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The Delhi Sultanate

Delhi has been centre of Indian politics since ancient times. Delhi was an important centre of trade and commerce during the reign of Tomar and Chauhan Rajputs in the 12th century. The Delhi Sultanate was established in the early 13th century. The rulers who ruled over the vast area of North India between 1206 A.D. and 1526 A.D. are known as Sultan and their reign is known as Delhi Sultanate. These rulers were originally of Turkish and Afghan origin. During these 325 years, total five dynasties came to power in Delhi Sultanate, including the Slave dynasty, the Khilji dynasty, the Tughlaq dynasty, Saiyad dynasty and Lodi dynasty. Along with Delhi sultanate, we will also study about Vijaynagar and Bahmani empires in this lesson.

Rulers of the Delhi Sultanate

Slave Dynasty (1206 A.D - 1290 A.D) : In 1192 A.D in the second battle of Tarai, Shihabuddin Ghorî won a decisive victory over Prithviraj Chauhan and laid the foundation of Delhi Sultanate (1206 A.D). After the death of Mohammad Ghorî, his slave, Qutubuddin Aibak became the first Sultan of Delhi Sultanate. During his reign of only five years, he tried to retain the Sultanate power. He fell from the horse back while playing polo and died in 1210 A.D. After his death his slave as well as his son-in-law Iltutmish came to the power. He established 'Chahalgani' (Chargan) i.e. a force of 40 Turkish nobles to make Sultanate supreme. He shifted the capital from Lahore to Delhi. Iltutmish is considered to be the true founder of the Slave dynasty. Iltutmish did not find any of his sons deserving the position of the Sultan so he declared his capable daughter Razia Sultana as his successor.

Shortly, after the death of Iltutmish, his daughter Razia ascended the throne of Delhi. She was the first woman ruler to ascend the throne of Delhi. Minhaj-e-Siraj, a historian of that time also admitted that Razia was more capable to become Sultan as compared to her brothers. Yet it was difficult to gain recognition as a woman ruler. Even the courtiers were not willing to accept her as an independent ruler. Her rule came to an end because of greed for power of the nobles and the ongoing rebellion. The state was in turmoil for six years after her death. The nobles enthroned Iltutmish's son, Nasiruddin on the throne of Delhi. He ruled for 21 years. After his death Ghiyasuddin Balban came to the throne. He destroyed the 'Chahalgani' force and overthrew the grip of the nobles from the regime. He strengthened the King's position. Balban was a patron of literature and art. After his reign of 22 years, within short time the Khilji dynasty was established in Delhi Sultanate.



Razia Sultan

Khilji Dynasty (1290 A.D - 1320 A.D) : The rule of Khilji dynasty started with the ruler Jalaluddin. After 6 years rule of Jalal-ud-din, ambitious sultan Alauddin came to the throne of Delhi. He expanded his empire by conquering North India, Gujarat and South India. He started the system of keeping permanent army in Delhi. He introduced a system of 'Mark' (Daag) 'Face' (Chehra) for distinctive identification of army horses and soldiers. He also made administrative reforms like price-regulation, market



control and hoarding regulation. After the death of Alauddin Khilji the state was in turmoil. Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq was the one who ended the Khilji dynasty and started the Tughlaq rule from the throne of Delhi.

Know This

Famous poet Amir Khusro was there during the rule of Alauddin Khilji. He composed famous literary works like Kirat-ul-Sadayan, Ashiqa, Nuh Sipahr etc.

Tughlaq Dynasty (1320 A.D - 1414 A.D) : During the Tughlaq dynasty Mohammad-Bin-Tughlaq was one of the most talented Sultan. He implemented some schemes during his rule including relocation of the capital from Delhi to Daultabad, symbolic currency experiment etc. Most of the schemes failed due to lack of practicality as well as lack of planned implementation. Hence, these schemes have gone down in history as 'eccentric schemes'. Ibn Batuta, an African traveller, visited India during the time of Mohammad Tughlaq. Mohammad Tughlaq was succeeded by his paternal cousin Firoz Shah Tughlaq. After the death of Firoz Shah, Taimur Lang invaded Delhi (1398 A.D - 1399 A.D). Because of this attack the foundations of power were shaken and Tughlaq power became limited.

Sayyid dynasty (1414 A.D - 1451 A.D) and Lodhi dynasty (1451 A.D - 1526 A.D) : After the end of Tughlaq dynasty, Khizr Khan established the Sayyid dynasty. After the Sayyid dynasty, Bahlol Lodi established the Lodi dynasty. Bahlol was the first Afghan ruler of the Lodi Sultanate. The last emperor of the Lodi dynasty was Ibrahim Lodi. He was defeated by Babur in the first battle of Panipat in 1526 A.D. and Sultanate era came to an end and Mughal rule started.

State Administration

The Delhi Sultanate, which was established in the 13th century, was different in terms of state governance. The Sultan was at the center of the Delhi Sultanate. The power of Sultan was paramount. He was also the supreme commander, the supreme head of the executive and the supreme judge. There was a cabinet to help the Sultan. Cabinet ministers and officials were appointed by the Sultan himself. The Sultanate system was divided into three sections namely central, provincial and local.

Central Rule : The cabinet was the chief after the Sultan. The Sultan's, chief minister was called the 'Vazir', who was the head of the administration. Besides this, the cabinet consisted of army, postal department, religious department, foreign affairs department, intelligence department etc. Thus, more or less modern cabinet like arrangement was seen at that time.

Know This

During the time of Alauddin Khilji, the postal system came into existence to fulfil government requirements. Runners carried royal messages and orders. These runners were in all the important centers of the state. In this way it can be called the initial version of the current postal system.

Provincial Rule : During the Sultanate, the province was divided into 'Jagirs', which were called 'Iqtas'. The head of Iqta was called 'Iqtadar' or 'Mukti', who was the head of the executive and the judiciary of the province. His job was to provide army to the Sultan whenever needed and to collect the land revenue. However, in the time of Alauddin Khilji and Mohammad Tughlaq, the central army was given importance and control over Iqtadar was established.

Local Government : The unit after the province was divided into District, and Talukas called 'Shik' and 'Parganas' respectively. The village administration was headed by the 'Mukhi' or 'Mukadam' and the clerk and Patwari helped him.



Forts and other constructions

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate marked the beginning of the construction of Islamic style architecture in India. During the Sultanate period, significant works of architecture like forts, mosques, tombs, houses, gardens, gates, minarets etc. were constructed.

A mosque named Kuwat-ul-Islam was built in Delhi during the time of Qutubuddin Aibak.

Another important building built during Qutubuddin Aibak's reign was QutubMinar. Only one floor of it was constructed during his reign. Iltutmish completed rest of the work after his death. It was renovated by Firoz Shah Tughlaq and Sikandar Lodi. Another building built by Qutubuddin Aibak was a mosque called 'Dhai Din ka Zhopda' which is located in Ajmer. The construction during the period of Iltutmish include Hauz-e-Shammi, Shammi Idgah and Jama masjid. Major construction work during the reign of Allauddin Khilji include Alai Darwaza, Siri Fort and a town named Siri and Hauz-e-Khas. Tughlaqabad, Firozabad, Hissar, Jaunpur, Firozpur, Fatehabad etc. towns were settled during the Tughlaq rule. During this period many forts, mosques, lakes, palaces, baths, tombs, bridges, inns, gardens etc. were built in Delhi. Tombs and mosques were built during the Syed and the Lodi dynasty. Bandekhan's dome, Badagumbaj, Moth's mosque and Shihabuddin's tomb were the major ones among them.



QutubMinar



Dhai Din ka Zhopda

Vijaynagar Empire (1336 A.D - 1646 A.D)

The process of disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate began during the time of the weak Sultans of the Tughlaq dynasty. This process accelerated during the Syed dynasty and the Lodi synasty. The situation was further deteriorated by Taimur's invasion. Due to all these conditions many North and South Indian states became independent including Vijaynagar, Bahmani, Malwa, Mewar, Bengal, Jaunpur etc. Let's get some information about Vijaynagar and Bahmani.

Two brothers named Harihar Rai and Bukka Rai (1336 A.D) laid the foundation of the Vijaynagar Empire on the banks of the river Tungbhadra, making it the capital of their kingdom. The town was initially known as Vidyanagar after his guru Swami Vidyaranya. Later on, it was called Vijaynagar due to military success of their emperors. Harihar Rai and Bukka Rai were the kings of the Sangam



dynasty. Vijaynagar empire was ruled by the Sangam dynasty, **Saluva dynasty**, **Tuluva dynasty** and Aravidu dynasty. Harihar Rai-I and Bukka Rai made an important contribution in twinning a small kingdom into an empire. Rule of the Saluva dynasty lasted for 20 years and then Tuluva dynasty was established.

Great ruler like Krishnadev Rai was born in the Tuluva dynasty, who was the best ruler of Tuluva dynasty of the Vijaynagar empire. Not only this, he even got the honour of being a great ruler of India. He won many battles during his reign. Although Krishnadev Rai spent most of his life on the battlefield, he did not neglect the administration. He got lakes and canals dug in the state and enriched agriculture. He abolished some unjust taxes, and gained love of the people. He established a town called Nagalpur near Vijaynagar and decorated it with various buildings and temples. Krishnadev Rai was himself a great scholar. He wrote several texts in Sanskrit and Telugu. Due to the spread of literary art, he became well-known as the 'Bhoj of Andhra'.



Krishnadev Rai

After Krishnadev Rai's death, internal conflicts and conspiracies started in Vijaynagar. Vijaynagar was defeated by the Union of Muslim States in the Battle of Talikota on January 23, 1565. Even after the war, Vijaynagar empire lasted for a century but did not achieve the same grandeur as before.

Bahmani Kingdom (1347 A.D - 1518 A.D)

Zafar Khan (1347 A.D) established the Bahmani Kingdom in the south during the Tughlaq dynasty. This kingdom influenced the politics of South India for almost a century and a half. Zafar Khan under the name of Alauddin Bahmanshah ruled independently. He annexed several territories to his state, making Gulmarg the capital of newly independent state. The reigns of Ahmedshah and Mohammad Shah-III are significant in the Bahmani empire. Ahmed Shah moved his capital to Bidar from Gulmarg and built several buildings in Bidar. Mahmood Gawan was the Vazir of Mohammad Shah-III. He created a competent administration. Bahmani power strengthened during the reign of Mohammad Shah-III. After that during reign of Mahmood Shah, all the power of the State passed into the hands of his Wazir Qasim Barid and it was during his regin that Bahmani came to an end. The whole empire was divided into five independent states like Bijapur, Ahmednagar, Golconda, Bidar and Barar.

End of Delhi Sultanate Rule

Delhi Sultanate which was established in 1206 A.D by Qutubuddin Aibak, and after 320 years came to an end in 1526 A.D with the end of rule of Ibrahim Lodi. In the span of round 325 years, the right, powerful and sometimes weak Sultans also came to the throne. The Muslim empire of Delhi saw many ups and down and was ultimately destroyed.



Exercise

1. Find the correct option from the following options and write the correct answer :

- (1) Who established the 'Chahalgani' (Chargan) of the Delhi Sultanate ?
(A) Razia Sultana (B) Qutubuddin Aibak
(C) Balban (D) Iltutmish
- (2) Who was the first woman ruler of Delhi Sultanate ?
(A) Razia Sultana (B) Noor Jahan
(C) Arjmand Banu (D) Mehrunnisha
- (3) Which ruler of Delhi started 'Tarangi Yojna' ?
(A) Iltutmish (B) Qutubuddin Aibak
(C) Mohammad Tughlaq (D) Firoz Shah Tughlaq
- (4) Who founded Vijaynagar Empire ?
(A) Ahmed Shah (B) Harihar Rai and Bukka Rai
(C) Krishnadev Rai (D) Zafar Khan

2. Fill in the blanks :

- (1) 'Dhai-din-ka Jhopada' is located in city.
- (2) is in the center of administrative system of Delhi Sultanate.
- (3) was the last ruler of Delhi Sultanate.
- (4) founded Siri town.

3. Answer the following questions in one or two words :

- (1) Where is Qutub Minar located ?
- (2) Between whom was the first battle of Panipat fought ?
- (3) In whose time was Alai Darwaza built ?
- (4) Who established the kingdom of Bahmani ?

4. Answer the following questions in short :

- (1) Which cities were settled around Delhi during Mohammad Tughlaq's rule ?
- (2) Describe the architecture of Sultanate period.
- (3) Give brief information about Krishnadev Rai.

Activity

- Collect information of tourist places in Delhi and prepare a handwritten report.
- Prepare a genealogy of the native state or kingdom of your village, city or district.
- Prepare a handwritten report on the architecture of Vijaynagar and Bahmani empire.

