

7th Social Science Lesson 2 Notes in English

2] The Delhi Sultanate

Introduction:

During the eleventh century, the Turkish horsemen pillaged northern India and due to their persistent campaigns, they succeeded in seizing political control of the Gangetic plain by the next century. Though the success of their conquests could be attributed to their audacity and ferocity, their success is really due to the failure of Indians to defend themselves and their territories. Indians viewed each other with distrust, failing to take note of the success of Islam in early years of its spread. The superior military might of Muslim soldiers was yet another factor that contributed to success in their conquests. In this lesson, we discuss how Turkish warriors set about founding and consolidating their Islamic rule till the advent of Babur.

Slave Dynasty (1206 - 1290):

Muslim rule in India was established by Muhammad Ghori in 12th century A.D. (CE). As he had no sons, he nurtured special slaves called bandagan (a Persian term used for slaves purchased for military service). These slaves were posted as governors and they were later raised to the status of Sultans. After Ghori's death in 1206, one of his slaves Qutb-ud-din-Aibak who had been left behind by Muhammad Ghori to govern the territories he had conquered, proclaimed himself ruler of the Turkish territories in India. He laid the foundation of the Slave Dynasty. This dynasty is also known as Mamluk dynasty. Mamluk is an Arabic word meaning "slave". Qutb-ud-din-Aibak, Shams-ud-din-Iltutmish and Ghiyas-ud-din-Balban were the three great Sultans of this dynasty. The Slave Dynasty ruled over the sub-continent for about 84 years.

Qutb-ud-din-Aibak (1206 - 1210):

Qutb-ud-din-Aibak began his rule by establishing Lahore as the capital of his kingdom. Later he shifted his capital to Delhi. He was active all through his rule in Delhi conquering new territories and suppressing rebellions. He personally led military campaigns to the central and western Indo-Gangetic plain (north India) and left the conquest of the eastern Gangetic Plain (Bihar, Bengal) to the care of Bakhtiar Khalji. Aibak built the Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid (mosque) in Delhi. This mosque is considered to be the oldest in India. He also laid the foundation of the Qutb-Minar, but he was unable to complete it. It was later finished by his son-in-law and his successor Iltutmish. Aibak died of injuries received during an accidental fall from a horse, while playing polo in 1210.



Quwwat-ul-Islam Masjid

Iltutmish (1210 - 1236):

Aibak's son Aram Shah proved incompetent and so the Turkish nobles chose Iltutmish, the son-in-law of Aibak as the Sultan, who served as a military commander of Aibak. Iltutmish firmly established his control over the territories by suppressing rebellions. It was during his reign that the threat of Mongols under Chengiz Khan loomed large over the frontiers of India. He averted the impending danger by refusing to provide shelter to the Kwarezm Shah Jalal-ud-din, who had been driven out by Chengiz Khan. In order to counter the possible attack of the Mongols, Iltutmish organised Turkish nobility into a select group of 40 nobles known as chahalgani or The Forty.

Iltutmish granted iqtas (land) to members of his army. Iqta is the land granted to army officials in lieu of a regular wage. The iqta holder is called the iqtadar or muqti who had to provide the Sultan with military assistance in times of war. The iqtadar collected revenue from his iqta to meet the cost of maintaining his troops and horses.



Qutb-Minar

Iltutmish completed the construction of the Qutb-Minar, which had been started by Aibak. Iltutmish died in April 1236 after ruling for 26 years.

Razia (1236 - 1240):

As the most capable son of Iltutmish, Rukn-ud-din-Firuz, was dead, Iltutmish nominated his daughter Razia Sultana as his successor to the throne of Delhi. Razia was an able and brave fighter. But she had a tough time with Turkish nobles as she favoured non-Turkish nobles. She also faced the situation of the ferocious Mongols raiding Punjab during her reign.

Razia made an Ethiopian slave named Jalal-ud-din Yakut as her personal attendant and started trusting him completely. This led to a revolt of the Turkish nobles who conspired against her and got her murdered in 1240.

Ghiyas-ud-din Balban (1266 - 1287):

After Razia, three weak rulers in succession ascended the throne. After them came Ghiyas-ud-din Balban. Balban abolished The Forty as it was hostile to him. He established a department of spies to gather intelligence about the conspirators and the trouble makers against his rule. He dealt with insubordination and defiance of royal authority sternly. Tughril Khan, a provincial governor in Bengal, who raised a banner of revolt against Balban, was captured and beheaded. He was ruthless in dealing with enemies like Meos of Mewat (a Muslim Rajput community from north-western India). Balban, however, took care to maintain cordial relationship with the Mongols. He obtained from Hulagu Khan, a grandson of Chengiz Khan and the Mongol viceroy in Iran, the assurance that Mongols would not advance beyond Sutlej.



Tomb of Balban

Balban built forts to guard his empire against the Mongol attacks. He patronised the famous Persian poet Amir Khusru. Balban died in 1287. Balban's son Kaiqubad turned out to be weak. In 1290 Malik Jalal-ud-din Khalji, the commander of the army, assumed the office of Naib (a deputy to the Sultan) and ruled the kingdom in the name of Kaiqubad. Then one day, Jalal-ud-din sent one of his officers and had Kaiqubad murdered. Jalal-ud-din then formally ascended the throne. With him began the rule of Khalji dynasty.

Khalji Dynasty (1290 - 1320):

Jalal-ud-din Khalji (1296 - 1316):

There were many military campaigns during the reign of Jalal-ud-din. But they were mostly organised and led by his nephew, Ala-ud-din, the governor of Kara. One significant military expedition was against the Deccan kingdom Devagiri. Ala-ud-din, after defeating the Yadava king Ramachandra, plundered the city and returned with huge wealth. Ala-ud-din treacherously killed Jalal-ud-din after buying off the prominent nobles and important commanders with the wealth he had brought from the Deccan and declared himself as the Sultan of Delhi in 1296.

Ala-ud-din Khalji (1296 - 1316):

Ala-ud-din Khalji consolidated the Delhi Sultanate. The range of his conquests is impressive: in the Punjab (against the Mongols), in Rajasthan and in Gujarat. With his northern frontiers secure, he sent his chief lieutenant Malik Kafur into the southern parts who took even the distant Madurai in 1310. The Yadavas of Devagiri, the Kakatias of Warangal, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra and the Pandyas of Madurai accepted Ala-ud-din's suzerainty.

Ala-ud-din's political and administrative reforms were as impressive as his military conquests. Ala-ud-din undertook a survey of the agrarian resources around his capital and fixed a standard revenue demand. He entrusted the task of collecting the revenue to the military officers. This measure deprived the local chiefs and rajas of their time memorial privilege. Ala-ud-din established a system of forced procurement of food grains for Delhi and other garrison centres. The procurement prices were fixed and grain collected as tax was stored in state granaries. In order to ensure the enforcement of his new regulations, he employed spies who were responsible to report to him directly.

Ala-ud-din died in 1316. The failure of his successors to retain power led to the seizure of power by Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq, who founded the Tughluq dynasty.

Tughluq Dynasty (1320 - 1324):

One of the major tasks of Ghiyas-ud-din as the Sultan was to recover the territories that the Sultanate had lost during the turmoil following the death of Ala-ud-din. Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq sent his son Jauna Khan to fight against Warangal. Jauna Khan defeated Pratabarudra of Warangal and returned with a rich booty. With this looted wealth, Ghiyas-ud-din is said to have laid the foundation of the city Tughluqabad near Delhi. However, as Ala-ud-din treacherously killed his uncle, Jauna Khan was said to have killed his father and ascended the throne with title Muhammad-bin-Tughluq in 1325.

Muhammad-bin-Tughluq (1325 - 1351):

Muhammad-bin-Tughluq was a learned man. Yet he was a person of cruelty. Ala-ud-din had conquered, looted and left the old ruling families as his dependents. In contrast, Muhammad Tughluq dreamt of making the whole of the subcontinent his domain. With the view to facilitating extended sovereignty, he shifted his capital from Delhi to the centre of the kingdom, namely Devagiri. He also changed its name to Daulatabad. When Muhammad himself decided that the move was a mistake, he ordered a return to Delhi as the capital again. When Ibn Battuta, the Morocco traveller who was with the Sultan, returned to Delhi, he found Delhi 'empty, abandoned and had but a small population'.

Tughluq changed the Ala-ud-din's system of revenue collections in grain and ordered that land revenue, which was increased, should henceforward be collected in money. This proved disastrous during famines. When he discovered that the stock of coins and silver was inadequate for minting, he issued a token currency in copper. Counterfeiting soon became order of the day and, as a result, the entire revenue system collapsed. Trade suffered as foreign merchants stopped business. This forced Sultan to withdraw the token currency and pay gold and silver coins in exchange. This move led the state to become bankrupt. Tughluq increased land tax in the Doab region, which triggered peasant revolts. As the revolts were cruelly dealt with, peasants abandoned cultivation, which resulted in the outbreak of frequent famines.



Coins of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq

Tughluq ruled as Sultan for 25 years. During his long reign, he had to face many revolts of the provincial governors. The Governors of Awadh, Multan and Sind revolted and declared themselves independent. In South India, several states arose. The new Daulatabad and the conquered territories around them were declared independent sultanate called Bahmani. Its founder after whom it was named, was a soldier formerly in Tughluq service. Madurai was proclaimed a separate sultanate in 1334. Bengal became independent in 1346. Tughluq died on 23 March 1351.

Firoz Shah Tughluq (1351 - 1388):



Tomb of Firoz Shah Tughluq

Firoz, the son of Ghiyas-ud-din's younger brother, succeeded Muhammad-bin-Tughluq. Firoz could neither suppress revolts nor win back the provinces that had broken away. He also showed no interest in re-conquering the southern provinces. He refused to accept an invitation (c. 1365) from a Bahmani prince to intervene in the affairs of the Deccan. Firoz rewarded Sufis and other religious leaders generously and listened to their advice. He also created charities to aid poor Muslims, built colleges, mosques, and hospitals. He adopted many humanitarian measures. He banned inhuman punishments and abolished taxes not recognised by Muslim law.

He promoted agriculture by waiving off the debts of the agriculturalists and constructing many canals for irrigation. He laid out 1200 new gardens and restored 30 old gardens of Ala-ud-din-Khalji. He had built new towns such as Firozabad, Jaunpur, Hissar and Firozpur.

Despite adopting a peaceful approach and taking efforts to organise the Sultanate well, he had to spend his last days in unhappiness. His own son Muhammad Khan revolted against him and Firoz Shah died in September 1388, at the age of 83.



Timur's Invasion (1398):

The sacking and massacre by Tamerlane or Timur of Delhi came a decade after Firuz Shah Tughluq died. As a ruler of the region around Samarkand in Central Asia, Timur had occupied some parts in the north-west of India. Taking advantage of India's weakness, he entered India in December 1398 and plundered Delhi. Punjab, besides the Delhi city, was the province that suffered most by Timur's raid. Timur, apart from carrying huge wealth in the form of gold, silver, jewels, also took along Indian artisans like carpenters and masons to work on monuments in Samarkand.

Sayyid Dynasty (1414 - 1451):

Though the Sultanate fragmented into a number of independent kingdoms, it endured for 114 years more, till the Mughal invasion. Before leaving Delhi, Timur had left behind his representative Khizr Khan as the governor of the territories he had conquered (Delhi, Meerut and Punjab). He founded the Sayyid Dynasty in 1414, which lasted till 1451. The last ruler of this dynasty, Ala-ud-din Alam Shah, abdicated the throne in 1451. This gave Bahlol Lodi, then the governor of Sirhind (Punjab), the opportunity to become the new Sultan of Delhi, leading to the establishment of Lodi dynasty.

Lodi Dynasty (1451 - 1526):

In 1489, Bahlol Lodi was succeeded by his son Sikandar Lodi. Sikandar was a patron of arts and learning. He founded the city of Agra and made it his capital. He died in 1517 and was succeeded by his son, Ibrahim Lodi, who was defeated by Babur in 1526 in the Panipat battle. Thus the Lodi

dynasty and the Delhi Sultanate were ended by Babur who went on to establish the Mughal Empire in India.

Summary:

- ❖ Establishment of Muslim rule in India by Muhammad Ghori.
- ❖ Slave dynasty founded by Qutb – ud- din- Aibak and consolidated by his Son-in-law Iltutmish.
- ❖ Razia, the daughter of Iltutmish, a brave fighter and a great administrator.
- ❖ Balban's espionage system and the abolition of The Forty, to reduce the power of Turkish nobles.
- ❖ Ala – ud- din- Khalji as the founder of Khalji dynasty - his military conquests and administrative reforms.
- ❖ Firoz Shah Tughluq as a compassionate ruler with his concentration on the well - being of the people.
- ❖ The sacking of Delhi by Timur.
- ❖ Khizr Khan founding the Sayyid dynasty and Bahlol Lodi the governor of Sirhind establishing the Lodi dynasty.
- ❖ The first battle of Panipat paving the way for the foundation of Mughal Empire by Babur in A.D. (CE)1526.

Glossary:

1.	Impending	About to happen	எக்கணமும் நடைபெற இருக்கிற/அச்சுறுத்தும் நிலையில் இருக்கிற
2.	Ferocious	Cruel, Violent	மூர்க்கமான/அச்சம் தருகிற வகையில்
3.	Conspirator	Someone who conspires secretly with other people to do something unlawful or harmful	சதிகாரர்கள்
4.	Patron	Supporter, promoter	புரவலர்
5.	Plunder	To steal goods forcibly from a place especially during a war	கொள்ளையடி
6.	Procurement	The process of getting supplies	கொள்முதல்
7.	Diasastrous	Causing great damage	பேரழிவு
8.	Fragment	Break into pieces	துண்டு துண்டாக
9.	Counterfeit	Fake	போலியான
10.	Waiving	Exempting	விலங்கு அளி

Do You Know?

Sack of Chittor (1303):

When Ala-ud-din's army overwhelmed the Rajput army in Chittor and in the context of threat of defeat, the men and women of the fortress, in accordance with their old custom, performed the rite of jauhar. According to this custom, left with no other way to survive, the men would go out and die in the field of battle and women would burn themselves on a pyre.

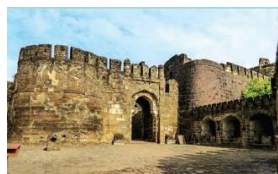


Chittor Fort

It was a 40-days march to Daulatabad from Delhi. Many people left. Some hid themselves. When they were found, they were punished cruelly, even though one was a blind man and another a paralytic. Describing the city as spreading over eight or ten miles, a historian observed: 'All was destroyed. So complete was the ruin that not a cat or a dog was left among the buildings of the city in its palaces or in its suburbs.'

Islamic art and architecture:

The mansions of high-ranking Muslim nobles, soldiers and officials were built first in cities and the neighbourhoods. Around them, the mosques in the imperial style were constructed by successive Muslim regimes in Delhi. Mosques and Madrasas looked architecturally different. The graceful decorations of doorways and walls with lines from the Koran made a distinct appearance in these buildings. The shape of all these buildings was Persian, while the decoration was Indian. So, it is called Indo-Saracenic architecture. Qutb Minar, Alai-Darwaza, Quwwat-ul Islam Masjid, Moth-ki-Masjid, the tombs of Iltutmish, Balban and the forts of Daulatabad and Firozabad were all constructed in this style.



Daulatabad Fort



Alai-Darwaza