

Lesson at a Glance

- Delhi became the capital of a kingdom under the Tomara Rajputs.
- It was only under the rule of the Tomars and Chauhans that Delhi flourished as an important **commercial centre**.
- The city was inhabited by many Jaina merchants who also constructed a number of temples.
- Coins, known as *dehliwal*, were minted here and had wide circulation.
- **Delhi Sultanate** played the most vital role in the transformation of Delhi into a capital which controlled vast areas of the subcontinent.
- **Inscriptions, coins and architecture** provide a lot of information but especially significant are "histories", *tarik* (singular)/*tawarikh* (plural), written in Persian, the language of administration under Delhi Sultan.
- *Tawarikh* were written by learned men, secretaries, administrators, poets, and courtiers who lived in cities (mainly Delhi). They were written for the Sultans with an anticipation of rich rewards. They also advised rulers on governance, emphasizing the importance of just rule based on birthright and gender distinctions, not shared by every one.
- **Raziyya**, the daughter of Sultan Iltutmish, became the Sultan of Delhi in 1236 but she was dethroned only in 1240 only for being a woman and was unacceptable to the nobles. Even a famous chronicler of the age, **Minhaj-i Siraj**, recognized her as more able than all her brothers but was not comfortable with her, only for her being a lady.
- In the early thirteenth century there was no significant **expansion of Delhi** beyond heavily fortified town occupied by garrisons. It was only during the reigns of Ghiyasuddin Balban, Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq that Delhi saw expansion for the first time.
- The expansion was initiated with the **internal frontier**. Forests were cleared in the Ganga-Yamuna *doab* and hunter-gatherers and pastoralists expelled from their habitats and these lands were given to the peasants in order to promote agriculture. Regional trades were also promoted.

- **External frontier** was the next phase of expansion which started with Alauddin Khalji in southern India and culminated with Muhammad Tughluq.
- The armies of Delhi Sultanate had marched across a large part of the subcontinent till the reign of Muhammad Tughluq. They defeated rivals, seized cities. The Sultanate collected taxes from the peasantry.
- The early Delhi Sultans favoured the appointment of their slaves purchased for military service as governors to control the administration of the vast empire. These slaves were totally dependent upon their master and so they were more reliable and trustworthy. They were called **bandagan** in Persian.
- The Khaljis and Tughluqs continued the use of *bandagan* and also raised people of humble birth, usually their clients, to high positions and appointed them as generals and governors. However, this also gave rise to political instability as there was often a conflict for succession.
- This system was criticised by the elites and authors of *tawarikh*, because for them the new high class people were in fact 'low and base-born'.
- Khalji and Tughluq monarchs, like their predecessors, appointed military commanders as governors of territories of varying sizes. These territories were called **iqta** and their holders were called **iqtdar** or **muqti**.
- *Muqtis* were responsible for leading their military campaigns and maintaining their *iqtas*.
- Accountants were appointed by the state to check the amount of revenue collected by *muqtis* who were not allowed to collect revenue more than that prescribed by the state nor were they allowed to keep soldiers more than the number prescribed by the state.
- Delhi Sultans had complete control over the hinterland of the cities, and so the *samanta* aristocrats were forced to accept their authority. During Alauddin Khalji's regime the state brought the assessment and collection of land revenue under its control.
- There were three **types of taxes** : (1) on **cultivation** called *kharaj* and amounting to about 50 per cent of the peasant's produce; (2) on **cattle**; and (3) on **houses**.
- As the large part of the subcontinent was outside the control of Delhi Sultan, it was difficult to control distant provinces like Bengal from Delhi. Hence, soon after annexation of southern India, the

entire region became independent. The local chieftains established their rule in these regions.

- The **Mongols** led by Genghis Khan invaded Transoxiana in north-east Iran in 1219. Such attacks frequented during the reign of Alauddin Khalji and in the early days of Muhammad Tughluq's rule. This forced the two rulers to mobilize a large standing army in Delhi. It posed a huge administrative challenge.
- After Tughluqs the **Sayyid** and **Lodi dynasties** ruled from Delhi and Agra until 1526. By that time Jaunpur, Bengal, Malwa, Gujarat, Rajasthan and the entire south India had independent rulers who established flourishing states and prosperous capitals. It was during this period that some new ruling groups like the **Afghans** and the **Rajputs** emerged.
- Some small but powerful and extremely well administered states also emerged. **Sher Shah Sur** (1540—1545) was the most powerful of them all. He even challenged the Mughal emperor Humayun and captured Delhi. In a very short period of fifteen years (1540-1555) he introduced many reforms and a lot of welfare works. His administration became the model followed by the great emperor Akbar (1556—1605) when he consolidated the Mughal Empire.

TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

Let's Recall

- Q. 1.** Which ruler first established his or her capital at Delhi?
Ans. The Tomara Rajputs were the first rulers who established their capital at Delhi.
- Q. 2.** What was the language of administration under the Delhi Sultans?
Ans. It was Persian.
- Q. 3.** In whose reign did the Sultanate reach its farthest extent?
Ans. The Sultanate reached its farthest extent during the reign of Muhammad Tughluq.
- Q. 4.** From which country did Ibn Battuta travel to India?
Ans. Ibn Battuta belonged to Morocco, Africa and travelled to India.

Let's Understand

- Q. 5.** According to the 'circle of justice' why was it important for military commanders to keep the interests of the peasantry in mind?

Ans. Peasantry was the backbone of the entire kingdom. The king could not do anything without it because it was the source of revenue. The soldiers got the salaries which came from this revenue. Hence, it was necessary to keep the peasants prosperous and happy because only then they could be able to pay revenue. Now, it becomes clear why the military commanders kept the interests of the peasantry at top.

Q. 6. What is meant by the 'internal' and 'external' frontiers of the Sultanate?

Ans. The 'internal' frontier means the hinterland of the garrison town.

The 'external' frontier means the areas beyond the hinterland of the garrison towns.

Q. 7. What were the steps taken to ensure that muqtis performed their duties? Why do you think they may have wanted to defy the orders of the Sultans?

Ans. The steps taken are given below:

1. Accountants were appointed by the state to check the amount of revenue collected by the *muqtis*.
2. Care was taken that the *muqti* collected only the taxes prescribed by the state and not more than that.
3. It was also taken care that he kept only the required number of soldiers.

The *muqtis* may have wanted to defy the orders to the Sultans because their appointment was not hereditary. Also, their job was transferable. What is more, the conditions of service were severely imposed on them which they did not like.

Q. 8. What was the impact of the Mongol invasions on the Delhi Sultanate?

Ans. The Delhi Sultanate mobilised a large standing army in Delhi. It posed a big administrative challenge.

- Alauddin Khalji constructed a new garrison town at Siri for his soldiers. He imposed taxes on land to feed the army at the rate of 50 percent of peasant's yield. He began to pay the soldiers in cash.
- Muhammad Tughluq shifted people of Delhi to Daulatabad in south and thus converted Delhi into a garrison town. He also disbanded the army. He also paid the soldiers in cash.

Let's Discuss

Q. 9. Do you think the authors of *tawarikh* would provide information about the lives of ordinary men and women?

Ans. I don't think like that. It is because the authors of *tawarikh* lived in cities mainly Delhi. They were not in touch of village people. They often wrote their histories for Sultans in the hope of rich rewards. They had nothing to do with common mass. Hence, it was obvious that the information provided by them would lack ordinary men and women.

Q. 10. Raziyya Sultan was unique in the history of the Delhi Sultanate. Do you think women leaders are accepted more readily today?

Ans. Yes, I think like that. The situation has changed today. Due to the spread of education people now realise the potential of women. So, they have started accepting them as leaders. Even in rural areas now we see women Sarpanches and Councillors.

Q. 11. Why were the Delhi Sultans interested in cutting down forests? Does deforestation occur for the same reasons today?

Ans. The Delhi Sultans cleared the forests in the Ganga-Yamuna doab and gave these lands to peasants in order to encourage agriculture. They also established new fortresses and towns in these lands to protect trade routes and to promote regional trade.

No, deforestation does not occur for the same reasons today. Nowadays, vegetation cover is being reduced due to over-population, urbanisation and commercialisation.

Let's Do

Q. 12. Find out whether there are many buildings built by the Delhi Sultans in your area. Are there any other buildings in your area that were built between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries? Describe some of these buildings, and draw sketches of them.

Ans. Students are suggested to visit their city and prepare the list themselves. They can take help of their parents.