



The Delhi Sultanate-I: Slave Dynasty (1206-1290)

For Prelims: Iltutmish, Qutbuddin Aibak, Raziya Sultan, Balban.

For Mains: Administrative apparatuses of the Delhi Sultanate, Significance of nobility in the Delhi Sultanate

How Qutbuddin Aibak (1150-1210) Established the First Muslim Dynasty?

- **Muizzuddin (Muhammad of Ghur)** was succeeded by **Qutbuddin Aibak** a **Turkish slave** in **1206**. He had played an important part in the expansion of the **Turkish Sultanate** in India after the **Battle of Tarain (1192 AD)**.
- Another **slave of Muizzuddin**, **Yalduz**, succeeded at **Ghazni**. As the **ruler of Ghazni**, **Yalduz** claimed to rule over Delhi as well.
- This, however, was not accepted by **Aibak** who ruled from **Lahore**. But from this time, the **Sultanate** severed its links with **Ghazni**.
- The establishment of the **Slave Dynasty** is credited to **Qutbuddin Aibak**.
- The **Slave Dynasty**, also known as the **Mamluk Dynasty**, was the **first Muslim dynasty** to rule over the **Delhi Sultanate in India**.
- **Qutbuddin Aibak** is also known as **Lakh Baksh**.

How did Iltutmish (1210-36) Expanded its Territory?

- In 1210, **Aibak** died of injuries received in a fall from his horse while playing **chaugan (polo)**.
- He was succeeded by **Iltutmish** who was **the son-in-law of Aibak**.
- **Iltutmish** must be regarded as the **real consolidator of the Turkish conquests in north India**.
 - At the time of his accession, **Ali Mardan Khan** had declared himself the **king of Bengal and Bihar**.
- At first, even some of the **fellow officers of Iltutmish** near **Delhi** were reluctant to accept his authority. The **Rajputs** found an opportunity to assert their independence. The **regions of Kalinjar, Gwaligar, and eastern Rajasthan**, which encompassed **Ajmer and Bayana** successfully liberated themselves from **Turkish domination**.
- At about the same time, **Iltutmish** took steps to recover **Gwaligar, Bayana, Ajmer and Nagor**.
- During the early years of his reign, Iltutmish's attention was concentrated on the northwest. A new danger to his position arose with the conquest of **Ghazni** by **Khwarizm Shah**.
 - The **Khwarizmi empire** was the most powerful state in **Central Asia** at this time, and its eastern frontier now extended up to the **Indus**. To avert this danger, **the Iltutmish** marched to **Lahore** and occupied it.
- **Qubacha**, a fellow **slave of Aibak**, had declared himself an independent ruler of **Multan** and seized **Lahore** and parts of the **Punjab**.
- **Iltutmish** also ousted **Qubacha** from **Multan** and **Uchch**. The frontiers of the **Delhi Sultanate**, thus, **reached up to the Indus** once again. Secure in the west, Iltutmish was able to turn his attention elsewhere. He made raids on the territories of his neighbours, the **Sena rulers of East Bengal**, and the **Hindu rulers of Orissa and Kamrup (Assam)** continued their sway.

- In **Bengal and Bihar**, a person called **Iwaz** who had taken the **title of Sultan Ghiyasuddin** assumed independence. In **1226-27**, **Iwaz** was defeated and killed in a battle with **Iltutmish's son** near **Lakhnauti**. **Bengal** and **Bihar** passed under the **domian of Delhi** once again.
- He sent expeditions against **Ranthambhore** and **Jalor** to reassert his suzerainty.
- He also attacked **Nagda, the capital of Mewar** (about 22 km from Udaipur) but had to beat a retreat at the arrival of the **Gujarat armies**. As revenge, **the Iltutmish** dispatched an expedition against the **Chalukyas of Gujarat**, but it was repulsed with losses.

How Raziya Sultan (1236-39) Succeeded to Iltutmish?

- **Iltutmish** decided to nominate his daughter, **Raziya**, to the throne.
- In order to assert her claim, **Raziya** had to contend against her brothers as well as against powerful **Turkish nobles** and could rule only for **three years**.
- It marked the beginning of a struggle for power between the monarchy and the **Turkish chiefs**, sometimes called '**the forty**' or the **chahalgani**.
 - **Corps of Forty/chahalgani** was a council of **40 Turkic slave emirs** who administered the **Delhi Sultanate** as per the wishes of the sultan.
- **Iltutmish's wazir, Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi**, who had opposed her elevation to the throne, and backed and supported a rebellion of nobles against her, was defeated and was forced to flee.
- **Raziya** sent an expedition against **Ranthambore** to control the **Rajputs**, and successfully established **law and order** in the length and breadth of her kingdom.
- Abyssinian noble, **Yaqut Khan** had **been appointed Superintendent of the royal stable** and was favoured by Raziya Sultan.
 - The Turkish **nobles accused her of violating feminine modesty**, and of being too friendly to Yaqut Khan.
- Rebellions broke out in **Lahore** and **Sirhind**. **Raziya** personally led an expedition against **Lahore** and compelled the governor to submit.
- On the way to **Sirhind**, an internal rebellion broke out in which **Yaqut Khan** was killed, and **Raziya** imprisoned at **Tabarhinda**.
- However, **Raziya** won over her **captor, Malik Altunia**, and after marrying him made a renewed attempt on Delhi. **Raziya** fought valiantly but was defeated and killed in a forest by bandits while she was in flight.

How did Mangols Rise?

- The **Mongol Empire** made several attempts to invade the **Indian subcontinent** from **1221** to **1327**.
- The **Rise of Mangols** started with the arrival of **Changez Khan**, the **Mongol leader**, who prided in calling himself '**the scourge of God**'.
- The **Mongols** attacked the **Khwarizmi empire in 1218**.
 - The **Mongol** onslaught had serious repercussions on the **Sultanate of Delhi**.
- **Iltutmish**, who was ruling at Delhi tried to appease the **Mongols**.
- This resulted in a series of **Mongol** attacks. The river Indus ceased to be India's western boundary.
- Ultimately, **Iltutmish** was able to conquer both **Lahore** and **Multan**, thus forming a fairly strong line of defense against the **Mongols**.
- After the death of **Changez Khan** in **1227**, the mighty **Mongol** empire was divided among his sons.

How did Balban (1246-87) Rise to Power?

- **Background:**
 - The struggle between the monarchy and the Turkish chiefs continued, till one of the Turkish chiefs, **Ulugh Khan**, known in history by his later title of **Balban**.
 - Gradually he seized control of everything, and in **1265** he succeeded in taking the throne.
 - During the earlier period, **Balban** held the position of naib or deputy to **Nasiruddin Mahmud**, a younger son of **Iltutmish**, whom **Balban** had helped in securing the throne in

1246.

- **Balban** further strengthened his position by marrying one of Nasiruddin Mahmud's daughters to the young sultan.
- The growing authority of **Balban** alienated many of the **Turkish chiefs** who had hoped to continue their former power and influence in the **affairs of government**, since **Nasiruddin Mahmud** was young and inexperienced.
- They, therefore, hatched a conspiracy in **1253** and ousted **Balban** from his position.
- **Balban** was replaced by Imaduddin Raihan who was an Indian Muslim.
- **A Separate Group Formation:**
 - **When Balban** agreed to step aside but carefully continued to build his own group. He had also established some contacts with the **Mongols** who had overrun a large part of the **Punjab**.
 - **Sultan Mahmud** bowed to the superior strength of Balban's group and dismissed Raihan. After some time, Raihan was defeated and killed.
 - **Balban** got rid of many of his other rivals by means of fair or foul.
 - In **1265**, **Sultan Mahmud** died.
- **Strong Centralized Army:**
 - **Balban** organized a **strong centralized army**, both to deal with **internal disturbances**, and to **repel the Mongols** who had entrenched themselves in the **Punjab** and posed a serious danger to the **Delhi Sultanate**.
 - **Diwan-i-arz:**
 - He reorganized the **military department (diwan-i-arz)** and pensioned off those soldiers and troopers who were no longer fit for service.
 - **Balban** adopted a policy of '**blood and iron**' to deal with **Mewatis, Rajput zamindars and Dacoits of Ganga-Jamuna Doab and Awadh**.
 - In the **Doab** and in **Katihar (modern Rohilkhand)** **Balban** ordered forests to be cleared, rebellious villagers destroyed, and the men, women and children enslaved.
 - By these harsh methods, **Balban** controlled the situation. In order to impress the people with the strength of his government and to awe them, **Balban** maintained a magnificent court.
- **Death of Balban:**
 - **Balban** died in **1286**.
 - He was undoubtedly one of the main architects of the **Sultanate of Delhi**, particularly of its form of government and institutions.
 - By asserting the power of the monarchy, **Balban** strengthened the **Delhi Sultanate**.
 - He could not fully defend northern India against the inroads of the Mongols.

What are Some of the Examples of Architecture of the Slave Dynasty?

- **Important Buildings created by the Rulers of Slave Dynasty:**
 - **Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque:**
 - It is one of the **earliest mosques in India** and was erected between **1192** and **1198** by **Qutubuddin Aibak**.
 - **Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque** meaning the '**might of Islam**'.
 - It is built **northeast** of the **Qutub Minar**.
 - The **Iron Pillar** in the courtyard bears an inscription in **Sanskrit** in **Brahmi script** of fourth century AD, **according to which the pillar was set up as a Vishnudhvaja (standard of god Vishnu) on the hill known as Vishnupada in memory of a mighty king named Chandra**.
 - **Qutub Minar:**
 - **Qutub Minar** in **red** and **buff sandstone** is the **highest tower in India**.
 - **Qutbu'd-Din Aibak** laid the foundation of **Minar in AD 1199** up to the first Storey.
 - It was added **three more Storeys** by his **successor** and **son-in-law Shamsu'd-Din Iltutmish (AD 1211-36)**.
 - Numerous inscriptions in **Arabic** and **Nagari** characters in different places of the minar reveal the **history of Qutb**.
 - The **Iron Pillar** in the courtyard bears an inscription in **Sanskrit** in Brahmi script of fourth century AD, according to which the pillar was set up as a **Vishnudhvaja**

(standard of God Vishnu) on the hill known as Vishnupada in memory of a mighty king named **Chandra**.

- **Adhai Din ka Jhonpra:**
 - **Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra**, also known as the "**Two-and-a-half-day Mosque**," is a historical mosque located in **Ajmer, Rajasthan, India**.
 - The **mosque** was built in **AD 1199** by **Qutub-ud-Din-Aibak**.
- **Tomb of Nasir-ud-Din Mohammed (Sultan Ghari):**
 - The **Sultan Ghari's tomb** lies about **6 km west of the Qutub Minar**.
 - It was built in **1231** by **Iltutmish** over the **remains of his eldest son and Nasiru'd-Din Mahmud**.
- **Tomb of Shams-ud-Din Iltutmish:**
 - The **tomb of Shamsuddin Iltutmish** is located close to the **north-west of Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque**.
 - The tomb was built by Iltutmish himself in **AD 1235**.
- **Balban's Tomb:**
 - The **tomb of Ghiyasud din Balban** is located in **Mehrauli, New Delhi, India** built in **AD 1287**.

What are the Administrative Apparatuses of the Delhi Sultanate?

- The node of the **administrative apparatus** was the **Sultan**.
- He was the ruler of the entire realm, and after accession to the throne he had absolute power in his hands.
- He was the **supreme commander** of the army.
- The **sultan** was in many ways the **head of the administrative system**.
- The **capital city** and its **surrounding** areas were often areas where **direct control of central administration was prevalent**.
- The **ruler, the nobles, the court, royal architecture, trade, urbanization**, all were more focused on these regions, and hence the administrative apparatus was also elaborate and prominent.
- It was necessary to develop **centrally administered control** and **regulation mechanisms** because of the historical politics itself.
- The "**parasitic**" nature of the governing classes, along with other groups such as **artisans, traders, soldiers**, etc. meant that resources had to be appropriated sometimes by force from other parts of the empire for the maintenance of this political structure.

What was the Significance of Nobility in the Delhi Sultanate?

- **Qutbuddin** ascended the throne without any conflict since the **Muizzi (Muizzuddin Ghori, The Ghorid ruler)** nobles accepted him as their superior and offered their loyalty to him.
- **Iltutmish's** accession to the throne of Delhi constituted an important landmark in the growth of **Turkish nobility** in India.
- This reflected the **power of the nobles** to select their leaders through armed strength.
- **Nobles in Delhi** acquired prominence in selecting the ruler and Delhi became the hub of political activity of **Turkish rule**.
- **Iltutmish** is credited with the **establishment of a sovereign Turkish state** in India and the nobility in his time consisted of **efficient administrators**.
- After **Iltutmish's death (1235)** till the accession of **Balban (1269)**, the **Chihalgani slaves (group of 40 nobles of which Balban was also a part)** decided the succession issue.
- **Balban** tried to restore the supremacy of the crown by crushing the power of the **Turkish nobility**.
- **Balban's accession** demonstrated that the **hereditary principle** was no longer relevant.
- The accession of **Jalaluddin Khilji (1290)** to the throne established that heredity was not always the basis of sovereignty and **kingship**. **Ability and force** were also important factors in the succession to the throne.

UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. In the revenue administration of Delhi Sultanate, the in-charge of revenue collection was known as 'Amil'.
2. The Iqta system of Sultans of Delhi was an ancient indigenous institution.
3. The office of 'Mir Bakshi' came into existence during the reign of Khalji Sultans of Delhi.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- In the **Delhi Sultanate**, the task of collecting revenue directly from peasants and measurement of land rested on Amils. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **Iqta system** evolved in West Asia, particularly in Persia under the Buyid dynasty, which formalized the system and ruled during the 10th and 11th century. In India, the system was provided an institutional status by Iltutmish (Mamluk dynasty). Under the Iqta system, the land of the empire was divided into various tracts of land called Iqta which were assigned to officers known as 'Iqtadars' **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- **Ghiyas ud-din Balban (1266 -1287)** had set up a military department called 'Diwan-i-arz', under which 'Ariz-i-mamalik' was responsible for the organization and maintenance of the royal army. Alauddin Khalji introduced 'Dagh' system (i.e., branding of horses) to improve horse quality as well as eliminate fake numbering to further enhance efficiency of Diwan-i-arz department. In contrast, Mir Bhakshi was the head of the military department during Mughal India. **Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**