was divided into provinces, shiqs and parganas. The sultan gave pieces of land to military leaders called iqtadars. The iqtadars collected revenue from these lands. The military head was ariz. He appointed soldiers and maintained records. The qazi was the head of justice.

The main source of revenue was land. Sometimes this could be as high as 50%. Other taxes were house tax, water tax and trade tax. Tax could be paid in cash or kind.

### **ECONOMY**

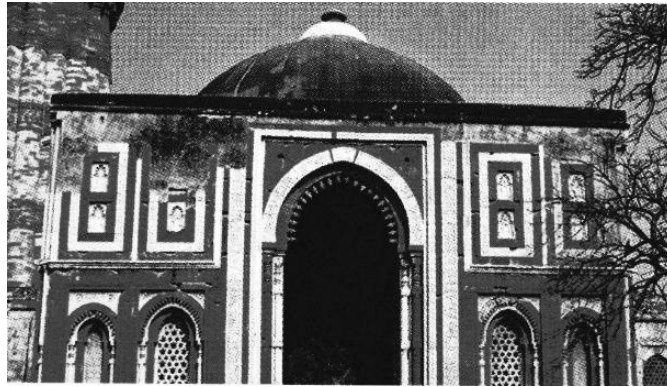
Agriculture prospered during the period of Sultanate. Irrigation canals were dug and more land was brought under cultivation. Crafts were patronized. Skilled artisans made objects using metals, stones, pearl, ivory and sandalwood. Silk, woollen and cotton textiles were made. Industries came up in rural and urban areas. Fairs were organized. Merchants were wealthy and lived well. There existed important commercial cities like Delhi, Kanauj, Multan and Surat.

#### **History Reveals**

A postal system also existed during the Sultanate period. The post was carried on horses or on foot. This system was also used to transport fruits for the sultan from Khurasan.

Both internal and external trade was carried out. There were paved roads, rest houses and shops for travellers. Trade was carried on with Sumatra, Malaysia, China and Africa. Main imports were Arabian horses, gold and silver whereas the items of exports were spices, sandalwood and indigo.

### **ART, ARCHITECTURE AND LITERATURE**



**Alai Darwaza**

New styles of art and architecture were brought into India. Many mosques and tombs were built. New architectural styles, geometric designs and calligraphy came to be used. They also introduced the use of enameled tiles. Some of the important buildings were Qutb Minar, Alai Darwaza and Siri Fort among many others.

Many Arabic and Persian works were written. Amir Khusrau wrote poetry and historical romances. Another important Persian author was Ziauddin Barani. Many Sanskrit works were translated into Persian.

## **DECLINE OF THE DELHI SULTANATE**

The decline of Delhi Sultanate occurred due to many reasons:

- The nobles were greedy and there was no unity.
- The Mongols invaded and plundered the Sultanate.
- The wars and the failure of policies cost the Sultanate dearly.
- There was a constant struggle for the throne.
- The size of the empire was too big and there were many revolts.

## **Around the World**



**A Knight pledges his fealty to king Charlemagne of France**

Feudalism existed in the society in medieval Europe. At the top of the feudal system was the king. He owned all the land in the kingdom. Next were the nobles. They were given large lands by the king and in return, they fought for the king and supplied him knights for the army. Next in the hierarchy were the

knights. Nobles gave land to the knights in return for their help in battles. At the bottom were the peasants who farmed the land.