

Slave Dynasty

[UPSC Notes]

What is Slave Dynasty?

Slave Dynasty is the first dynasty to rule over the Delhi Sultanate. The Slave dynasty is also known as the Mamluk dynasty. The Mamluk dynasty was founded by Qutb ud- Din Aibak in Delhi. The word 'Mamluk' means 'owned'. The Mamluk was a strong military class that originated around the 9th century CE in the Islamic empire of the Abbasid Caliphs. The Mamluks controlled political and military power in Egypt. During that era, high-profile officers, army generals, and soldiers were called slaves. They had devoted their lives to their masters. Thus, the word slave originated from there itself.

- Slave Dynasty ruled from 1206 to 1290.
- The Khilji (or Khalji) dynasty, the second dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate, succeeded the Slave Dynasty.

Founder of Slave Dynasty - Qutb-ud-Din Aibak

The founder of the Slave Dynasty was Qutb-ud-Din Aibak. He ruled the Delhi Sultanate from 1206 AD. He belonged to a Turkish family in Central Asia.

- He was brought as a slave to Muhammad Ghori (ruler of Gur in Afghanistan). The works of the Aibak were liked by everyone in the court including the ruler. Further, he was promoted and gained the position of most trusted general and commander of Ghori.
- After the assassination of Muhammad Ghori, Aibak called himself the Sultan of Delhi in 1206 and became the first ruler of the Slave Dynasty.
- He constructed one of the oldest Islamic monuments, The Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque in Delhi. The construction of Qutub Minar in Delhi also began during his initial years of reign.
- The people of the kingdom titled him 'Lakh Bash' which means a gift of lakhs due to his generous nature.
- He died in 1210. Aram Shah succeeded him as the 2nd ruler of the Slave Dynasty.

Slave Dynasty Rulers - Successors of Qutb-ud-Din Aibak

In 1210 AD, Qutb-ud-Din Aibak died accidentally in Lahore while playing chovgan (a form of Polo).

- Aram Shah succeeded him. He was a weak ruler. He was the rumoured son of Aibak. He ruled the Ghurid region in Northern India.
 - His assassination was played by a group of nobles. This group wanted Shamsuddin Iltutmish to rule the kingdom. Iltutmish was born in Central Asia and was the son-in-law of Aibak.
 - Iltutmish is known to be the greatest slave ruler in Delhi. He expanded the capital from Lahore to Delhi. Iltutmish ruled the Delhi Sultanate for about 25 years and expanded its territories. Apart from expanding territories, he also contributed a lot to the welfare of society.
 - The daughter of Iltutmish, Razia Sultana was born in 1205. She became the first and last woman to rule Delhi.
 - Razia Sultana was also known as Razia-al-Din. After the death of Iltutmish, the throne was transferred to Rukn-ud-din Firuz who was the half-brother of Razia Sultana. He was also assassinated by a group of elites who decided to put Razia on the throne.
 - Razia Sultana was an efficient ruler who was popular for her fair judgments. Malik Ikhtiar-ud-din Altunia who was the governor of Bathinda married Razia Sultana. She was conspired by the troops sent by her brother- Muizuddin Bahram Shah who inherited the throne after her death.
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- Nasir-ud-din-Mahmud was the ninth Sultan of the slave dynasty. He was born in Turkey. His real name was Bahauddin.
 - Iltutmish acquired Nasir-ud-din-Mahmud as a slave. He was promoted later and was allowed to hold military campaigns as a military officer.
 - After the death of Nasir, Balban who had no male heirs declared himself the Sultan. He maintained civil reforms and military and administrative management.
 - Balban was called the strict ruler due to his strict obedience and austerity to the king. Balban imposed a minimum penalty on his subjects and had a proper spy system to regulate the nobles. He popularised the Persian festival in Navroz, India.

After the death of Balban, Qiqubad, who was his grandson, inherited the throne. Later, Qaiqubad died of a brain stroke in 1290. He was succeeded by his son Shamsuddin Kayumars who was just three years old. He was also murdered by Jalal ud-Din Firuz Khalji.

Slave Dynasty Rulers List

The Slave Dynasty or Mamluk Dynasty ended when Khalji ruler Jalal ud din Firuz Khalji overthrew the last rulers of the Slave Dynasty.

1. Qutb ud- Din Aibak (1206- 1210 AD).
2. Aram Shah (1210-1211 AD).

3. Iltutmish (1211-1236 AD).
4. Rukn-ud-din Feroze (1236 AD).
5. Razia-al-Din (1236- 1240 AD).
6. Muiz-ud-din Bahram (1240- 1242 AD).
7. Ala-ud-din-Masud (1242-1246 AD).
8. Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246- 1266 AD).
9. Ghiyas-ud-din-Balban (1266- 1286 AD).
10. Muiz-ud-din Muhammad Qaiqabad (1286- 1290 AD).

Contributions of the Slave Dynasty

The Sultans of the Slave Dynasty contributed to the field of art and architecture.

- The Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque was formed by Qutb-ud-Din Aibak in Delhi. He also built the Adhai din ka-jhonpra mosque situated in Ajmer.
- The construction of Qutb Minar was also started during his reign. This site was dedicated by him to Sufi Saint Khwaja Qutbuddin Bhaktiyar Kaki.
- Iltutmish helped in the construction of the Quwwat-ul-Islam mosque. He is also credited with establishing a strong footing in the Slave dynasty.
- Iltutmish also introduced a new currency called Tanka. Under his rule, the Qutb Minar was built completely.

Ghiyas-ud-din-Balban was an effective ruler who devoted much of his time to strengthening governance.

- Many poets have written about the greatness of this emperor who was well known for his dignity. He was so much into his religion that he always dressed in full traditional attire even in front of his private attendants.
- The period of Ghiyas-ud-din-Balban was also marked by an enhancement of creativity in the form of poems and paintings. The emperors used to hire poets and artists as slaves.

The most popular institution developed in the Slave dynasty was that of chalgan or the forty. The word 'Chalgan' was used for the high-profile corps that was powerful. They were the personal supporters of Iltutmish.

- The cabinet of the emperor comprised these chalgans who suggested different policies and plan strategies during the time of civil war but gradually they breached the administration by overlooking their favors.
- They started calling themselves 'deputy of the sultan' because of their authority.

Decline of the Mamluk Dynasty

The rule of the Mamluk dynasty came to an end within a century. After the decline of the Mamluk dynasty, Khaljis came into existence. There were several circumstances that led to the decline of the Slave Dynasty.

- The Sultans from Slave Dynasty called themselves as 'foreigners'. At that time, the feeling of brotherhood and harmony was not shared by the people of India.
- The Hindus started conspiring against Muslim rulers. The deviousness of the Hindus for the Sultans created chaos and confusion, making it difficult for the Sultanate to control the people of the Kingdom.
- The autocratic military rule authorised the centre with immense power.
- No rights were given to the provincial governors. They acted like the puppets of the Sultans, their survival in the court depended on following the directions given by the Sultans. This affected their promotions and demotions.
- The dynasty also followed the divine right theory, in which the Sultans of the Mamluk dynasty claimed themselves to be the descendants of the God on earth. This theory was denied by the subjects. Such tension led to the downfall of the Mamluk dynasty.

The Sultans in India were depended on Muslim Amirs for their survival. The Muslim Amirs were honoured with gifts and high posts by the Sultanate. Military security and financial aid were given to them in return. They were powerful as well, such authority made them from 'The forty' which increased the power of the Amirs. Later on, they started neglecting the will of the king.

Iltutmish wanted Razia to sit on the throne but by sources Muslim Amirs enthroned Ruknuddin. The rising power of the Muslim Amirs contributed to the decline of the Slave dynasty.