

# Delhi Sultanate

The **Delhi Sultanate** was an Islamic empire based in Delhi that stretched over large parts of the Indian subcontinent for 320 years (1206–1526). There was a total of five dynasties that ruled over the Delhi Sultanate sequentially: the Mamluk dynasty (1206–1290), the Khalji dynasty (1290–1320), the Tughlaq dynasty (1320–1414), the Sayyid dynasty (1414–1451), and the Lodi dynasty (1451–1526). On multiple occasions, the entire mass of India was being ruled under the Sultan, sometimes even stretching out to modern-day Pakistan, Bangladesh as well as some parts of southern Nepal. Delhi Sultanate has had a deep impact on the country's culture and Geography. covered large swathes of territory in modern-day India,  
 What was the Delhi Sultanate?

The Islamic era started with the invasion of Md. Bin Qasim captured the area of Sind in 712 AD. Initially, India's Islamic rule was fragile but changed drastically with the Turkish invasion.

- Muhammad Ghori was one of the famous names in the Sultan's era. Muhammad Ghori Invaded India seven times to expand its rule over the Indian subcontinent, specifically Delhi.

- He fought two battles of Tarain. In the first battle, he lost badly to the era's most powerful Indian ruler, Prithviraj Chauhan.

- In the second battle, he defeated Prithviraj Chauhan. He fought with approximately one lakh soldiers in that battle which outnumbered the Rajput army.

- Thus, Muhammad Ghori is responsible for establishing the Islamic Empire in India.

After the death of Muhammad Ghori in 1206 AD, Qutubuddin Aibak, with Mangburni in Central Asia and Yalduz in Lahore, started the Slave dynasty, which marked the beginning of the Delhi Sultanate.

Timeline of the Delhi Sultanate;

Ruler Period Relation to the Throne

Ruler	Period	Relation to the Throne
Qutb-ud-din Aibak	(1206–1210)	Founder of Mamluk Dynast and Slave of Muhammad Ghori
Aram Shah	(1210–1211)	Qutb-ud-din Aibak's eldest son
Shams-ud-din		
Shams-ud-din- Iltutmish	(1211–1236)	Qutb-ud-din Aibak's Son-in-law
Ruknuddin Feruz Shah	(1236)	Iltutmish's son
Razia Sultana	(1236–1240)	Iltutmish' daughter

Muizuddin Bahram	(1240–1242)	Iltutmish's son
Alauddin Masud	(1242–1246)	Ruknuddin Feruz Shah's son
Nasiruddin Mahmud	(1246–1266)	Razia's Brother
Ghiyas-ud-din Balban	(1266–1286)	Father-in-law of Nashiruddin Mahmud and the most powerful ruler of the Slave Dynasty
Muiz ud din Kaiqubad	(1287–1290)	Ghiyasuddin Balban's Grandson
Kaimur	1290	Muiz-ud-din Kaiqubad's son

The Slave dynasty ruled from c. 1206 – 1290 CE. It was also named the 'Mamluk' dynasty; the word Mamluk is an Arabic word that means "slave/owned". In fact, there were three other dynasties that were established during this period. They were –

1. Qutbi dynasty (c. 1206 – 1211 CE) – Its founder was Qutub-ud-din Aibak.
2. First Ilbari dynasty (c. 1211- 1266 CE) – Its founder was Iltutmish.
3. Second Ilbari dynasty (c. 1266 – 1290 CE) – Its founder was Balban.

### **Qutub-ud-din Aibak (1206 – 1210)**

After the demise of Muhammad Ghori, Qutubuddin Aibak got his possessions in India in 1192 and declared himself the Sultan. The Slave dynasty is also known as the Mamluk dynasty. In Arabic, Mamluk means enslaved person.

- Qutub-ud-din Aibak founded the Slave/Mamluk dynasty. He was Muhammad Ghori's Turkish slave. He became important to Ghori because he played an important part in the expansion of the Turkish Sultanate in India, especially after the Battle of Tarain. This caused Muhammad Ghori to make him the governor of his Indian possessions.
- He was also known as Lakh Baksh due to his generosity.
- He constructed two mosques, namely the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi and the Adhai din ka Jhompra mosque at Ajmer. He constructed Qutub Minar.
- After ruling for four years, he died in 1210 while playing chaugan (polo).
- His son Aram Shah succeeded the throne in 1210 but was incompetent and removed from the throne

**Aram Shah (1210):-** Qutub-ud-din Aibak was succeeded by his son Aram Shah but he was quickly declared incapable as a ruler. He was opposed by the Turkish armies making his rule last for only eight months

**.Iltutmish (1210 – 1236)** Sultan Iltutmish is considered the integrator of the Turkish conquest of Northern India. Iltutmish was from the Ilbari tribe making his dynasty the Ilbari dynasty. He was sold into slavery by his half-brothers to Aibak who eventually made him his son-in-law by marrying his daughter to him. He was appointed as the Iqtadar of Gwalior by Aibak. It was in 1211 CE when Iltutmish dethroned Aram Shah to become the Sultan and took the name of Shamsuddin. He is regarded as the real consolidator of Turkish rule in India. One major threat that came upon his reign was that of the Mongols in the year 1220 when Chengiz Khan, the leader of the Mongols, started his march towards Central Asia. He defeated Jalal-ud-din Mangabarni, the ruler of Khwarizm. Mangabarni escaped and sought refuge under Iltutmish. By denying him shelter, Iltutmish cleverly saved his reign from the Mongolian onslaught. He formed a group of 40 powerful Turkish nobles and named it Turkan-i-Chahalgani and introduced a system in which the father's land would be succeeded by his son, and the succession of land would continue as the family progressed. He made Delhi his new capital. He shifted the capital from Lahore. Iltutmish was regarded as a great statesman who was cemented when he received 'Mansur', a letter of recognition sanctioned by the Abbasid Caliph in 1229 which made him the legal sovereign ruler of India. He completed the construction of Qutub Minar in Delhi, the tallest stone tower in India (238 ft). He also introduced a new system of coinage in India. The silver tanka weighed 175 grams and became the standard coin in medieval India. It is important to note that the Silver tanka became the basis of the modern rupee. He patronised many scholars and a number of Sufi saints came to India during his reign. Minhaj-us-Siraj (author of Tahaqqat-i-Nasuri), Taj-ud-din, Muhammad Jundiai, Fakhru'l-Mulk-Isami, and Malik Qutub-ud-din Hasan were some of the important names that graced his halls. • He divided the empire into Iqtas, a practice that was brought to India by Ghori. In this system, the nobles and officials were assigned specific land pieces for revenue collection that made up to be their salary. • He nominated his daughter as his successor. He reigned from 1210 AD to 1236 AD.

### **Ruknuddin Feruz Shah (1236)**

While Iltutmish had named his daughter, Razia Sultan as the next ruler in line. The rulers found it unsettling for a woman to be holding the position of Sultan. • Ruknuddin was the eldest son of Iltutmish who was helped by the nobles to ascend the Throne. • The governor of Multan revolted against this causing Ruknuddin Feroz Shah to march to suppress the revolt. This opportunity was used by Razia and with the help of the Amirs of Delhi; she was able to seize the throne of the Delhi Sultanate that rightfully belonged to her.

**Raziya Sultan (1236 – 1239):-**Razia Sultan was the first and last woman to rule Delhi. She was the daughter of Iltutmish. She Faced opposition when she appointed a non-Turk, Yakut, as cavalry head.

- The governor of Bhatinda, Altunia, rebelled against Razia Sultan imprisoning her under a Conspiracy in which Yakut was murdered. Razia Sultan married Altunia to get out of jail and reclaim the throne but was killed by Muizuddin Bahram Shah, son of Iltutmish. She reigned from 1236 AD to 1240 AD.

**Bahram Shah (1240 – 1242):-**The fall of Raziya Sultan paved the way for the ascendancy of ‘the Forty’. There were a lot of quick successions after Iltutmish’s death. Bahram Shah’s reign saw a continued struggle for supremacy between the Sultan and the nobles. Initially, the Turkish nobles supported Bahram Shah. However, later the reign became disordered and during this unrest, Bahram Shah was killed by his own army.

**Alauddin Masud Shah (1242 – 1246):-**He was the son of Ruknuddin Feroz Shah and nephew of Raziya Sultan. After the death of Bahram Shah, he was chosen as the next ruler. However, he was incompetent and incapable of handling the affairs in the government, and was replaced by Nasiruddin Mahmud.

**Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246 – 1265)**

Nasiruddin was Iltutmish’s grandson. He has claim to the throne but he was young and inexperienced.

- Balban/Ulugh Khan, a member of Chahalgani (the Forty), helped Nasiruddin ascend to the throne. He married his daughter to Nasiruddin and hence, the real power resided in the hands of Balban who was powerful and organised in the stately administration/ however, he faced several rivals in the royal court. In 1265, Nasiruddin Mahmud died and according to some historians like Ibn Batuta and Isami, Balban poisoned him and ascended the throne.

**Balban (1266 – 1286):-**

Nasiruddin, the younger son of Iltutmish, had his reign from 1246-1265 AD, but as he was Interested in philosophy, he was inefficient at ruling. Balban proclaimed the throne in 1265 after killing all members of the Iltutmish family. Balban was experienced as a regent who made him understand the Sultanate’s Problems well. He recognized the real threat to be the nobles called ‘Forty’. He removed the Chahalgani as it became very powerful after the death of Razia Sultan. He separated Diwan-i-arz (military department) from Diwan-i-wazart (finance department). He reorganized the army.

He declared himself as Zil-i-Ilahi, which literally translates to ‘the shadow of God’. Owing to the fact that the Sultanate went through ruler in such quick succession, it was for Balban to enhance the power of the monarchy. He introduced a strict court discipline With new customs like prostration (sajida) and kissing the Sultan’s feet (paibos)

**Kaiqubad (1287 – 1290)**

Kaiqubad was the grandson of Balban and was made the Sultan of Delhi by the nobles.

- He was soon replaced by his son, Kaimur.
- In 1290, the Ariz-e-Mumalik (the minister of war) of Kaimur named Feroz murdered him and captured the throne. He assumed the title of Jalal-ud-din Khalji and established the Khalji dynasty. Khilji Dynasty. The Khilji dynasty also belonged to the Turkish race. It was in power for the shortest period,

Rulers	Period	Events
Jalal-ud-din Firoz Khilji	1290–1296	Founder of the Khilji/Khalji Dynasty
Alauddin Khilji	1296–1316	Jalal-ud-din Firoz Khilji’s nephew
Qutb-ud-din Mubarak Shah	1316–1320	Son of Alauddin Khilji

1290 AD to 1316 AD. The sultans under this dynasty have been listed in the table below;

**Jalal-ud-din Khalji (c. 1290 – 1296 CE)**

Jalal-ud-din Khalji was the founder of the Khalji dynasty. He was already 70 years old when he came to power. He was a seasoned warrior who had been the warden of the marches in the Northwest under Balban’s reign. He had fought many successful battles against the Mongols.

- The Khaljis were of Turkish-Afghan descent. Unlike the rulers before them, they did not Execute or dismiss the Turkish officials. However, the rise of Khaljis marked the end of the Turkish monopoly. He was a pacifist to a great extent and tried to soften some of the harsher aspects of Balban’s rule. He was the first ruler of the Delhi Sultanate who was secular to a great extent and denied India to be an Islamic state as the majority of the population was Hindu. To him,

a state should be based on the generous support of its people. He adopted the policy of tolerance and avoided harsh punishments. However, his reign came to an end when he was murdered by his nephew and son-in-law Alauddin Khalji.

### **Alauddin Khalji (1296 – 1316)**

Alauddin Khalji is known as the Alexander of India (Sikander-i-Sani). Alauddin Khalji was the first Emperor to have a permanent army and paid the soldiers in cash. He constructed the entrance Gate of Qutub Minar, known as Alai Darwaja, Mahal Hazrat Satoon, Hauz Khas, and Siri fort. He collected tax in cash. • Alauddin Khalji was the nephew and son-in-law of Jalal-ud-din Khalji. During the reign of Jalaluddin Khalji, he was appointed as the Arizi-i-Mumalik (minister of war) and the Amiri-Tuzuk (Master of ceremonies) His policy was similar to Balban's way of governance which was quite contrary to Jalaluddin's policy of tolerance. He identified a few problems in the system that caused rebellions (according to him) like the increased wealth of the nobles, intermarriage among noble families, an inefficient spy system and consumption of liquor.

### **Military Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji:-**

- Alauddin was skilled at warfare and had experience as well. He understood the importance of having a strong army and how it was key to a stable reign. For this reason, he maintained a permanent standing army. He had been successful in stopping Mongolian invasions several times. The northwestern frontier was fortified and Ghazi Malik (Ghayasuddin Tughlaq) was appointed as the Warden of Marches to protect the frontier.

1. **Conquest of Gujarat:** Alauddin Khalji sent two generals, Nusrat Khan and Ulugh Khan, with his army to win Gujarat in 1299. King Rai Karan and his daughter were able to escape while the queen was caught and sent to Delhi. Another person, Malik Kafur, a eunuch was also sent to Delhi. He later became the military commander.

2. **Conquest of Rajputana:** After capturing Gujarat, Aladdin's attention turned toward the Rajput kingdoms. Ranthambore: Considered the strongest fort in Rajasthan, Khalji had a tough time initially. However, in 1301, the fort fell to Alauddin. The Rajput women of the palace committed Jauhar, an act of self-immolation. Chittor: Chittor, another powerful state of Rajputana, fell to Khalji in 1303. According to folklore and some scholars, Aladdin's prime motivation behind attacking Chittor was the coveted beauty of Queen Padmini, the wife of Raja Ratan Singh. Despite having fought bravely, Raja Ratan was defeated. The Rajput women of the palace including Rani Padmini performed Jauhar. This episode has been mentioned in the book Padmavat written by Jayasi. Malwa and others: Under the able leadership of Ain-ul-Mulk, the Khalji army captured Malwa in 1305. Ujjain, Mandu, Chanderi and Dhar were also annexed. After the annexation of Jalore in 1311, Alauddin Khalji became the master of north India after having captured large parts of the Rajputana.

3. **Conquest of Deccan and the far South:** The conquest of Deccan and the far South was the greatest achievement of Alauddin. Yadavas of Devagiri, Kakatiyas of Warangal, Hoys alas of Dwarasamudra and the Pandyas of Madurai ruled this region. Malik Kafur was sent to lead the invasions for Alauddin. When he was successful, he made Malik Kafur Naib Malik of the empire to honour him.

- Despite his illiteracy, Khalji patronized many poets like Amir Hasan and Amir Khusrau. He also built the famous gateway known as Alai Darwaza. He constructed a new capital at Siri. Alauddin took up the title of Sikander-i-Azam and called Amir Khusrau the title of Tuti-i-Hind.

### **Administration of Alauddin Khalji**

Khalji was skilled at running his administration smoothly, he ushered in many reforms to keep a stronghold over such a vast empire.

### **Military Reforms**

- A large permanent standing army was maintained which was paid in cash.
- According to a historian named Ferishta, Khalji recruited 4, 75,000 cavalrymen. He also introduced the system of dagh that was used for the branding of horses and prepared Huliya, which was a descriptive list of soldiers. A strict review of the army every now and then for the most efficiency.

### **Market Reforms**

- Four separate markets in Delhi were established, mandi (for grain); another one which sold cloth, sugar, dried fruits, oil and butter; a third one for horses, cattle and slaves and the fourth market was for miscellaneous commodities.
- Shahna-i-Mandi was the head who presided over each of these markets. The supply of grain was maintained by government storehouses. Regulations were in place for fixing

The prices of all commodities.

- Diwan-i-Riyasat was created, headed by an officer called Naib-i-Riyasat. Every Merchant was registered here.
- Munhiyans, secret spies appointed by Khalji, were responsible for sending reports to the Sultan detailing the functioning of these markets.
- He also often sent slave boys to buy various commodities to check the prices. Anyone violating the orders received severe punishment.
- Hoarding wasn't permissible. Even during famines, the prices of the commodities remained the same.