

MEDIEVAL INDIA I

Connected Worlds, Kingdoms, and the Delhi Sultanate

Medieval India from the Eighth Century to the Early
Sixteenth Century

Gaurav Tiwari

INDIAN HISTORY LIBRARY

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Dedication

For the reader trying to see a connected past, not memorize a row of disconnected reigns.

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Preface

Medieval India becomes difficult when every kingdom, ruler, campaign, traveler, text, and religious movement arrives as a separate fact. The dates may be correct and the notes may be complete, but the period still feels like a crowded room where everyone is speaking at once.

This volume gives the room a shape. It begins outside India because the subcontinent was tied to commercial, intellectual, and political networks across West Asia, Africa, China, and Southeast Asia. It then follows the regional states of northern and southern India, the long contest for resources and routes, the making of the Delhi Sultanate, and the political and cultural formations that surrounded it.

The main chapters are meant to be read. Timelines, people registers, comparisons, and retrieval questions remain, but they sit behind the explanation instead of interrupting it. On a first reading, follow the movement. On a later reading, use the chapter companions to rebuild the movement without looking.

Keep returning to 4 questions: what changed, what caused it, who carried it, and what survived? They prevent a list of dynasties from replacing history.

How to use this book

Read the main chapter before opening its companion. On the first pass, follow causation, institutions, and changes in political scale. On the second pass, close the narrative and rebuild the chronology, comparison, or map from memory. Use the answer key only after committing to an answer.

Names and dates are necessary, but they are not the book's organizing principle. Keep asking what changed, what caused it, who carried it, and what survived.

Part I

Connected worlds and regional formations

India in a Connected Medieval World

Medieval India did not develop behind a wall. Merchants, scholars, sailors, conquerors, pilgrims, and envoys moved through overlapping routes that joined the Mediterranean, West Asia, East Africa, Central Asia, China, and Southeast Asia. Those connections carried money, crops, technologies, religious ideas, political models, and stories. They also changed when empires rose, trade routes shifted, or new powers controlled the sea.

The useful starting point is therefore not a dynasty. It is the network around the subcontinent. Once that network is visible, later chapters make more sense: the wealth of port cities, the value of horses, the reach of Persian and Arabic scholarship, the Chola interest in maritime routes, and the eventual pressure created by European naval power all belong to the same connected history.

India and the World

Period and scale. The chapter surveys major global changes during the thousand years from the eighth to the eighteenth century, when new political and social forms altered how people lived and thought.

Why India was affected. India already had long-standing commercial and cultural relations with Mediterranean countries and with empires such as Rome and Persia; it therefore cannot be studied in isolation.

Europe

Two Roman inheritances. By the third quarter of the sixth century, the western empire centred on Rome had been overwhelmed by Slav and Germanic groups, whose settlement and mixing with local populations reshaped languages, government, and the foundations of later European nations. The Byzantine East, centred on Byzantium or Constantinople, retained strong monarchy, centralized administration, and territories in eastern Europe, modern Turkey, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa.

Religion and transmission. The Greek Orthodox Church differed from the Roman Catholic Church and, with Byzantine rulers, helped convert Russia. Byzantium traded with Asia, passed governmental and cultural traditions to Arab conquerors of Syria and Egypt, bridged Greco-Roman and Arab civilization, and later aided the revival of Greek learning in the West.

End of Byzantium. The Byzantine Empire ended in 1453 when the Ottomans captured Constantinople.

Western recovery. Western cities nearly vanished after Rome's collapse, partly because African gold used in Oriental trade was unavailable. Although the sixth to tenth centuries were long labelled a "Dark Age," agricultural expansion enabled the revival of towns and foreign trade from the tenth century.

Prosperity and learning. From the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, prosperity, science, technology, towns, and universities such as Padua and Milan grew; universities helped generate ideas that led gradually toward the Renaissance and a new Europe.

Growth of Feudalism

Land and loyalty. After Rome's breakup, military chiefs dominated large territories. Kings sought to contain their conflict by recognizing chiefs' lands as fiefs in exchange for oaths of vassal loyalty; chiefs could create sub-vassals, while royal resumption of a disloyal vassal's fief remained more theoretical than practi-

cal.

Landed hierarchy. Government was dominated by a hereditary landed aristocracy, although disloyal chiefs could be removed and new men could still rise. Even stronger governments after the eleventh century found its established power difficult to reduce.

Serf and manor. A serf could not freely change occupation, migrate, or marry; serfs divided labour between their own fields and the lord's direct land and owed cash or produce. Manor lords owned large tracts, kept law and justice, and offered enough protection that some free peasants accepted vassalage.

Debate and Indian comparison. Some historians make serfdom and the manor essential to feudalism. India had neither in the same form, but samantas exercised many lordly powers and peasants were dependent; the chapter therefore stresses effective freedom over formal status. In much of western Europe, manors and peasant labour dues disappeared after the fourteenth century.

Military and ecclesiastical supports. Arab mounted warfare encouraged the European shift from Roman-style infantry to cavalry from roughly the eighth century. Costly cavalry was decentralized to fief-holders; iron stirrups and improved harnesses, believed to have come from the East, supported the change. Meanwhile the Catholic Church and Pope exercised governmental, political, moral, educational, and charitable power, although wealthy monasteries later provoked internal conflict and ruler hostility.

The Arab World

Empire and Abbasid power. Islam united warring Arab tribes from the seventh century, and early caliphs built an empire spanning Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain. Civil conflict displaced the Umayyad caliphate in the mid-eighth century. The Abbasids founded Baghdad and grounded their legitimacy in descent from al-Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet Muham-

mad.

Commercial system. For about 150 years the Abbasid empire protected major Mediterranean-India trade routes and supported prosperous towns, merchants, and seafarers. Gold and silver coinage supported exchange, while partnerships, written accounts, credit, and bills of exchange widened commerce across long distances.

Translation culture. Harun al-Rashid and al-Mamun symbolized court splendour and patronage. Al-Mamun's House of Wisdom at Baghdad translated Greek, Byzantine, Egyptian, Iranian, and Indian learning into Arabic; Abbasid administration and scholarship included Christians, Jews, Iranians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and non-Arabs, within the caliphs' stated religious limits.

India and wider transmission. Conquered Sind became an eighth-century conduit. The Indian place-value decimal system was developed and extended over centuries, studied in the Islamic world by scholars including al-Khwarizmi, and later spread more widely in Latin Europe through works including Fibonacci's *Liber Abaci* of 1202; Arabic translations included the *Surya Siddhanta*, works of Charak and Sushruta, and *Kalila wa Dimma* or the *Panchatantra*. Indian merchants, physicians, and craftsmen also reached Iraq, Iran, and the Baghdad court.

Independent growth and changing centers. Scholars working in Arabic made major advances in mathematics, geography, astronomy, optics, medicine, and related fields. Translation, scholarly mobility, patronage, libraries, observatories, and connections across a wide region sustained that work. Political fragmentation and conquest later shifted institutions and centers of learning, but scholarship did not end in a single century or for a single cause. Indian-Islamic scientific exchange also moved in more than 1 direction and remains an active field of historical study.

Africa

East African trade. Arab migration and mercantile activity extended down the East African coast to Malindi and Zanzibar, drawing Africa further into Indian Ocean and Middle Eastern exchange.

Exports. This commerce included large-scale slave exports as well as gold and ivory.

Ethiopia. The long-established Ethiopian kingdom had many towns; Christian Ethiopians, called Habshis, traded with India across Aden and were allied with Byzantium in Indian Ocean commerce.

Changing balance. Ethiopia's economic position weakened as the Byzantine empire declined.

East and Southeast Asia

China and the Silk Road. Tang society and culture reached a climax in the eighth and ninth centuries. Tang overlordship in Sinkiang, including Kashgar, stimulated Silk Road exports of silk, porcelain, and jade to West Asia, Europe, and India; Arab, Persian, and Indian traders settled in Canton after arriving by land and sea.

Dynastic and Mongol change. Tang power collapsed in the early tenth century. After an interval of division, the Song dynasty ruled from 960 until the Mongol conquest was completed in 1279. Mongol armies caused immense destruction but also reunited northern and southern China under one imperial state. Marco Polo described Kublai Khan's court and returned to Italy by sea through Malabar.

Maritime states. Despite some Chinese expansion, Southeast Asian states usually remained independent. Srivijaya grew as a major Sumatran maritime power from the seventh century and benefited from the trade routes linking the Indian Ocean and China. Its influence weakened over time. Majapahit emerged in eastern Java in the late thirteenth century and reached its great-

est power in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Indian maritime and cultural links. Pallava and Chola power connected southern India to the Bay of Bengal. Rajendra Chola I's naval campaign against Srivijaya in 1025 joined political ambition to competition over maritime routes. Palembang in Sumatra became an important Buddhist and commercial center. Borobudur, built in Central Java in the eighth and ninth centuries, uses square terraces, circular platforms, reliefs, and stupas to express Buddhist cosmology.

Kambuja and the larger pattern. Kambuja replaced Funan, covered Cambodia and Annam, and flourished to the fifteenth century. Its Angkor-area temples, begun in the tenth century, culminated in Angkor Wat and paralleled India's tenth- to twelfth-century temple boom. Indian traders, brahmins, and monks moved through the region; Buddhist texts, teachers, and artistic forms circulated among India, China, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia through several routes. Southeast Asian religious cultures combined imported and local forms without becoming copies of India. Islam later spread through trade, scholarship, political patronage, and conversion across maritime Southeast Asia. European colonial power reordered these older networks rather than simply switching them off.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
By the seventh century	Indian mathematicians use a place-value decimal notation that includes zero.	The system is studied in the Islamic world and later spreads more widely in Europe through several transmission routes.
By the third quarter of the sixth century	The old Roman empire has broken into western and eastern parts; the West is overwhelmed by Slav and Germanic groups.	Sets the background for western political fragmentation and new European peoples and states.
Sixth to tenth centuries	Western Europe's so-called "Dark Age" includes urban decline but also agricultural expansion.	Agricultural growth prepares the later recovery of towns and trade.
From the seventh century	Islam unites warring Arab tribes and supports imperial expansion.	Creates a large political and commercial zone across West Asia, North Africa, and Spain.
Seventh century	Syailendra dynasty arises and forms the Srivijaya empire.	Establishes a major maritime power linking Southeast Asia and China trade.
Roughly from the eighth century	Cavalry warfare becomes traceable as a major European system.	Its cost and organization help strengthen decentralized feudal military arrangements.
Eighth century	Arab conquest makes Sind a channel between Indian and Arab scientific cultures.	Facilitates translation and transmission of Indian knowledge.
Eighth and ninth centuries	Tang society and culture reach their climax.	Chinese political reach strengthens Silk Road trade and foreign settlement.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Mid-eighth century	Abbasids displace the caliph at Damascus and establish Baghdad as capital.	Begins about 150 years of Abbasid power, trade security, and major patronage.
Ninth century	Al-Khwarizmi popularizes the Indian decimal system in the Arab world.	Connects Indian mathematics to later European numerical practice.
Ninth century	An Arab writer describes Srivijaya's enormous maritime extent.	Indicates the scale attributed to its island and sea-based empire.
Mid-ninth century	Tang empire declines.	Opens the way for a new Chinese dynasty.
From the tenth century	Western European towns and foreign trade revive.	Marks recovery from the post-Roman urban contraction.
960-1279	The Song dynasty rules China, first in the north and later from the south.	Its long commercial and technological history precedes the completion of Mongol conquest.
Tenth century onward	Iron stirrup and improved harness spread in India.	Shows the eastward and westward circulation of military technologies described in the chapter.
Early tenth century	Arab scholars begin making major independent scientific contributions.	Marks movement from translation and assimilation to leadership in multiple sciences.
1025	Rajendra Chola I launches a naval campaign against Srivijaya.	Connects Chola power to competition over Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asian trade routes.
Tenth century onward	Kambuja rulers begin building temples near Angkor Thom.	Starts a memorial temple complex that eventually contains about 200 temples.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Tenth to twelfth centuries	Most vigorous Kam-buja temple building parallels India's temple-building high point.	Demonstrates synchronized cultural florescence across connected regions.
Late thirteenth century	Majapahit emerges in eastern Java.	It becomes a major regional power, especially during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
After the eleventh century	Stronger European governments emerge.	Yet kings still struggle to reduce entrenched feudal power.
1202	Fibonacci completes <i>Liber Abaci</i> .	The work helps spread calculation with Hindu-Arabic numerals in Latin Europe.
After the twelfth century	Arab science declines in much of the region.	The chapter links decline to political-economic change and growing orthodoxy.
Twelfth to fourteenth centuries	Western Europe reaches renewed prosperity; towns, science, technology, and universities grow.	Helps prepare the Renaissance and new European learning.
Thirteenth century	Mongols conquer China.	They cause destruction but unify north and south under one rule.
Fourteenth and fifteenth centuries	Majapahit reaches its height while scholarship continues in several Islamic centers.	Political and intellectual histories follow different regional chronologies.
After the fourteenth century	Manor systems and peasant labour dues disappear in many western European countries.	Weakens two institutions closely associated with feudalism.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1453	The Ottomans capture Constantinople, ending the Byzantine Empire.	Political control changes while Greek learning and commercial connections continue through new routes.
Until the fifteenth century	Kambuja flourishes; Arab open-sea devices remain in use.	Shows the durability of Southeast Asian state culture and Arab nautical innovation.
Nineteenth century	Angkor enters sustained European archaeological scholarship, although local knowledge of the site had never disappeared.	Colonial-era study and conservation reframed an existing sacred and inhabited landscape.
Early modern and colonial periods	European commercial and territorial empires redirect older Asian maritime networks.	New monopolies and military power alter rather than erase long-distance exchange.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Western Roman and Byzantine empires	The western empire centred on Rome collapsed under tribal incursions; the Byzantine East centred on Constantinople retained centralized Roman traditions until the mid-fifteenth century.
Greek Orthodox and Catholic Churches	The Greek Orthodox Church belonged to the Byzantine East and aided Russia’s conversion; the Catholic Church was centred at Rome and assumed broad authority in the fragmented West.

Often confused	The distinction
Fief and manor	A fief was land recognized within a vassal relationship; a manor was the lord's house or castle and the centre of local landholding, labour, dues, justice, and protection.
Vassal and serf	A vassal was tied by loyalty and land within a political-military hierarchy; a serf was a peasant restricted in occupation, movement, and marriage.
European feudal lords and Indian samantas	India lacked European-style serfdom and manors, but samantas exercised comparable local landed powers and peasants faced real dependence.
Formal and effective peasant freedom	Legal freedom alone does not show how far peasants could actually choose work, residence, marriage, or resist dues and local power.
Older foot support and iron stirrup	A wooden stirrup or rope offered only a toe-hold; the iron stirrup stabilized an armoured rider and made a shock lance charge possible.
Translation phase and independent Arab science	Early Arab learning assimilated works from conquered and connected civilizations; by the early tenth century, scholars made major contributions of their own.
Arab and Arabian science	"Arab science" refers to Arabic as the common language; many scholars and centres were outside Arabia and the culture was international.
Abbasid openness and unrestricted belief	The caliphs employed and learned from diverse peoples but allowed intellectual openness only while Islam's fundamental tenets were not challenged.

Often confused	The distinction
Tang, Song, and Mongol China	Tang rule supported cultural and Silk Road exchange; after a period of division, the Song ruled from 960 to 1279; Mongol conquest then reunited north and south under Yuan rule.
Srivijaya and Majapahit	Srivijaya grew as a Sumatran maritime power from the seventh century; Majapahit emerged in eastern Java in the late thirteenth century and reached its height in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
Srivijaya and Kambuja	Srivijaya was a wide maritime empire with naval trade power; Kambuja was a mainland empire over Cambodia and Annam famed for the Angkor temple complex.
Borobudur and Angkor Wat	Borobudur is an eighth- and ninth-century Buddhist monument in Central Java; Angkor Wat is an early twelfth-century temple in Cambodia's Angkor complex.
Cultural influence and political dependence	Southeast Asian states absorbed Indian ideas but generally remained independent and developed distinctive high cultures of their own.

Self-test

1. Why does the chapter place India within a wider history from the eighth to eighteenth centuries?
2. How did western and eastern parts of the Roman world follow different paths?
3. What were the political, agrarian, and military components of European feudalism?

4. Why is the application of “feudalism” to India debated in this chapter?
5. How did the Catholic Church both stabilize and generate conflict in medieval western Europe?
6. Which commercial institutions helped make the Abbasid world prosperous?
7. How did Indian knowledge move into the Arab world and then toward Europe?
8. Why does the chapter call Arab science international, and why does it say that science declined?
9. What roles did Arab traders and Christian Ethiopia play in Africa’s Indian Ocean connections?
10. Trace political change in China from Tang through Song to Mongol rule.
11. Compare Srivijaya, Majapahit, and Kambuja in power, geography, and cultural legacy.
12. How did commerce and religion interact in India-Southeast Asia relations, and what finally disrupted the network?

Answer key

1. India had long-standing trade and cultural relations with the Mediterranean, West Asia, Africa, China, and Southeast Asia, so new political, social, and intellectual forms elsewhere affected it.
2. The West centred on Rome was overrun and transformed by Slav and Germanic settlement; Byzantium retained centralized Roman traditions, fostered Greek Orthodoxy, traded with Asia, and transmitted learning until Constantinople fell.
3. Chiefs held fiefs for vassal loyalty and military service; serfs and manors organized dependent labour and local authority; cavalry costs, stirrups, and harnesses encouraged decentralized forces maintained by fief-holders.
4. India lacked European-style serfdom and manors, which some historians regard as essential, but samantas held comparable local powers and peasants’ effective freedom remained limited.

5. The Church supplied political-moral authority, charity, medicine, shelter, and education, but rich monasteries behaved like feudal lords and provoked internal discord and ruler resentment.
6. Protected routes, coinage, partnerships, written accounts, credit, and bills of exchange supported long-distance trade and urban growth.
7. Sind served as 1 conduit; Arabic scholarship engaged Indian mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and literature. Al-Khwarizmi wrote on calculation with Hindu numerals, and Fibonacci's *Liber Abaci* later helped widen their use in Latin Europe.
8. Arabic connected scholars across West Asia, North Africa, Iberia, and beyond. Political change shifted institutions and centers of learning, but no single date or cause marks the end of scientific work across the Islamic world.
9. Arab migration and trade reached Malindi and Zanzibar and exported slaves, gold, and ivory; Christian Habshis traded with India across Aden and allied with Byzantium, whose decline weakened Ethiopia.
10. Tang power supported Silk Road exchange before collapsing in the early tenth century. The Song ruled from 960 to 1279, after which the Mongols completed their conquest and reunited north and south under Yuan rule.
11. Srivijaya grew as a Sumatran maritime power from the seventh century; Majapahit emerged in eastern Java in the late thirteenth century and flourished later; the Khmer Empire created the monumental Angkor complex in mainland Southeast Asia.
12. Traders, brahmans, and monks circulated alongside Arabs and local peoples; Buddhism absorbed Hindu elements, early Arabs did not press conversion, and local cultures combined tolerance with distinctiveness. European commercial and territorial empires eventually redirected older Asian networks through monopolies and military power.

Closing perspective

The chapter's larger argument is connective: India's medieval changes belonged to a web of Eurasian and Indian Ocean exchange rather than an isolated national sequence. Political breakdown did not produce simple decline. In western Europe, it created feudal fragmentation, but agricultural expansion later supported towns, trade, universities, and intellectual renewal.

Northern India and the Contest of Three Empires, c. 800-1000

The long contest among the Gurjara-Pratiharas, Palas, and Rashtrakutas is often remembered as a triangle with Kannauj at its center. That picture is useful, but Kannauj was not a trophy floating above the map. Control of the middle Ganga valley carried revenue, routes, prestige, and access to a larger political field.

No contender could convert repeated success into permanent control. Distance, regional bases, subordinate rulers, and pressure on other frontiers limited each empire. The contest therefore produced both imperial ambition and regional resilience. That tension between a ruler's claim and the reach of administration will return throughout the medieval centuries.

The struggle for domination in north India: the Palas

Setting and foundation. After Harsha's death, political confusion made Kanauj the key symbol of northern sovereignty. Lalitaditya of Kashmir briefly controlled Punjab and Kanauj and invaded Gaud, but Pala and Pratihara power displaced his ascendancy. Gopala, probably elected around AD 750 by local notables to end anarchy, united Bengal and gained Magadha; his non-royal father was probably a soldier.

Dharmapala and Kanauj. Dharmapala ruled from AD 770 to 810. Rashtrakuta Dhruva defeated the advancing Pratihara ruler and drove him into Rajasthan, then returned south; Dharmapala occupied Kanauj and held a darbar attended by vassals from Punjab and eastern Rajasthan. Claims of authority up to the north-west and perhaps Malwa and Berar probably indicate suzerainty, not direct rule. His high point, about AD 790-800, was not consolidated, and Nagabhata II later defeated him near Mongyur.

Eastern consolidation. Bengal and usually Bihar remained Pala territory despite continuing conflict over Bihar and modern east Uttar Pradesh. Devapala, ruling from AD 810 for forty years, expanded toward Pragjyotishpur, parts of Orissa and probably part of modern Nepal. Pala dominance of eastern India lasted about a century, from the mid-eighth to mid-ninth century, and at times reached Varanasi.

Learning, religion and agrarian expansion. Dharmapala revived Nalanda, assigned 200 villages to it and founded Vikramasila on the Ganga in Magadha. The Palas built viharas and maintained close Buddhist links with Tibet through Santarakshita and Dipankara or Atisa, while also patronising Saivism, Vaishnavism and brahmans. Brahman settlements aided cultivation and the transition of pastoralists and food-gatherers toward settled agriculture.

Military and overseas connections. The Arab merchant Sulaiman called the kingdom Ruhma or Dharma and described an exceptionally large army, though his figures may be exaggerated and the balance between a standing army and feudal levies is unknown. Profitable trade linked Bengal with Burma, Malaya, Java and Sumatra; the Buddhist Sailendras sent embassies and received Devapala's permission and five-village endowment for a monastery at Nalanda.

The Pratiharas

Origins and early defence. The Gurjara-Pratiharas probably arose from Gurjara pastoralist-fighters and built principalities

in central and eastern Rajasthan, initially from Bhinmal. Nagabhatta I resisted Arab rulers of Sind; after the Chalukyan ruler of Gujarat decisively defeated a major Arab thrust in 738, later incursions remained small and the Arabs ceased to be a major threat.

Tripartite struggle. The Pratiharas sought the upper Ganga valley, Kanauj, Malwa and Gujarat. Rashtrakuta rulers Dhruva and Gopal III defeated their early expansion in 790 and 806-07 and withdrew, temporarily favouring the Palas. Rashtrakuta interest may have centred particularly on Malwa and Gujarat.

Bhoja's reconstruction. Bhoja, treated by the chapter as the real founder and greatest Pratihara ruler, recovered Kanauj by about AD 836 and made it the capital for almost a century. Checked in the east by Devapala, he retained much of Malwa and parts of Gujarat after a bloody Narmada battle with the Rashtrakutas, then extended north to the western side of the Sutlej and, after Devapala's death, again moved east. A Vishnu devotee, he used the title Adivaraha and is also called Mihir Bhoja; he probably died around 885.

Height under Bhoja's successors. Mahendrapala I ruled to about 908-09, maintained Bhoja's empire, extended into Magadha and north Bengal, and left inscriptions from Kathiawar, east Punjab and Awadh; he nevertheless yielded some Punjab territory to Kashmir. Al-Masudi's account of 915-16 depicts the Pratihara realm, al-Juzr, as vast, organised into four military fronts and possessing India's best cavalry, though its enormous figures should be read as testimony to power rather than exact totals.

Culture and decline. Rajashekhar served at the court of Mahipala, Bhoja's grandson; Kanauj gained buildings and temples. Indian scholars carried mathematics, algebra and medicine to Baghdad despite Pratihara hostility toward Sind's Arab rulers, showing continued movement of goods and knowledge. Indra III's attack and devastation of Kanauj in 915-18, probable Rashtrakuta acquisition of Gujarat, and Krishna III's northern victory around 963 led to rapid imperial dissolution.

The Rashtrakutas

Foundation and range. Dantidurga founded the dynasty and established Manyakhet or Malkhed near modern Sholapur. The Rashtrakutas dominated northern Maharashtra, contested Malwa and Gujarat with the Pratiharas, raided the Ganga valley for plunder and prestige, fought the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, and campaigned against the Pallavas of Kanchi and Pandyas of Madurai.

Govinda III. Govinda III, ruling AD 793-814, defeated Nagabhatta of Kanauj, annexed Malwa and campaigned in the south. An inscription claims submission or defeat of the Kerala, Pandya, Chola, Pallava and Karnataka Ganga powers and the capture of Lanka's king and minister; statues from Lanka were installed before a Siva temple at Manyakhet as victory emblems.

Amoghavarsha and Indra III. Amoghavarsha ruled AD 814-878 and preferred religion and literature to war. Credited with the first Kannada work on poetics, he built up Manyakhet, but recurrent rebellions exposed the difficulty of controlling a far-flung empire. His grandson Indra III, ruling AD 915-927, restored power, defeated Mahipala and sacked Kanauj in 915; al-Masudi regarded the Rashtrakuta king, called Balhara or Vallabharaja, as India's foremost ruler.

Krishna III and collapse. Krishna III, AD 934-963, fought the Paramaras of Malwa and eastern Chalukyas of Vengi, defeated Chola ruler Parantaka I in AD 949, annexed the northern Chola realm, reached Rameshwaram, erected a victory pillar and built a temple. After his death, enemies combined against his successor; Malkhed was sacked and burnt in 972, ending the empire.

Religious, commercial and literary legacy. Rashtrakuta rule lasted nearly two centuries. Rulers patronised Saivism, Vaishnavism and Jainism; Krishna I built Ellora's rock-cut Siva temple, while Amoghavarsha was said to be Jain but supported other faiths. Muslim traders could settle, preach and maintain headmen and mosques in coastal towns, aiding foreign trade. Courts supported Sanskrit, Prakrit and apabhramsha, including the poet Svayambhu and probably his son.

Political ideas and organisation

Kingship and succession. The monarch headed administration, army, justice and court culture, but direct power was restricted by vassals and autonomous chiefs despite claims such as Maharajadiraj, param-bhattaraka and chakravartin. Loyalty was emphasised in insecure times, yet Medhatithi defended self-protection and opposition to an unjust king. Succession was flexible: Dhruva and Govinda IV displaced elder brothers, a yuvaraj might assist at the capital, younger sons could govern provinces, and Amoghavarsha I's daughter Chandrobalabbe administered the Raichur doab.

Ministers and armed forces. Ministers, often from leading hereditary families, handled correspondence and foreign affairs, revenue, treasury, military command, justice and priestly advice; a brahman family supplied four successive chief ministers to Dharmapala and his successors. Offices could be combined, royal-household officers could become powerful, and all ministers except the purohita could command campaigns. Armies mixed hereditary regulars, irregulars and vassal levies, with cavalry, infantry, forts under independent commanders and prized war-elephants but no war-chariots. Pala regulars came from regions including Malwa, Khasa, Lata and Karnataka. Horses came by sea from Arabia and West Asia and overland from Khurasan and Central Asia; the Palas had the most elephants and the Pratihara the best cavalry. Pala and perhaps Rashtrakuta navies existed, but their organisation is unknown.

Vassals and territorial government. Vassals managed internal affairs but owed loyalty, tribute, troops, court attendance and sometimes hostages or marriage alliances; they repeatedly sought independence. Pala-Pratihara lands used bhukti provinces, mandala or visaya districts and pattala below visaya, headed by uparika and visayapati. Rashtrakuta lands used rashtra, visaya and bhukti, headed at provincial level by a rashtrapati. Rent-free land paid officials and blurred the boundary between officials, hereditary chiefs and vassals; samanta and bhogapati chiefs controlled clusters of villages.

Village, town and hereditary intermediaries. Hereditary village headmen and accountants, aided by grama mahajana or grama mahattara elders, formed the basic administrative unit. Especially in Karnataka, committees managed schools, tanks, temples, roads, trusts, revenue shares and minor disputes. Town committees included guild heads; the koshta pala or kotwal maintained order in towns and nearby areas. In the Deccan, hereditary nad gavundas or desa gramakutas grew powerful. Their rise, along with northern petty chiefs such as the Paramaras of Malwa and Chandellas of Bundelkhand, weakened village bodies and royal control, producing what the chapter calls feudalisation.

State and religion. Rulers personally followed Saivism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism or Jainism but usually patronised multiple faiths; Rashtrakutas also welcomed Islam. Kings were expected to respect custom and Dharmashastra, protect brahmins and uphold the four-varna order, with guidance from the purohita. Medhatithi derived royal authority from both sacred law and Arthashastra and treated rajadharma as political, so religion largely remained a personal duty and source of legitimacy rather than priestly control of government.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Seventh century, after Harsha	Political confusion followed Harsha's decline; Lalitaditya briefly controlled Punjab and Kanauj and invaded Gaud.	Establishes why Kanauj became the contested emblem of northern sovereignty.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
738	Chalukyan ruler of Gujarat decisively defeated a major Arab advance toward Gujarat.	Arab incursions continued on a small scale but ceased to be a major territorial threat.
Probably AD 750	Gopala was elected king and founded the Pala empire.	Ended Bengal's anarchy and created the base for eastern imperial power.
AD 750-1000	Large Pala, Pratihara and Rashtrakuta states dominated north India and the Deccan.	Defines the chapter's age of three empires.
AD 770-810	Reign of Dharmapala.	Pala participation in the tripartite struggle and major Buddhist patronage.
790	Rashtrakuta defeat of the Pratiharas; Dharmapala's triumphal phase began around this time.	Temporarily cleared the way for Pala control of Kanauj.
About AD 790-800	Dharmapala's high point in northern India.	Vassal attendance at Kanauj indicated broad suzerainty, but control was not consolidated.
AD 793-814	Reign of Rashtrakuta Govinda III.	Northern victory and major southern campaigning displayed pan-regional reach.
806-07	Rashtrakutas again defeated the Pratiharas and withdrew south.	The temporary withdrawal again favoured Pala power.
AD 810	Devapala succeeded Dharmapala and ruled for forty years.	Shifted Pala energy toward Assam, Orissa and Nepal after setbacks in the north.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
AD 814-878	Reign of Amoghavarsha.	Long literary and religious reign, but persistent rebellions revealed imperial limits.
By about AD 836	Bhoja recovered Kanauj.	Established the durable Pratihara imperial capital.
Mid-eighth to mid-ninth century	Pala dominance in eastern India.	Bengal and Bihar supported military, religious and commercial expansion.
Mid-ninth century	Sulaiman visited India and described Pala military power.	Contemporary foreign evidence, though its numbers may be exaggerated.
About 885	Probable death of Bhoja.	Transfer to Mahendrapala I after the empire's reconstruction.
To about 908-09	Reign of Mahendrapala I.	Maintained and extended Pratihara power into Magadha and north Bengal.
915-16	Al-Masudi visited Gujarat.	Described Pratihara scale, four-front army and superior cavalry.
915	Indra III defeated Mahipala and sacked Kanauj.	Restored Rashtrakuta supremacy and seriously weakened the Pratiharas.
AD 915-927	Reign of Indra III.	Rashtrakutas were presented as the foremost Indian power of the moment.
915-18	Rashtrakuta attack devastated Kanauj.	Accelerated Pratihara decline and probably their loss of Gujarat.
AD 934-963	Reign of Krishna III.	Last major Rashtrakuta ruler; fought in both north and south.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
AD 949	Krishna III defeated Chola ruler Parantaka I.	Enabled annexation of the northern Chola kingdom and advance to Rameshwaram.
About 963	Krishna III defeated the Pratihara ruler in north India.	Followed by rapid Pratihara dissolution.
972	Malkhed was sacked and burnt.	Marks the end of the Rashtrakuta empire.
Early ninth to mid-tenth century	Pratihara dominance in north India.	A century-long imperial phase centred on Kanauj.
To end of tenth century	Rashtrakuta rule lasted almost two centuries.	Longest-lasting and, in the chapter's assessment, most powerful of the three empires.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Kanauj and Gujarat	Kanauj symbolised northern sovereignty and controlled upper Gangetic resources; Gujarat supplied ports, manufactures and overseas access.
Direct rule and suzerainty	Directly administered lands had royal officials; suzerainty meant subordinate rulers acknowledged an overlord while retaining internal autonomy.
Dharmapala and Devapala	Dharmapala contested Kanauj, revived Nalanda and founded Vikramasila; his son Devapala expanded eastward and endowed the Sailendra monastery.

Often confused	The distinction
Bhoja and Bhoja Paramara	Pratihara Bhoja, also called Mihir Bhoja, rebuilt the Kanauj empire; the chapter distinguishes him from the later Bhoja Paramara of Ujjain.
Adivaraha, Baura and Bhoja	Adivaraha was Bhoja's title; al-Masudi's Baura is presented as a likely mispronunciation of it even though Bhoja had already died.
Ruhma or Dharma and al-Juzr	Sulaiman's Ruhma or Dharma refers to the Pala kingdom; al-Masudi's al-Juzr is a corrupted form of Gurjara for the Pratihara.
Balhara or Vallabharaja	Al-Masudi's designation for the Rashtrakuta king, not a separate dynasty.
Nagabhatta I and Nagabhatta II	Nagabhatta I resisted Sind's Arab rulers; Nagabhatta II revived Pratihara power and defeated Dharmapala near Mongyr.
Govinda III and Indra III	Govinda III defeated Nagabhatta and campaigned south; Indra III restored later Rashtrakuta strength and sacked Kanauj.
Krishna I and Krishna III	Krishna I built Ellora's Siva temple; Krishna III was the last brilliant ruler, defeating Parantaka I and reaching Rameshwaram.
Pala-Pratihara bhukti and Rashtrakuta bhukti	For Palas-Pratihara, bhukti was a province; in the Rashtrakuta system, it was below visaya and therefore a smaller unit.
Uparika and rashtrapati	Both were provincial governors: uparika in Pala-Pratihara lands, rashtrapati in Rashtrakuta lands.
Visayapati and samanta	A visayapati headed a district; samantas were hereditary/local chiefs, though the roles increasingly merged.

Often confused	The distinction
Purohita and chief minister	The purohita advised on religious-social duty; the chapter denies that priests normally controlled the king or state affairs.
Dharmashastra and Arthashastra	Dharmashastra supplied sacred and social norms; Arthashastra supplied political principles for public duty or rajadharma.
Religious devotion and religious persecution	Kings could be personally devout and still patronise multiple faiths; the chapter stresses broad toleration.
Standing army and feudal levies	Regular hereditary troops served rulers directly; vassal levies were supplied by subordinate chiefs. For the Palas, their relative proportions are unknown.

Self-test

1. Why did control of Kanauj matter in the politics of AD 800-1000?
2. How did Rashtrakuta intervention help Dharmapala occupy Kanauj, and why did his success remain temporary?
3. What were the political, educational and economic bases of Pala power?
4. Why is Bhoja treated as the real founder of the Pratihara empire?
5. What did Sulaiman and al-Masudi contribute to our knowledge, and what caution should be applied to their accounts?
6. Trace the principal stages of Pratihara decline.
7. How did the reigns of Govinda III, Amoghavarsha, Indra III and Krishna III show different aspects of Rashtrakuta rule?
8. Compare Pala-Pratihara and Rashtrakuta territorial administration.
9. How did vassalage both enlarge and weaken the three empires?

10. What does the chapter mean by the “feudalisation” of government?
11. How were village and town affairs administered?
12. How does Medhatithi’s view qualify an absolute or priest-dominated theory of kingship?

Answer key

1. Kanauj symbolised northern sovereignty and commanded the upper Gangetic valley, whose agricultural and commercial resources could support wider empire.
2. Dhruva defeated the Pratihara ruler and returned to the Deccan, leaving Dharmapala free to occupy Kanauj and summon vassals. Nagabhata II’s revival and victory near Monghyr showed that Pala suzerainty had not become durable direct rule.
3. Politically, Gopala unified Bengal and acquired Magadha, while successors usually held Bihar and expanded east. Educationally, Palas supported Nalanda, Vikramasila, viharas and Tibetan links. Economically, brahman settlement extended cultivation and Southeast Asian trade brought prosperity and precious metals.
4. Bhoja rebuilt the weakened dynasty, recovered Kanauj by about AD 836, secured much of Malwa and some Gujarat, extended north to the Sutlej and later expanded east.
5. Sulaiman described Pala power in the mid-ninth century; al-Masudi described Pratihara and Rashtrakuta strength in 915-16. Their accounts are valuable contemporary evidence, but huge troop and territorial figures may be exaggerated or imprecise.
6. Indra III devastated Kanauj in 915-18; Gujarat probably passed to the Rashtrakutas, cutting Pratihara maritime access; Krishna III defeated the Pratihara ruler around 963; the empire then rapidly dissolved.
7. Govinda III represented wide military conquest; Amoghavarsha literary-religious patronage and the problem of rebellion; Indra III imperial restoration and the sack of Kanauj; Krishna

III the last major expansion and subsequent collapse after his death.

8. Palas-Pratiharas used bhukti provinces, mandala or visaya districts and pattala below visaya, with uparika and visayapati. Rashtrakutas used rashtra provinces, visaya districts and smaller bhukti units, with rashtrapati at provincial level. Both systems focused on revenue and order.
9. Vassals enabled rule over large regions and supplied tribute and troops, but retained internal autonomy, sought independence and repeatedly fought their overlords.
10. It means the growth of hereditary local officers and chiefs, often supported by rent-free land, until royal officials, vassals and local lords blurred together and both central and village bodies lost authority.
11. Hereditary headmen and accountants worked with village elders and, especially in Karnataka, committees responsible for public works, trusts and minor disputes. Town committees included guild heads, while the koshta pala or kotwal maintained order.
12. Medhatithi accepted resistance to an unjust king, derived royal authority from both Dharmashastra and Arthashastra, and treated rajadharma as political duty. Religion legitimised the ruler but did not normally place state power under priests.

Closing perspective

The tripartite struggle was driven by geography and resources, not prestige alone: Kanauj meant the upper Ganga valley, while Malwa and Rajasthan connected it to Gujarat's commercial outlets. Rashtrakuta victories in the north repeatedly altered the Pala-Pratihara balance, but withdrawal to the Deccan prevented durable Rashtrakuta annexation of the Ganga valley.

The Chola State and the Indian Ocean, c. 900-1200

Chola power grew from the Kaveri delta, where agricultural revenue, temple institutions, local assemblies, military organization, and access to the sea reinforced one another. Expansion was not simply a series of royal campaigns. It depended on a productive core that could sustain armies, monumental building, and competition across southern India.

The sea widened the scale. Chola intervention in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asian routes connected political ambition to maritime commerce without turning the empire into a modern naval state. The chapter is best read as an interaction between locality and reach: strong regional institutions made wider power possible, but wide power never erased the local structures on which it rested.

The Rise of the Chola Empire

Earlier south Indian setting. Between the sixth and eighth centuries, Pallavas and Pandyas were prominent in modern Tamil Nadu, Cheras in modern Kerala, and Chalukyas in the Deccan; Pulakesin II checked Harsha's southward expansion. Pallava and Pandya naval strength supported contact with Southeast Asia and China and temporary rule in parts of Sri Lanka.

Foundation. Vijayalaya began as a Pallava feudatory and captured Tanjore in AD 850. By the end of the ninth century, the Cholas had defeated the Pallavas of Kanchi or Tondaimandalam and weakened the Pandyas, securing the southern Tamil country.

Setback and recovery. Rashtrakuta king Krishna III defeated a Chola ruler and annexed the empire's north. The Cholas recovered quickly after Krishna III died in 965 and the Rashtrakuta empire declined.

Larger significance. The ninth-century Chola state eventually controlled much of the peninsula; its navy enabled the conquest of Sri Lanka and the Maldives and gave it influence in Southeast Asia. The author presents it as a climax of south Indian history.

Age of Rajaraja and Rajendra I

Rajaraja's expansion and trade logic. Rajaraja I (985-1014) destroyed the Chera navy at Trivandrum, attacked Quilon, conquered Madurai, captured the Pandyan king, annexed northern Sri Lanka, took the Maldives, added northwestern Ganga territory in Karnataka, and overran Vengi. Control of commerce through the Coromandel and Malabar coasts partly motivated these campaigns.

Rajendra's consolidation and northern expedition. Made heir during Rajaraja's lifetime, Rajendra I (1014-1044) already had substantial administrative and military experience when he acceded. He completed the conquest of Pandya and Chera lands and Sri Lanka, whose king's and queen's crown and royal insignia were seized; Sri Lanka remained under Chola control for another 50 years. In 1022 a Chola general marched through Kalinga to Bengal by reversing Samudragupta's earlier route, crossed the Ganga, and defeated two local kings, after which Rajendra took the title **Gangaikondachola** and founded **Gangaikondacholapuram** near the Kaveri's mouth.

Temples, commemoration, and evidence. Both rulers marked victories with Siva and Vishnu temples. Rajaraja's Brihadishwara

temple at Tanjore was completed in 1010. Historical narratives inscribed on temple walls make Chola achievements better known than those of their predecessors.

Sri Vijaya, China, and overseas commerce. Although the Buddhist Sailendras of Sri Vijaya had been friendly with the Cholas and their ruler built a monastery at Nagapatnam that Rajendra supported with a village, relations apparently broke over Chola efforts to ease Indian trade and expand commerce with China. Chola expeditions took Kadaram or Kedah and other places in the Malay peninsula and Sumatra; the chapter describes the Bay of Bengal for a time as a “Chola lake.” Embassies reached China in 1016 and 1033, while 70 merchants arrived in 1077 and received 81,800 strings of copper cash, stated as more than four lakh rupees, for goods such as glassware, camphor, brocades, rhinoceros horns, and ivory, which Chinese sources termed “tribute.”

War, coercion, decline, and succession. Repeated conflict with the later Chalukyas of Kalyani over Vengi or Rayalaseema, the Tungabhadra doab, and Ganga territory in northwest Karnataka produced no decisive victory and exhausted both kingdoms. Cholas sacked Kalyani, killed civilians including Brahmans and children, planted military colonies in Pandya country, destroyed Anuradhapura, and treated Sri Lanka’s rulers harshly, although they later sought sound administration and encouraged village self-rule. The empire flourished in the twelfth century but declined early in the thirteenth; Pandyas and Hoysalas replaced it in the south, while Yadavas and Kakatiyas replaced the later Chalukyas. These states patronized art and architecture, but continual mutual wars, including the sacking of towns and temples, weakened them before Delhi sultans destroyed them at the start of the fourteenth century.

Chola Government - Local Self Government

King and armed power. Authority centered on the king, advised by ministers and active through royal tours. The military had elephants, cavalry, and spear-armed infantry, described as its three limbs, plus sworn bodyguards and a navy dominant on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts and, for a time, the Bay of Bengal. Marco Polo's later claim that royal bodyguards burned themselves on a dead monarch's pyre may, the author warns, be exaggerated.

Territorial structure. The state mixed directly controlled areas with loosely administered zones and included hill and tribal populations. The basic **nadu** joined villages linked by kinship and association; nadus increased as irrigation extended cultivation and hill or tribal people became cultivators. Brahman and temple grants also promoted agricultural expansion. Nadus were grouped into **valanadus**, and the state was divided into four **mandalams**, sometimes governed by royal princes.

Officials, infrastructure, and economy. Officials were usually compensated with assignments of revenue-bearing land. Royal roads aided both commerce and armies; large trade guilds dealt with Java and Sumatra. The Cholas used the Kaveri and other rivers, built irrigation tanks, and surveyed land to assess revenue, though the chapter says the exact state share is unknown.

Revenue and royal wealth. Besides land tax, income came from trade tolls, professional taxes, and plunder. These resources financed towns and major monuments, especially temples.

Village assemblies and limits. The **ur** was the village's general assembly; the better-documented **sabha or mahasabha** gathered adult men in Brahman **agraharams**, where most land was rent-free. Educated property owners entered executive committees by lot or rotation and retired every three years; other committees managed land-revenue assessment and collection, law and order, justice, and tank-water distribution. The

mahasabha could allocate and own new land, borrow, and levy taxes. This strong autonomy extended partly to other villages but was restricted by feudal growth.

Cultural Life

Bhakti, courts, and cities. Chola rule brought the bhakti movement, closely connected with temples, to further growth and a climax. Imperial resources supported capitals such as Tanjore, Gangaikondacholapuram, and Kanchi, as well as large palaces with banquet halls, gardens, terraces, and five- or seven-storeyed elite houses. The buildings have not survived, so period literature supplies descriptions of royal, ministerial, and mercantile residences.

Dravida temple form. Above the **garbhagriha** rose a five- to seven-storeyed **vimana**; a pillared, flat-roofed **mandap** served as audience and activity space, including dances by **devadasis**. A passage could encircle the sanctum and hold other divine images, while high courtyard walls were pierced by **gopurams**. Over time vimanas, gopurams, and the number of courtyards grew, turning the temple into a miniature city or palace.

Temple economy and society. Revenue-free land, merchant donations, living quarters, and numerous personnel made temples more than worship sites. Rich temples lent money, joined enterprises, improved cultivation, dug tanks and wells, and built irrigation channels. Their place as hubs of social and cultural life closely integrated religion with everyday activity.

Architecture and sculpture. The eighth-century Kailasanath temple at Kanchipuram is an early Dravida example; Rajaraja's Brihadiswara, also called the Rajaraja temple because the Cholas installed royal images in temple courtyards, and the temple at Gangaikondacholapuram are major Chola examples. Later Chalukyas and Hoysalas continued temple building at Dharwar and Halebid; the Hoysalesvara temple is presented as the finest Chalukyan-style example, with gods, yakshas, yakshinis, and panels of dance, music, war, and love. Sculpture is repre-

sented by the giant Gomateswara at Sravana Belgola and bronze Nataraja images, regarded as masterpieces. The chapter also cautions that plunder from neighboring peoples financed some Chola building.

Languages and literary traditions. Sanskrit remained a high-cultural language used by kings, scholars, and court poets, but Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu literature grew. Tamil Nayanmars and Alvars, devotees of Siva and Vishnu, wrote between the sixth and ninth centuries; Saivite works collected as the eleven-volume **Tirumurai** in the early twelfth century became sacred as a “fifth Veda.” Kamban’s Tamil **Ramayana**, associated with a Chola court and the later eleventh to early twelfth century, is a classic. Kannada was younger than Tamil but became a literary language in this period; Rashtrakuta, Chalukya, and Hoysala rulers patronized Kannada and Telugu. Amoghavarsha wrote Kannada poetics, while Jain authors Pampa, Ponna, and Ranna became Kannada poetry’s “three gems.” Nanniah began a Telugu **Mahabharata** at a Chalukya court, completed by Tikkanna in the thirteenth century. Adaptations brought Sanskrit epics closer to the people, while Telugu **desi** themes expressed popular, non-Sanskritic rural feeling. Overall, the eighth to twelfth centuries joined regional state formation with cultural growth, trade, agriculture, and stronger merchant and artisan groups.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Sixth-eighth centuries	Pallavas, Pandyas, Cheras, and Chalukyas emerged as major southern powers; Pulakesin II checked Harsha.	Establishes the political and maritime background inherited by the Cholas.
Sixth-ninth centuries	Tamil Nayanmars and Alvars composed devotional works.	Shows the pre-Chola roots of the bhakti culture that later reached a climax.
Eighth century	Kailasanath temple at Kanchipuram exemplified early Dravida architecture.	Provides the architectural predecessor to mature Chola temples.
AD 850	Vijayalaya captured Tanjore.	Marks the foundation of Chola imperial power.
End of ninth century	Cholas defeated the Pallavas and weakened the Pandyas.	Brought the southern Tamil country under Chola control.
Tenth century	Sri Vijaya revived under Buddhist Sailendra rulers.	Re-established a major power controlling the maritime route to China.
965	Krishna III died; Rashtrakuta decline followed.	Opened the way for Chola recovery from Rashtrakuta conquest.
985-1014	Reign of Rajaraja I.	Chola expansion embraced southern rivals, northern Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Vengi, and parts of Karnataka.
1010	Brihadishwara temple at Tanjore completed.	Monumental high point and a key source of royal inscriptional history.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1014-1044	Reign of Rajendra I.	Consolidation in the south, full Sri Lankan conquest, Ganga campaign, and Sri Vijaya expeditions.
1016	Chola embassy reached China.	Shows the diplomatic-commercial dimension of overseas policy.
1022	Chola army marched through Kalinga to Bengal and crossed the Ganga.	Led to Rajendra's title Gangaikondachola and his new capital.
1033	Another Chola embassy reached China.	Indicates sustained commercial diplomacy.
1077	Embassy of 70 Chola merchants reached China.	Chinese records quantify a major return of 81,800 strings of copper cash.
Later eleventh-early twelfth centuries	Approximate age of Kampan.	Regarded as a golden age of Tamil literature.
Early twelfth century	Saivite writings compiled into eleven-volume Tirumurai.	Canonized Tamil devotional literature as the "fifth Veda."
Twelfth century	Chola empire still flourished; later Chalukyan empire ended.	Precedes a reshuffling among southern and Deccan powers.
Early thirteenth century	Chola decline; Pandyas and Hoysalas rose in the south.	Marks the end of Chola primacy.
Thirteenth century	Marco Polo visited Kerala; Tikkanna completed the Telugu Mahabharata begun by Nanniah.	Supplies a debated military custom account and a landmark of Telugu literature.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Beginning of fourteenth century	Delhi sultans destroyed the mutually weakened successor states.	Final consequence of prolonged inter-state conflict in the chapter's narrative.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Rajaraja I and Rajendra I	Rajaraja built the empire's great territorial-maritime base; Rajendra completed key southern conquests and added the Ganga and Sri Vijaya expeditions.
Gangaikondachola and Gangaikondacholapuram	The first is Rajendra's title after the Ganga expedition; the second is the new capital named to commemorate it.
Sri Lanka campaign and Sri Vijaya campaign	Sri Lanka was territorially conquered and held; Sri Vijaya's maritime centers were attacked in a trade-route conflict.
Pallavas and later Chalukyas	Pallavas were defeated during the Chola rise; later Chalukyas succeeded the Rashtrakutas and fought prolonged wars with mature Chola power.
Ur and sabha or mahasabha	Ur was the general village assembly; mahasabha was the better-documented assembly of adult men in Brahman agraharams.
Nadu, valanadu, and mandalam	Nadu grouped associated villages; valanadu grouped nadus; mandalam was one of four provinces.
Vimana and gopuram	Vimana rose in storeys above the sanctum; gopuram was a lofty gateway through the enclosing wall.

Often confused	The distinction
Garbhagriha and mandap	Garbhagriha was the innermost chamber of the chief deity; mandap was the pillared hall for audiences and activities.
Dravida and Chalukyan temple styles	Dravida form is illustrated by Kailasanath and Chola temples; the Hoysalesvara temple is identified as the finest Chalukyan-style example.
Nayanmars and Alvars	Nayanmars were devotees of Siva; Alvars were devotees of Vishnu.
Tirumurai and Kambar's Ramayana	Tirumurai is the eleven-volume collection of Tamil Saivite writings; Kambar's work is a Tamil epic adaptation.
Sanskrit-derived and desi themes	Epic adaptations drew on Sanskrit Ramayana and Mahabharata traditions; Telugu desi themes were popular or rural and not derived from Sanskrit.
Chinese "tribute" and political submission	In the cited Chinese usage, "tribute" was the term for goods brought for trade, not proof here of Chola subordination.
Strong village autonomy and full independence	Chola villages exercised notable self-government, but feudal growth limited it and imperial structures still surrounded them.

Self-test

1. How did Vijayalaya establish the foundation of Chola power, and what enabled recovery from the Rashtrakuta setback?
2. Which conquests of Rajaraja I were connected to his interest in Southeast Asian trade?
3. Why did Rajendra I assume the title Gangaikondachola and found Gangaikondacholapuram?
4. What changed Chola-Sailendra relations from cordiality to

conflict according to the chapter?

5. Why did the Chola-later Chalukya wars weaken both sides?
6. Arrange nadu, valanadu, and mandalam from the smallest named territorial unit to the largest.
7. What was the difference between the ur and the mahasabha?
8. Name four functions performed by mahasabha committees or the mahasabha itself.
9. What are the principal structural elements of a Dravida temple described in the chapter?
10. Why was a major temple also an economic and social institution?
11. Match Tirumurai, Kamban, Amoghavarsha, and Nanniah-Tikkanna to their languages or works.
12. What broader pattern does the chapter identify for south India from the eighth to twelfth centuries?

Answer key

1. Vijayalaya, then a Pallava feudatory, captured Tanjore in AD 850; Chola recovery followed Krishna III's death in 965 and Rashtrakuta decline.
2. His attacks on the Chera coast, Pandya country, northern Sri Lanka, and the Maldives helped place the Coromandel and Malabar trade centers and sea routes within Chola reach.
3. A Chola army crossed Kalinga to Bengal in 1022, crossed the Ganga, and defeated two kings; the title and new capital commemorated that victory.
4. The chapter says the breach apparently arose from Chola attempts to remove obstacles facing Indian traders and expand trade with China.
5. Neither side won decisively over Vengi, the Tungabhadra doab, and northwest Karnataka; continuous, increasingly harsh war exhausted both kingdoms.
6. Nadu, valanadu, mandalam.
7. Ur was the general village assembly; the better-known mahasabha was the assembly of adult men in rent-free Brahman aghahrams.

8. Any four: assessing or collecting revenue, maintaining law and order, administering justice, distributing tank water, allocating land, raising loans, or levying taxes.
9. Garbhagriha with a multi-storeyed vimana, pillared mandap, optional circumambulatory passage, enclosed courtyard and walls, and lofty gopurams.
10. It held land and donations, housed priests and others, hosted cultural activity, lent money, joined enterprise, and funded cultivation and irrigation.
11. Tirumurai: Tamil Saivite collection; Kamban: Tamil Ramayana; Amoghavarsha: Kannada poetics; Nanniah-Tikkanna: Telugu Mahabharata.
12. Regional kingdoms and integration developed together with cultural growth, agriculture, trade, and stronger merchant and artisan groups.

Closing perspective

The Chola climax rested on the interaction of agrarian resources, military power, maritime capacity, and trade rather than conquest alone. Rajaraja and Rajendra used temples and titles to convert victories into political memory; temple inscriptions are therefore both monuments of power and essential historical evidence.

Land, Society, Learning, and Belief, c. 800-1200

Political maps change quickly. Social and economic relations usually move at a different speed. Between about 800 and 1200, land grants, agrarian expansion, craft production, trade, temple-centered activity, caste relations, education, and religious practice changed together, but not uniformly across the subcontinent.

The central problem is scale. A royal grant could alter control over revenue and labor in one locality without producing the same social order everywhere. A temple could be a place of worship, a landholder, an employer, a center of redistribution, and a marker of political authority. Reading these institutions through one label hides their different jobs. This chapter keeps the interactions visible.

Trade and Commerce

Debate. Some historians infer stagnation, town decline, and shrinking trade from the near absence of gold coins until the tenth century. The chapter argues that Byzantine, Sassanid, and Arab commerce kept precious metals and western trade flowing, though their non-monetary use is unexplained.

Agrarian-local shift. Irrigation, Brahman grants, and the settlement of nomads and tribes expanded cultivation and strengthened chiefs. Small towns and self-sufficiency grew as northern

shrenis declined; Dvadasashreni became a Vaishya subcaste, and mercantile Jainism weakened.

Travel in practice. Dharmashastras called overseas travel polluting, perhaps mainly for Brahmins or to block heterodox influence, yet Indian merchants, thinkers, physicians, and craftsmen still visited West Asia.

Southeast Asia. Manigraman and Nandesī traded, financed temples and commerce, and settled abroad. Tamralipti linked India to Suvarṇadvīpa and Kātahā; traders and priests carried Hindu-Buddhist ideas into local cultural synthesis.

China network. Indian and Southeast Asian ports staged goods between China, Africa, and West Asia. Indian ships, guilds, embassies, and Rajendra I's Malayan expedition supported trade until larger Arab and compass-using Chinese ships gained the lead.

Condition of the People

Strong output, unequal gain. Crafts and farming remained productive, but ministers, chiefs, officials, and great merchants displayed royal splendour while poor townspeople lacked adequate food.

Literary contrast. The *Rajatarangini* opposes courtiers' meat and perfumed wine to common rice and bitter utpala-saka; destitution could lead to robbery.

Peasant extraction. Beyond one-sixth revenue, cultivators paid cesses and *vishti*. Some village grants transferred artisans, herders, and cultivators with the soil, while arbitrary *samanta* demands could depopulate settlements.

Crisis. Famines and wars brought destroyed reservoirs and villages and seized cattle and grain; the chapter links feudal-type growth to heavier common burdens.

Nature of Society

Samanta hierarchy. Revenue-paid officers, defeated rulers, hereditary chiefs, adventurers, and tribal leaders ranged from village heads to regional powers.

Hereditary turn. Bhoga assignments were resumable in theory but usually inherited; defeated rulers kept land, and families monopolized offices, including one Bengal mahamantri line for four generations.

Dispersed government. Chiefs collected revenue, punished, fined, and sublet land, multiplying non-cultivating claimants to peasant surplus.

Debate and outcome. Some historians call this feudal; others reserve that term for European vassalage, serfdom, and manors. Either way, localism and sub-regionalism grew from the eighth century.

The Caste System

Mobility within hierarchy. Caste remained fundamental, but groups could rise or fall, and new jatis did not always fit the four varnas.

New formations. Mixed-caste royal employees became Kayasthas; professions, Buddhists, Jains, tribes, and Hunas entered expanding Hindu society while often retaining customs and deities.

Brahmans and Rajputs

Brahman expansion. Land grants made Brahmans cultivators, officials, ministers, accountants, soldiers, teachers, and writers. Smritis exalted them, sometimes as the only remaining dvija, despite contrary evidence from merchants and chiefs.

Rajputs. Clan leaders controlled land and arms and shared rule through kinship. Proposed origins range from foreigners,

tribes, and Brahmins to solar-lunar Kshatriya descent or mixed Brahmin-Kshatriya claims.

Rajputization. Irrigation, settlement, crops, and political acquisition enabled some cultivators to become Rajputs while others remained Shudras.

Legitimacy and alliance. Brahmin genealogies, including the eleventh-century agnikula story of four clans and the Pratihara-Lakshman link, legitimized rulers who built temples and endowed priests.

Shudras, Dalits and Slaves

Shudra rise. Though denied Vedic study, Shudras gained smarta rites. Yagyavalkya allowed some shared meals, while Jats became Punjab cultivator-warriors who claimed parity with Rajputs.

Mixed society. Anulom and pratilom categories acknowledge cross-caste marriage and helped explain new professional and tribal castes.

Dalit decline. Antyajias lived outside the varna order, faced segregation and pollution rules, and usually lacked cultivated land; some Chandals had to sound a wooden board while walking.

Slavery. War, debt, famine, and purchase produced slaves, though not systematic Turkish-style raids. Saving a master or bearing his child could bring freedom; emancipation was meritorious.

Condition of Women

Restrictions and skill. Women were denied Vedic study, married young, subordinated to male kin, and secluded, yet court women composed Sanskrit-Prakrit verse and learned fine arts.

Marriage. Remarriage was allowed after disappearance, death, renunciation, impotence, or outcasting of a husband; even an

abandoned wife could claim maintenance.

Property and sati. Widows and daughters gained inheritance rights as landed property grew. Writers disputed sati; Sulaiman called it optional for royal wives, while property conflict may have spread it.

No purdah. Abu Zaid saw royal women unveiled. Prabhavati Gupta and Didda ruled, but ordinary women remain poorly documented and likely combined field and household labour.

Dress, Food and Amusements

Dress. Dhoti, sari, jacket, and choli remained common; upper-class northern men used long coats, trousers, and shoes. Cotton dominated, with wool, silk, and muslin also used.

Regional contrast. Gujarat favoured fitted clothing and earrings, while Malabar and Quilon used loincloths; southern kings offset scant clothing with lavish jewellery.

Food and wine. Vegetarianism was widespread, but specified meats were lawful. Travel accounts idealized abstinence, while literature records wine at ceremonies and outings.

Leisure. Fairs, gardens, swimming, animal fights, and wrestling were popular; elites favoured dicing, hunting, and polo.

Education, Science and Religious Learning

Access and teaching. No mass system existed. Brahmins, Kayasthas, and elites studied with temples or resident teachers; fees, gifts, or service paid for learning, while guilds and families taught professions.

Networks. Nalanda, Vikramsila, and Uddandapur offered grant-funded study and drew Tibetans; Nalanda held 200 villages. Kashmir and southern maths promoted debate and cultural unity.

Mixed scientific record. Abu Maashir studied at Banaras; *Lilawati*, mineral medicine, botany, and animal treatment advanced. Dissection prejudice reduced surgery, astrology displaced astronomy, and fine horses remained imported.

Stagnation. The chapter blames rigidity, weak towns and communications, orthodoxy, and isolation. Al-Biruni admired Indian learning but condemned Brahman restriction of knowledge.

Religious Movements and Beliefs

Religious balance. Hinduism expanded while Buddhism and Jainism declined. Persecution and temple takeover occurred, but their scale is unknown and the chapter distinguishes them from systematic temple-destruction ideology.

Buddhism and tantra. Pala decline weakened eastern Buddhism. Mantra and secret rites spread; Gorakhnath's lower-caste Nath-Panthis rejected Brahman privilege, and tantric convergence blurred Buddhism into Hinduism.

Jainism. Traders, Chalukyas, Paramaras, and Gangas supported temples, images, shelters, and the four gifts. Southern Jainism peaked in the ninth-tenth centuries before rigidity and lost patronage caused decline.

Synthesis and bhakti. Siva-Vishnu temples absorbed local deities; Tara, Durga, and Kali rose in the east. Tamil Nayanmars, Alvars, and Andal taught loving, caste-open devotion; Nathamuni systematized Alvar works, though later ritual bhakti could be restrictive.

Reform and philosophy. Lingayats opposed caste and several rites and allowed widow remarriage. Sankara's legendary life accompanied elite non-dual Vedanta; Ramanuja's grace and prapatti opened salvation to Shudras and Dalits and bridged bhakti with Vedic tradition.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Before the ninth century	Many older economic, social, and religious features are already established.	Explains why 800-1200 contains substantial continuity.
From the sixth century	Brisk south Indian trade with Southeast Asia grows.	Prepares the overseas network that flourishes during the chapter's period.
Seventh century onward	Arab empire expands western trade with India, Southeast Asia, and China.	Counters the idea that Roman collapse ended India's western commerce.
From the eighth century	A localized, revenue-based social order becomes more visible in India.	Frames the debate over feudal or medieval society.
800-1200	Main period treated as one unit for economy, society, education, and belief.	Social change is slower than the political sequence.
Ninth and tenth centuries	Jainism reaches its southern high point under patrons such as the Gangas.	Produces basadis, pillars, and the Sravana Belgola image.
Ninth century	Abu Maashir of Balkh studies at Banaras for ten years.	Evidence of continuing international scholarly movement.
Probably ninth century	Sankara is born in Kerala, according to the chapter's cautious dating.	His Advaita or non-dual Vedanta becomes the leading intellectual Hindu challenge.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Until the tenth century	Gold coins are virtually absent.	Used by some historians as evidence for trade decline, though the chapter disputes the inference.
Close of tenth to beginning of eleventh century	Indian monks at the Chinese court reach their highest recorded number in Chinese history.	Indicates vigorous sea travel and Buddhist scholarly contact.
After the tenth century	Pala decline weakens Buddhism in eastern India.	Removes a major source of royal patronage.
Eleventh century	Agnikula legend links four Rajput clans to Vashishtha's sacrificial fire.	Illustrates Brahman production of Kshatriya legitimacy.
Early eleventh century	Al-Biruni lives in India for about ten years.	His criticism supports the chapter's explanation of scientific isolation.
Eleventh century	Ramanuja teaches grace and prapatti.	Bridges Vedic orthodoxy and socially inclusive popular bhakti.
Twelfth century	<i>Rajatarangini</i> is written in Kashmir.	Provides evidence of sharp inequalities in consumption and daily life.
Twelfth century	Lingayat or Vir Saiva movement arises under Basava and Channabasava.	Challenges caste and several ritual and marriage practices.
Thirteenth century	Chinese government tries to restrict exports of gold and silver.	Shows how favourable China trade was to participating countries.
Fourteenth century	A Javanese writer recalls large numbers arriving by ship from India, Karnataka, and Bengal.	Later testimony to the remembered scale of Indian maritime settlement and trade.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
By early sixteenth century	Popular bhakti be-comes acceptable across Hindu society.	Marks the longer-term result of the tradition attributed to Ramanuja and later thinkers.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Absence of gold coins and ab-sence of precious metal	Gold coinage was nearly absent until the tenth century, but the chapter argues that gold and silver still entered India and may have gone into temples, palaces, jewellery, or hoards.
Inland and overseas trade	North Indian long-distance inland trade and guilds appear to have weakened; western and east-ern overseas trade continued to grow.
Northern and southern guilds	Some northern guilds declined or became subcastes; Manigraman and Nandesī remained active overseas.
Indian and later Chinese ships	Indian shipbuilding initially car-ried much China trade; the source describes later Chinese ships as multi-storeyed vessels carrying 600 passengers and 400 soldiers, aided by the com-pass.
Prescription and practice	Dharmashastra ideals did not necessarily stop travel, drinking, mixed marriage, remarriage, or women’s visibility.

Often confused	The distinction
Feudal and medieval society	One interpretation stresses peasant dependence and non-working surplus claimants; another reserves European feudalism for systems with vassalage, manors, and serfdom.
Bhoga in theory and practice	A ruler could resume a revenue assignment, but it usually became effectively hereditary unless its holder rebelled or proved disloyal.
Varna and jati	Varna gave a broad hierarchy; occupational, tribal, administrative, and mobile groups formed new jatis.
Shudras and Dalits	Shudras gained some ritual eligibility and could rise through agriculture or arms; antyajas stood outside the four varnas and faced deeper pollution and land restrictions.
Anulom and pratilom marriage	Anulom joined a higher-caste man to a lower-caste woman and was treated as within the norm; pratilom reversed the pairing and was treated as against it.
Seclusion and purdah	Upper-class women were secluded, but the chapter explicitly says there was no system of veiling, and royal women could appear unveiled at court.
Subordination and property	Restrictions intensified even as widows and daughters gained inheritance rights.
Arab praise and literary evidence on alcohol	Travellers idealized Indian abstinence, while Indian literature records ceremonial and recreational wine drinking.
Learning centres and mass education	Major centres existed, but literacy remained limited to small elite groups.

Often confused	The distinction
Scientific stagnation and total absence of advance	Surgery and astronomy declined, yet mathematics, mineral medicine, botany, and veterinary writing still advanced.
Buddhism's decline and disappearance	Buddhism lost patronage and distinctiveness but survived in eastern India and blended through tantric practices with Hindu forms.
Bhakti and tantra	Both disregarded caste barriers; tantra stressed esoteric practices and powers, while bhakti stressed loving personal devotion.
Sankara and Ramanuja	Sankara emphasized non-dual knowledge of unity, with bhakti purified by jnana; Ramanuja emphasized divine grace and surrender open to Shudras and Dalits.

Self-test

1. Why is the absence of gold coinage insufficient proof of a general trade collapse?
2. How did agricultural expansion connect Brahman land grants, tribal settlement, and samanta power?
3. Why did Indian and Southeast Asian ports become essential staging centres in China trade?
4. Contrast elite prosperity with the condition of peasants and urban poor.
5. Who became samantas, and how did temporary bhoga assignments alter government?
6. What does Rajputization reveal about the relationship between caste, agriculture, and political power?
7. Compare changes in the positions of Shudras, Dalits, and slaves.
8. Why is the condition of women in this period described as contradictory?

9. How did education circulate across India despite the absence of mass learning?
10. What advances and setbacks characterized science, and what causes does the chapter propose for stagnation?
11. How did Buddhism and Jainism decline differently, and what forms of survival did they retain?
12. Compare tantra, Tamil bhakti, Lingayat teaching, Sankara's Vedanta, and Ramanuja's prapatti.

Answer key

1. Byzantine, Sassanid, and Arab trade continued to bring gold and silver into India; the metal may have gone into temples, palaces, ornaments, or hoards rather than coins, while overseas trade expanded even as some inland networks declined.
2. Rulers granted uncultivated rent-free land to Brahmans and built irrigation works; nomads, pastoralists, food-gatherers, and tribes became settled cultivators, increasing the resources and authority of Brahmans, chiefs, and samantas.
3. Seasonal winds prevented direct continuous voyages, West Asian and African goods often stopped at Malabar, and Chinese ships often stopped near the Moluccas. Indian and Southeast Asian ports stored, transferred, and redirected cargoes.
4. Chiefs, officials, and merchants displayed imported clothing, jewellery, large houses, servants, and animals, while poor townspeople lacked food and peasants paid revenue, cesses, arbitrary dues, and vishti and suffered war and famine.
5. Officers, defeated rulers, hereditary chiefs, adventurers, and tribal leaders became samantas. Their theoretically resumable revenue grants became hereditary, and they acquired taxation, punishment, fines, and subletting powers.
6. Rajput status emerged through political and agrarian change, not only descent: settlement, irrigation, crops, warfare, Brahman genealogies, and Kshatriya claims could elevate selected groups while others remained Shudras.
7. Shudras gained smarta rites and sometimes higher agrarian-

warrior status; Dalits faced intensified segregation, pollution rules, and land exclusion; slaves came from war, debt, famine, or purchase but had prescribed paths to emancipation.

8. Women faced early marriage, blocked Vedic study, seclusion, and male control, yet conditional remarriage, maintenance, inheritance, lack of purdah, elite artistic education, and female rulers complicate a single picture of decline.
9. Teachers, temples, Kayastha systems, guilds, families, Buddhist viharas, and maths taught different fields; students and philosophers travelled among Nalanda, Bihar centres, Kashmir, Madurai, Sringeri, Banaras, and other places.
10. Surgery and astronomy declined, but mathematics, mineral medicine, plant study, and animal treatment advanced. The chapter blames rigid society, caste attitudes, weakened towns and communications, orthodoxy, and isolation from outside science.
11. Buddhism lost Pala support and became increasingly tantric and hard to distinguish from Hinduism; Jainism retained merchant and regional royal support, temples, images, shelters, and the four gifts before rigidity and lost patronage weakened it.
12. Tantra offered mantra and esoteric practice across caste; Tamil bhakti taught loving devotion in Tamil; Lingayats rejected caste and several rituals; Sankara taught non-dual unity reached through knowledge and devotion; Ramanuja opened salvation through grace and total surrender to all.

Closing perspective

The trade debate cannot be settled by coinage alone: declining inland guilds and town networks coexisted with expanding maritime commerce and continuing inflows of precious metal. Agricultural expansion was not simply economic growth. Grants and irrigation reorganized tribal populations, caste standing, revenue claims, local political authority, and temple power.

Conquest and Conflict, c. 1000-1200

Raids from the northwest, contests among Rajput states, and the Ghurid advance are often compressed into a simple story of invasion and defeat. The sequence matters, but explanation requires more. A raid seeking movable wealth, a campaign seeking tribute, and an attempt to hold territory create different political problems.

North Indian rulers were not passive, but their rivalries, military organization, regional priorities, and the difficulty of building durable coalitions shaped the outcome. The Ghurid victories near the end of the twelfth century mattered because they were followed by garrisons, commanders, and institutions that could convert battlefield success into a territorial state. That conversion, not conquest alone, opens the next chapter.

Opening context: West and Central Asia and north India

Political fragmentation. By the end of the ninth century, Abbasid power had declined. Islamized Turks who had entered as guards and mercenaries became king-makers, while governors acquired practical independence under formal titles such as **amir-ul-umra**; rulers first used **amir** and later **sultan**.

Instability and warfare. Continuing Turkish tribal incursions, mercenary shifts of loyalty, sectarian conflict, and regional ri-

valry made states rise and fall rapidly. Successful rulers needed military ability and skill in surviving court intrigue.

Mounted tactics. Turkish tribesmen practiced ruthless plunder, swift advance and withdrawal, lightning attack, and the pursuit of stragglers. Strong horses and endurance allowed them to cover exceptional distances.

Indian and frontier setting. Pratihara disintegration created rivalry in north India and diverted attention from expansionist states beyond the northwest. Until the end of the ninth century, Kabul, Qandahar, and Zabul or Zamindawar were regarded as parts of **al-Hind**; Bamiyan had a 53.5 m Buddha and caves for a thousand monks. Mixed frontier kingdoms up to the Oxus, some claiming Kanishka descent, resisted Arab demands for tribute, plunder, and slaves.

The Ghaznavids

From Samanids to Ghaznavids. Iranian Samanids ruled Trans-Oxiana, Khurasan, and parts of Iran and fought non-Muslim Turks. This frontier produced the **ghazi**, a missionary-fighter serving loosely beside regular armies and using plunder as pay. As Turks converted, Islamized Turkish forces combined defense of Islam with an enduring attraction to booty. Turkish slave-governor Alp-tigin made Ghazni independent, and the Ghaznavids inherited the frontier-defense role.

Mahmud's two legacies. Mahmud (998-1030) was praised by medieval Muslim historians for defending Islamic states and strengthening the ghazi spirit. He also participated in an Iranian revival: Samanid Persian patronage culminated in Firdausi's **Shah Namah**, written by Mahmud's poet laureate, while Mahmud claimed descent from Afrasiyab. The Turks thus became Persianized as well as Islamized, but Indian memory emphasized Mahmud as plunderer and temple destroyer.

Long defeat of the Hindushahis. Jayapala's coalition with a displaced Samanid governor, the Bhatti ruler near Multan, and Multan's amir failed against Ghazni. Sabuk-tigin defeated the

Shahis around 990-91 and annexed Kabul and Jalalabad. Mahmud defeated Jayapala near Peshawar in 1001, ravaged Waihind, and took land west of the Indus; later stories of Jayapala's funeral pyre and capture must be treated cautiously, the latter being called doubtful. Anandpala was defeated near the Indus in 1009; Nandana and the Salt Range fort Nagarkot were taken. Lahore fell in 1015, Ghaznavid territory reached the Jhelum, and Multan had already fallen, though weather stopped Mahmud's 1015 Kashmir attack.

Raids into the plains. Mahmud is said to have made seventeen Indian raids. The Shahis resisted stoutly and virtually alone apart from Multan's Muslim ruler; the chapter rejects Ferishta's later claim of major Rajput help in 1001 because Ajmer did not yet exist, Delhi was small, and Kanauj was weak. From 1015 Mahmud raided wealthy towns and temples to fund Central Asian wars and prevent Indian regrouping: Thanesar, Mathura and Kanauj in 1018, Kalinjar the next year, and Somnath in 1025. He did not annex these states. At Somnath, reached through Multan and Jaisalmer with a stated 30,000 cavalry, citizens resisted after the commander fled; Mahmud broke the Sivalingam, returned with immense wealth, evaded Rajput interception, and fought Jats in Sind. Whether this raid anticipated conquest of Rajasthan and Gujarat is uncertain; he returned in 1026 to punish the Jats and died in 1030.

Strategic result and contraction. Punjab and Multan gave Turkish forces a permanent route beyond the northwestern mountains, even though deeper conquest paused for about 150 years because of changes in Central Asia and India. After Mahmud, the Seljuks seized a vast zone and defeated his son Masud, who fled to Lahore; Ghaznavid territory shrank to Ghazni and Punjab. Later raids continued, but new north Indian states could contain them.

The Rajput States

Regional kingdoms and rulers. Pratihara collapse produced the Gahadavalas of Kanauj, Paramaras of Malwa, Chauhans of Ajmer, Kalachuris near modern Jabalpur, Chandellas of Bundelkhand, Chalukyas of Gujarat, and Tomars of Delhi; Bengal passed from Palas to Senas. Gahadavalas pushed the Palas from Bihar. Govind Chandra's twelfth-century Gahadavala realm stretched from Mongyr to Delhi, used Kanauj and Banaras as capitals, and resisted Ghaznavid raids; Persian sources called him Hindustan's greatest ruler. His successor Jai Chandra faced the Chauhans.

Chauhan expansion and rivalry. The Chauhans, formerly under Gujarat's rulers, based themselves at Nadol late in the tenth century. Vigraharaj captured Chittor, established Ajmer or Ajayameru, built a Sanskrit college and Anasager lake, resisted Ghaznavids, and took Delhi from the Tomars in 1151 while retaining them as feudatories. He and Paramara Bhoja patronized learning; Vigraharaj wrote a Sanskrit drama, while Bhoja was credited with works on philosophy, poetics, yoga, and medicine. Prithviraj III took the throne around 1177 at eleven and control at sixteen; after failing against Gujarat, he campaigned at Mahoba, where Alha and Udal died. Rivalry with Jai Chandra and other states blocked cooperation against Ghaznavid Punjab.

Clan and land structure. Rajput clans claimed a real or imagined common ancestor and controlled compact territories, sometimes arranged in units of 12, 24, 48, or 84 villages. Chiefs assigned land to sub-chiefs and warriors to support families and horses. Land, family, and **maan** or honor were central; a rana or rawat ruled with related chiefs. Although fiefs formally depended on the ruler, the sanctity of land prevented resumption except in cases such as rebellion or lack of an heir.

Strengths and weaknesses. Brotherhood and egalitarian feeling within the Rajput group fostered cohesion but complicated discipline. Long feuds, claims of clan superiority, and refusal to extend solidarity to non-Rajputs widened the gap between rulers and the majority. The chapter notes Rajputs are about ten percent of Rajasthan's present population and sug-

gests the ratio was not much higher in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Treating war as sport and fighting for land and cattle generated recurring Dussehra-season invasions whose main victims were ordinary villagers and townspeople.

Religion, architecture, and literature. Most rulers championed Hinduism, some supported Jainism, and grants protected Brahman and caste privileges; Brahmans in turn recognized Rajputs as lunar or solar kshatriya descendants. North Indian temple building peaked especially in the tenth-twelfth centuries. **Nagara** temples used a tall curved roof over the square **garbhagriha** or **deul**, a **mandapa**, and sometimes walls and gates; Khajuraho's Parsvanatha, Visvanatha, and Kandarya Mahadeo temples, Bhubaneshwar's group, Lingaraja, Konark's Sun temple, Jagannatha at Puri, and temples at Mathura, Banaras, and Dilwara are cited. Temples became wealthy social, cultural, and business centers; rulers also built forts, palaces, baolis, and bunds. Sanskrit flourished under patrons such as Vigraharaj, Bhoja, and Vastupala, minister of Chalukya Bhima and builder at Mount Abu. Ujjain and Dhara were learning centers. Hemachandra and other Jain scholars wrote in Sanskrit, Apabhramsha, and Prakrit; although revived Brahmanism favored Sanskrit among elites, popular languages continued and contributed to emerging Hindi, Bengali, and Marathi.

The Turkish Conquest of North India

Two kinds of contact. Ghaznavid successors still raided for plunder, while Rajput states resisted and sometimes won; success against a weakened Ghaznavid state encouraged complacency. At the same time, Muslim merchants were welcomed for Central and West Asian commerce, Muslim colonies grew, and Sufis preached love, faith, and devotion to one God, mainly among settlers but with some Hindu influence. Lahore became an Arabic-Persian center; Hindu commander Tilak, described as a barber by caste, and Hindu Jat soldiers served Ghaznavid armies.

Central Asian redirection. In the mid-twelfth century partly

Buddhist and partly pagan Turkish tribes broke Seljuk power. Khwarizm in Iran and the formerly Ghaznavid-vassal Ghurids then rose. Sultan Alauddin earned **jahan-soz**, or world-burner, by destroying Ghazni in revenge for his brothers. Khwarizm's seizure of disputed Khurasan blocked Ghurid expansion in Central Asia and pushed it toward India.

Muizzuddin's change of strategy. Shahabuddin or Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam (1173-1206) took Ghazni while his elder brother ruled Ghur. He crossed the Gomal pass to conquer Multan and Uchch, but Gujarat routed him near Mount Abu in 1178 after his desert march. Learning that a secure Punjab base was essential, he took Ghaznavid Peshawar, Lahore, and Sialkot by 1190.

Approaching collision. Chauhans had already killed Turkish invaders from the Punjab direction and taken Dhillika from the Tomars around mid-century. Their extension toward Punjab made conflict with its Turkish rulers unavoidable.

The Battle of Tarain

First battle, 1191. Rival claims over Tabarhinda triggered war. Prithviraj routed the Ghurids at Tarain; a young Khalji horseman saved Muizzuddin, and Tabarhinda fell to Prithviraj after a twelve-month siege. Prithviraj made little effort to clear Punjab, perhaps treating the attack as another temporary raid, so Muizzuddin could regroup. A reported proposal to leave Punjab to the Ghurids was rejected.

Preparation and alliance in 1192. Muizzuddin reportedly brought 120,000 men, including armored heavy cavalry and 10,000 mounted archers. The chapter rejects the charge that Prithviraj ignored state affairs. His former general Skanda was away, but Prithviraj called on northern rajas and received several contingents. Jaichandra stayed away because of longstanding rivalry; the later Chand Bardai romance about Prithviraj abducting Sanyogita is considered improbable by many historians.

Why the second battle turned. Prithviraj's reported 300,000

troops and 300 elephants and the Ghurid numbers may both be exaggerated. Indian forces were probably larger, but Turkish leadership, organization, speed, mounted archery, and heavy cavalry decided this chiefly cavalry battle. Prithviraj fled and was captured near Saraswati or Sirsa.

Aftermath. Turks took Hansi, Saraswati, Samana, and Ajmer. Coins bearing both Prithvirajadeva and Sri Muhammad Sam show that Prithviraj initially retained Ajmer; he was later executed for alleged conspiracy and succeeded by his son. Delhi was briefly restored to a Tomar, then converted into a Turkish base. Rebellion brought direct Turkish control to Ajmer, while Prithviraj's son founded a strong Chauhan state at Ranthambor. Delhi and eastern Rajasthan passed under Turkish rule.

Turkish Conquest of the Ganga Valley

Doab and Chandawar. Between 1192 and 1206 Turkish power spread through the Ganga-Jamuna doab and neighboring areas. Muizzuddin left India to his trusted slave Qutbuddin Aibak, who took upper-doab territory during the next two years. In 1194 Muizzuddin crossed the Jamuna with 50,000 cavalry and met Jaichandra at Chandawar near Kanauj; Jaichandra was reportedly close to victory when an arrow killed him, after which his army collapsed. Banaras was ravaged and many temples destroyed; Turkish reach extended to Bihar's border.

Foundation, not instant consolidation. Tarain and Chandawar founded Turkish rule in north India, but consolidation was difficult and occupied almost fifty years.

Strategic forts and Chandel lands. Before his death in 1206, Muizzuddin occupied Bayana and Gwaliyar to protect Delhi's southern flank. Aibak later took Kalinjar, Mahoba, and Khajuraho from the Chandellas.

Limits of distant control. Using the doab as a base, Aibak defeated Gujarat ruler Bhima III and plundered Anhilwara and other towns. The appointed Muslim governor was soon expelled, proving Turkish control could not yet be sustained so far away.

Bihar and Bengal

Bihar raids. Bakhtiyar Khalji, placed beyond Banaras and related to a Tarain veteran, raided Bihar when it was effectively a no-man's land. He destroyed the unprotected monasteries of Nalanda and Vikramasila, gathered wealth and followers, and learned routes into wealthy, commercially active Bengal.

Nadia and Lakhnauti, 1204. Exploiting the familiar sight of Turkish horse merchants, Bakhtiyar posed as one and surprised Lakshmana Sena's palace at the pilgrimage center Nadia. The noted Sena warrior escaped through a rear exit, believing the main Turkish army had arrived; the arriving army took the garrison, royal wealth, and the ruler's family. Bakhtiyar then occupied Lakhnauti without resistance, while Lakshmana Sena and his successors continued from Sonargaon.

Position in Bengal. Although formally Muizzuddin's governor, Bakhtiyar acted as a virtually independent ruler.

Assam disaster. Bakhtiyar unwisely entered the Brahmaputra valley, though some writers say Tibet was his objective. Magh rulers let his army advance, then harassed its provisionless retreat. Hunger, illness, a river ahead, and Assamese forces behind produced total defeat. Mountain tribes helped Bakhtiyar and a few followers return; sick and demoralized, he was stabbed by one of his amirs.

Ghurid reversal and final assessment. Muizzuddin's 1203 defeat by Khwarizm ended Central Asian ambitions and redirected Turkish energy toward India, a long-term benefit despite immediate rebellions. Khokhars cut the Lahore-Ghazni route; Muizzuddin suppressed them with mass killing in 1206 and was then killed by a rival-sect Muslim fanatic. Mahmud had the better military record and larger non-Indian empire, while Muizzuddin faced stronger Indian states and achieved more politically in India; because conditions and aims differed, the chapter rejects a simple comparison. Neither was primarily motivated by Islam in the author's assessment: both retained submitted rulers, used Hindu personnel, and invoked religion when useful to justify plunder.

Causes of the Defeat of the Rajputs

Not technological inferiority. Recent research cited by the chapter finds no overall Turkish weapon superiority. India had the iron stirrup from the eighth century; Turkish bows had longer range, but Indian bows were considered more accurate and deadly, Indian swords excellent, and elephants useful. Turkish horses may have been faster and hardier.

Feudal and military fragmentation. The rise of landed chiefs weakened Indian administration and military organization. Rulers depended on contingents that coordinated poorly and dispersed after battle. Rajput forces lacked comparable bodies of maneuvering horsemen, mounted archers, and heavy cavalry despite often possessing greater people and resources.

Turkish centralization. Tribal organization plus **iqta** and **khalisa** supported standing forces that stayed in the field. An iqta-holder collected assigned land revenue in exchange for maintaining troops; the grant was non-hereditary and transferable at the sultan's will. Khalisa revenue went directly to the sultan, helping maintain a central army. Trained slave officers offered dependable service.

Courage, caste, and religion qualified. Rajput personal bravery was not inferior. Ghazi commitment and the Rajput refusal to retreat both shaped battle ethics, while caste did not prevent non-Rajputs or lower castes from fighting. Religion and caste should therefore not be exaggerated as explanations.

Failure of strategic vision. Turkish reconnaissance began by the late tenth century, and Rajputs resisted strongly and won several battles. Their deeper failure was not organizing to retake Kabul, Lahore, or Punjab after the outer defenses fell and not following Central Asian changes that repeatedly shaped Indian politics.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Eighth century onward	Iron stirrup used in India.	Rules out a simple stirrup advantage.
Ninth century	Turks entered Abbasid service.	Guards and mercenaries became king-makers.
Around 990-91	Sabuk-tigin defeated the Shahis.	Kabul and Jalalabad were annexed.
998-1030	Mahmud ruled Ghazni.	Combined Central Asian defense, Persian patronage, and Indian campaigns.
1001	Jayapala defeated near Peshawar.	Mahmud gained land west of the Indus.
1009	Anandpala defeated near the Indus.	Nandana and Salt Range Nagarkot fell.
1015	Lahore fell; Kashmir attack failed in bad weather.	Ghaznavids reached the Jhelum.
1018-next year	Mathura, Kanauj, then Kalinjar raided.	Wealth was taken without annexation.
1025	Somnath raided.	Major act of plunder and intimidation.
1026	Jats punished after harassing Mahmud.	Follow-up to the Somnath retreat.
1030	Mahmud died.	Seljuk pressure soon shrank Ghaznavid power.
First half of twelfth century	Govind Chandra ruled.	Gahadavala power defended the doab.
1151	Vigraharaj took Delhi.	Chauhan power moved toward Punjab.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Mid-twelfth century	Seljuks fell; Khwarizm and Ghur rose.	Central Asian change redirected Ghurids.
1173-1206	Muizzuddin ruled at Ghazni.	Main period of Ghurid Indian conquest.
About 1177	Prithviraj III took the throne.	Later Chauhan leader at Tarain.
1178	Gujarat routed Muizzuddin.	Prompted his Punjab-base strategy.
By 1190	Peshawar, Lahore, and Sialkot taken.	Ghurids gained the needed base.
1191	First Tarain.	Prithviraj won but left Punjab intact.
1192	Second Tarain.	Ghurid victory opened Delhi and eastern Rajasthan.
1194	Chandawar; Jaichandra killed.	Route toward Bihar opened.
1203	Khwarizm defeated Muizzuddin.	Ghurid effort shifted fully toward India.
1204	Nadia and Lakhnauti taken.	Turkish power reached Bengal.
1206	Khokhars suppressed; Muizzuddin killed.	End of his career; consolidation remained unfinished.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Mahmud and Muizzuddin	Mahmud had the stronger overall military record and won Punjab, while Muizzuddin achieved greater political expansion inside India; the chapter warns that different conditions make a simple ranking unhelpful.

Often confused	The distinction
Mahmud's plains raids and Punjab conquest	Plains raids extracted wealth without annexation; Punjab and Multan created the permanent strategic bridgehead.
Ghazi and regular soldier	Ghazi was a religiously motivated loose auxiliary who often lived on plunder; regular forces belonged to the organized army.
Islamization and Persianization	Turkish rulers adopted Islam through frontier politics and also adopted Persian language and Iranian cultural identity.
Waihind and Lahore	Waihind or Udbhanda was the earlier Shahi capital; Lahore later became Anandpala's base and a Ghaznavid-Ghurid center.
Nagarkot in the Salt Ranges and Himachal Nagarkot	Mahmud took the Salt Range fort; the chapter explicitly says he never reached the similarly named Himachal site.
First and second Tarain	Prithviraj won in 1191 but left the Punjab base intact; Muizzuddin returned better prepared and won in 1192.
Tarain and Chandawar	Tarain broke Chauhan power around Delhi; Chandawar defeated the Gahadavalas and opened the eastern doab.
Prithviraj-Jaichandra rivalry and Sanyogita story	Political rivalry is established in the chapter; the later romantic abduction story is treated as improbable.
Rajput clan solidarity and broad social unity	Brotherhood operated mainly within exclusive Rajput groups and was not extended to the non-Rajput majority.
Rajput fief and Turkish iqta	Rajput attachment made fiefs difficult to resume; iqta was non-hereditary and transferable at the sultan's will.

Often confused	The distinction
Iqta and khalisa	Iqta revenue supported an assigned chief's troops; khalisa revenue went directly to the sultan and standing army.
Weapon quality and military organization	The chapter denies general weapon inferiority; it attributes defeat mainly to cavalry organization, standing forces, coordination, and strategy.
Nagara garbhagriha and mandapa	Garbhagriha or deul housed the deity under a curved tower; mandapa was the adjoining ante-room.
Conquest and consolidation	Victories from 1192 onward founded Turkish rule, but stable consolidation required almost fifty years.
Bakhtiyar's Bengal success and Assam failure	Surprise and intelligence enabled a rapid Bengal victory; overextension, hunger, illness, terrain, and harassment destroyed his Assam expedition.
Military conflict and everyday Hindu-Muslim contact	Raids and resistance coexisted with welcomed Muslim traders, mixed armies, Sufi preaching, and cultural interaction.

Self-test

1. How did Abbasid decline contribute to the rise of Turkish military states?
2. What was a ghazi, and why were religion and plunder both part of the role?
3. Why was Mahmud's conquest of Punjab more consequential than his raid on Somnath?
4. What evidence does the chapter use to reject Ferishta's account of Rajput aid to Jayapala?
5. Name four structural features or weaknesses of Rajput political society.

6. What two patterns of Hindu-Muslim relations followed the Ghaznavid conquest of Punjab?
7. Why did Muizzuddin change strategy after his defeat near Mount Abu in 1178?
8. Why did the result of Tarain change between 1191 and 1192?
9. What did the battles of Tarain and Chandawar each accomplish?
10. How did Bakhtiyar Khalji succeed in Bengal, and why did he fail in Assam?
11. Distinguish iqta from khalisa.
12. Why does the chapter reject weapon superiority, religion, caste, or bravery as single explanations for Rajput defeat?

Answer key

1. Turkish guards and mercenaries became king-makers as central power weakened; provincial commanders gained independent authority while retaining formal caliphal titles.
2. A ghazi was a missionary-fighter who loosely supported regular armies, defended Islamic frontier states, and often compensated himself through plunder.
3. Punjab opened a permanent route beyond the northwestern mountains for deeper later conquest; Somnath yielded wealth and shock but was not annexed.
4. Ajmer had not yet been founded, Delhi was only a small state, and the Kanauj Pratiharas were badly weakened in 1001.
5. Any four: clan exclusivity, long feuds, difficult discipline, hereditary attachment to land, weak coordination among chiefs, continual warfare, or separation from non-Rajput subjects.
6. Plundering raids and Rajput resistance coexisted with welcomed Muslim traders, settler colonies, Sufi preaching, mixed military service, and cultural contact.
7. Direct penetration through the Rajputana desert ended in a rout; he concluded that Punjab had to be secured as a base first.
8. Prithviraj did not remove the Ghurids from Punjab after 1191;

Muizzuddin regrouped, while better Turkish organization, leadership, mounted archery, heavy cavalry, and speed decided 1192.

9. Tarain opened Delhi and eastern Rajasthan by breaking Chauhan power; Chandawar broke Gahadavala resistance and extended Turkish reach toward Bihar.
10. He used route intelligence, a horse-merchant disguise, and surprise at Nadia; in Assam his overextended army lacked provisions, suffered hunger and disease, and was trapped and harassed during retreat.
11. Iqta revenue was assigned to a transferable, non-hereditary chief who maintained troops; khalisa revenue went directly to the sultan to support the standing army.
12. Both sides possessed effective weapons, Rajputs were personally brave, lower castes fought, and religious zeal existed on both sides; the stronger explanation is organizational centralization, cavalry coordination, and strategic vision.

Closing perspective

The decisive long-term outcome of Mahmud's career was territorial: Punjab and Multan created the route later used by the Ghurids, whereas famous temple raids brought wealth but no plains empire. North India's fragmented post-Pratihara states were not passive. Shahis and Rajputs resisted for long periods and sometimes won, but local victories produced complacency instead of a coordinated frontier strategy.

Part II

The Delhi Sultanate and regional powers

Making the Delhi Sultanate, c. 1200-1300

A conquest does not become a state by surviving one battle. The early Delhi Sultanate had to secure a political center, manage ambitious military commanders, defend the northwest, suppress rebellions, collect revenue, and persuade or compel local power holders to work inside a new order.

Iltutmish, Raziya, Balban, the Turkish nobility, frontier commanders, and regional opponents were all part of that struggle. The main thread is the making of monarchy under pressure. Every attempt to strengthen the center changed the balance among ruler, nobles, army, and provinces. The Sultanate survived because that balance could be rebuilt, not because it was ever free of conflict.

I. The Mameluk Sultans (Thirteenth Century)

The imported Turkish military slaves who ruled are called Mameluk or Slave rulers; the source footnote explains the Arabic term as “owned,” distinguishing them from slaves used for domestic or economic labour.

For almost a century after the initial conquest, the Sultanat fought foreign invasions, factional conflict among Turkish leaders and attempts by dispossessed or subordinate Rajput rulers to regain independence. By the century’s end it could look to-

ward Malwa, Gujarat, the Deccan and south India, beginning far-reaching administrative, social and cultural change.

Struggle for the establishment of a strong monarchy

- Muizzuddin or Muhammad of Ghur was succeeded in India by his Turkish slave Qutbuddin Aibak in 1206. Aibak had played a major role in expansion after Tarain and ruled from Lahore. Yalduz, another slave of Muizzuddin, succeeded at Ghazni and claimed authority over Delhi. Aibak rejected the claim, severing Delhi's political link with Ghazni; the chapter treats this as fortunate because it prevented entanglement in Central Asian politics and encouraged independent development.

Ilutmish (1210-36)

Accession and rivals. Aibak died in 1210 after falling from his horse while playing chaugan. His son-in-law Ilutmish defeated Aibak's son, checking hereditary succession at the outset. He then faced Ali Mardan Khan in Bengal-Bihar, Qubacha in Multan, Lahore and Punjab, reluctant officers near Delhi, and Rajput recovery of Kalinjar, Gwalior, eastern Rajasthan, Ajmer and Bayana.

Northwest consolidation. Khwarizm Shah's capture of Ghazni carried Khwarizmi power to the Indus, prompting Ilutmish to occupy Lahore. After the Mongols destroyed Khwarizm in 1218 and turned elsewhere, he expelled Qubacha from Multan and Uchch and restored the Sultanat's frontier to the Indus.

Bengal and Bihar. Iwaz, titled Sultan Ghiyasuddin, ruled independently and built public works while neighbouring Sena, Orissa and Kamrup rulers retained their areas. Ilutmish's son defeated and killed him near Lakhnauti in 1226-27, restoring Delhi's suzerainty, though the east repeatedly challenged it.

Rajput frontier. Iltutmish recovered Gwaliyar and Bayana, retained Ajmer and Nagor, and reasserted suzerainty over Ranthambhor and Jalor. His attack on Nagda in Mewar retreated before Gujarat aid, and his retaliatory expedition against Gujarat's Chalukyas was repulsed.

Raziya (1236-39)

A novel succession. Finding his surviving sons unworthy, Iltutmish nominated Raziya and secured consent from nobles and ulama. Female queens and regents had precedents in Iran and Egypt, but preferring a daughter to sons was presented as new. Raziya had to overcome both her brothers and the powerful Turkish chahalgani or “forty.”

Assertion of sovereignty. She abandoned female apparel, appeared unveiled, held court, hunted and led armies. She defeated a noble rebellion supported by the former wazir Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi, sent a force against Ranthambhor and restored order across the kingdom.

Yaqut controversy. Raziya tried to create loyal nobles and elevated the non-Turk Abyssinian Yaqut Khan as Superintendent of the Royal Stable. Turkish nobles turned this into accusations about feminine modesty and intimacy, but the chapter stresses that contemporary writers made no such personal allegation and rejects the story that Yaqut lifted her onto a horse because she appeared publicly on an elephant.

Fall. After forcing Lahore's governor to submit, Raziya marched toward Sirhind. Rebels killed Yaqut and imprisoned her at Tabarhinda. She won over and married her captor Altunia, attempted to retake Delhi, was defeated, and was killed by bandits in a forest while fleeing.

Era of Balban, concerning Balban in the text (1246-87)

Rise through factional conflict. Ulugh Khan, later Balban, became naib to Iltutmish's younger son Nasiruddin Mahmud in 1246 and married his daughter to the sultan. Turkish chiefs removed him in 1253 and installed Indian Muslim Imaduddin Raihan, but Balban rebuilt his coalition and apparently even contacted Mongols then occupying much of Punjab. He forced Raihan's dismissal and later defeat, eliminated rivals and assumed the chhatr before taking the throne in 1265. Some historians allege he poisoned Mahmud and removed his sons, but the chapter presents this as opinion rather than established fact.

Theory and social limits of monarchy. Claiming descent from Iranian king Afrasiyab, Balban exalted noble birth, excluded Indian Muslims and other low-born people from high office, and even refused an important trader an audience. Though championing Turkish nobility rhetorically, he would not share power, destroyed the chahalgani and allegedly poisoned his cousin Sher Khan. This narrow elite base later produced dissatisfaction.

Centralisation and justice. Balban punished the fathers of the governors of Badaun and Awadh for cruelty to their slaves, showing that even leading families were not immune. He placed spies in every department, reorganised the diwan-i-arz and built a central army. His attempt to pension unfit old Turkish soldiers provoked such protest that he partly relented.

"Blood and iron" and court awe. Against Mewatis, robbers and defiant Rajput zamindars, Balban cleared forests, established thanas, destroyed villages, enslaved inhabitants and settled Afghan soldiers in the doab and Katehar. He staged a magnificent, stern court, used armed bodyguards, gave up wine, avoided laughter and required Iranian sijada and paibos. These rites were considered un-Islamic, but opposition was muted because Delhi stood as one of the few surviving Muslim states after Mongol destruction in Central and West Asia.

Achievement and limitation. Fear of Mongol attack kept Balban from distant expansion except for Bengal, though hunting

expeditions exercised the army. His death in 1286 ended an era that strengthened government and institutions but had not fully secured north India from Mongols and had alienated groups excluded from authority.

The Mongols and the problem of the northwest frontier

Strategic problem and wider shock. India was most vulnerable through the northwest passes; effective defence required the Kabul-Ghazni-Qandahar zone around the Hindukush, which Delhi could not obtain. Changez Khan's Mongols destroyed Khwarizm from 1218, deliberately used terror and devastated urban, economic and cultural life. Later Mongol order protected transcontinental trade routes, but recovery in Iran, Turan and Iraq took generations.

Delhi's adaptation, 1221-45. Refugee princes, scholars, theologians and leading families made Delhi a major Islamic centre, while loss of homeland reinforcement forced the Turks to adapt to India. In 1221 Iltutmish politely denied asylum to the fleeing Khwarizmi prince Jalaluddin, and Changez did not cross the Indus. After Changez's death in 1227, Mongol focus on Iraq and Syria gave Delhi respite until Tair Bahadur sacked and nearly depopulated Lahore in 1241; Balban's rapid march saved besieged Multan in 1245.

Balban's frontier system. Mongols held Lahore and pushed Delhi's effective frontier from the Jhelum to the Beas, though Balban recovered pressured Multan. As sultan he repaired Tabarhinda, Sunam and Samana, stationed troops at the Beas, stayed near Delhi, exchanged honoured envoys with Halaku and tacitly left much Punjab under Mongol control. Annual operations held the line, but his eldest son Prince Mahmud died defending the Multan-Beas sector.

Direct attacks on Delhi. In 1292 Jalaluddin Khalji defeated Halaku's grandson Abdullah, whose force is given as 150,000 horses, near Balban's fortified line; 4,000 converted Mongols

settled near Delhi. Dawa Khan's Chaghatais then attacked from 1297. Qutlugh Khwaja reached Delhi with a stated 200,000 in 1299, cut the capital's communications and entered some streets; Alauddin Khalji held outside the city, although Zafar Khan died, and the Mongols withdrew without full battle. In 1303 a stated 120,000 faced Alauddin at Siri for two months amid citizen hardship, skirmishes and another Mongol retreat.

Outcome. The 1299 and 1303 invasions showed Delhi could match the Mongols but exposed its danger. Alauddin enlarged the army and repaired Beas forts, repelling later attacks heavily. Dawa Khan's death in 1306 brought Mongol civil war; the threat ceased until Timur, and Delhi recovered Lahore and eventually reached the Indus. Although Mongols had controlled almost all Punjab and Kashmir and threatened Delhi, firm rule and diplomacy averted conquest; the danger shaped every internal problem of the thirteenth-century Sultanat.

Internal rebellions and the struggle for the territorial consolidation of the Delhi Sultanat

Nature of resistance. Ambitious Muslim chiefs sought independent kingdoms, while Rajput rajas and zamindars tried to expel Turkish rule or profit from its weakness, often fighting one another too. Geography required autonomous governors, and regional identities strengthened between the seventh and twelfth centuries. The chapter therefore rejects treating all rebellions as a single "Hindu resistance."

Bengal and Bihar. Bakhtiyar Khalji expelled Lakshmana Sena from Lakhnauti, after which Iwaz or Ghiyasuddin asserted independence and extended to Bihar while extracting tribute from Jainagar, Tirhut, Bang and Kamrup. He submitted to Iltutmish in 1225, rebelled again and was killed by Iltutmish's son; a second expedition followed in 1230. Later governors alternated between independence and submission, failed against Orissa in 1244 and

beyond, and kept Bihar tied mainly to Lakhnauti.

Balban's eastern settlement. Tughril rebelled after submission and was hunted down in 1280; Balban's three-year Bengal campaign, his only distant one, imposed savage punishment on Tughril's family and followers. After Balban's death, his son and governor Bughra Khan chose an independent Bengal dynasty lasting forty years. Thus Bengal and Bihar were outside Delhi control for most of the century.

Doab and Katehar. Kateharia Rajputs based at Ahichchatra raided Badaun until Balban's forces used massacre, plunder, forest clearance and road-building. Barani says the iqtas of Baran, Amroha, Sambhal and Katehar were thereafter made safe, while Mongol control still removed most of Punjab from Delhi.

Rajasthan and the western-southern frontier. Aibak had taken a chain of forts and parts of eastern Rajasthan from Chauhan power, but Rajputs recovered many during Iltutmish's northwest difficulties. From 1226 Iltutmish regained Ranthambhor, Jalor, Bayana and Gwalior, raided Malwa, Ujjain, Raisina and Bundi, but failed against Gujarat, stronger Paramaras and Baghelkhand. After renewed losses, Balban failed at Ranthambhor and Gwalior but crushed Mewat, retained Ajmer and Nagaur, and consolidated eastern Rajasthan; Rajput disunity aided Turkish survival.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1206	Qutbuddin Aibak succeeded Muizzuddin in India.	Began rule independent of Yalduz's Ghazni claim.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1210	Aibak died after a fall while playing chaugan; Iltutmish gained the throne after defeating Aibak's son.	Checked strict hereditary succession and opened the main consolidation phase.
AD 1210-36	Reign of Iltutmish.	Consolidated Turkish conquests and rebuilt the Sultanat's frontiers.
1218	Mongols destroyed the Khwarizmi empire.	Removed one rival but created a much greater northwest danger.
1221	Jalaluddin crossed the Indus while pursued by Changez Khan; Iltutmish refused him asylum.	Careful diplomacy helped prevent an immediate Mongol invasion of weak Delhi.
1225	Iltutmish marched against Iwaz, who submitted and then rebelled again.	First major effort to restore direct eastern authority.
From 1226	Iltutmish reopened campaigns in eastern Rajasthan.	Recovered strategic forts and reasserted suzerainty after Rajput resurgence.
1226-27	Iwaz was defeated and killed near Lakhnauti by Iltutmish's son.	Bengal and Bihar returned temporarily to Delhi suzerainty.
1227	Changez Khan died and the Mongol empire was divided among his sons.	Mongol attention elsewhere gave Delhi time to centralise.
1230	Iltutmish led a second expedition to Bengal.	Shows that the first settlement had not produced stable control.
AD 1236-39	Reign of Raziya.	Opened the monarchy's direct struggle against the chahalgani.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
To 1240	Mongols made no Indian encroachments beyond the Indus.	Temporary breathing space for Delhi.
1241	Tair Bahadur sacked and nearly depopulated Lahore.	Demonstrated frontier vulnerability.
1244	Orissa's ruler badly defeated Muslim forces near Lakhnauti.	Limited expansion by Bengal's independent Muslim governors.
1245	Mongols invested Multan; Balban's rapid march relieved it.	Early evidence of Balban's frontier role.
1246	Nasiruddin Mahmud became sultan with Balban as naib.	Start of Balban's effective ascendancy.
1253	Turkish chiefs displaced Balban with Imaduddin Raihan.	Revealed continuing elite factionalism; Balban returned within about eighteen months.
1260	Mongols suffered their first conquest-era defeat at Egyptian hands near Jerusalem, according to the source footnote.	Contextualises Delhi's later success against a previously dominant power.
1265	Balban ascended the throne.	Began strong, centralised kingship.
1280	Balban hunted down Tughril during a three-year Bengal campaign.	Temporary reassertion of eastern control through exemplary terror.
1286	Balban died.	His institutions endured, but elite exclusion and unresolved frontier problems produced fresh disorder.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1292	Jalaluddin Khalji defeated Abdullah near Balban's frontier line; 4,000 converted Mongols settled near Delhi.	Validated Balban's defensive arrangements.
From 1297	Dawa Khan launched Chaghatai campaigns against Delhi's frontier forts.	Shifted the Mongol threat from Iran's friendly Il-Khans to their eastern rivals.
1299	Qutlugh Khwaja's stated force of 200,000 reached Delhi; Zafar Khan died in action.	First serious Mongol attempt to conquer Delhi itself.
1303	A stated Mongol force of 120,000 faced Alauddin at Siri for two months.	Second direct test of Delhi's ability to withstand Mongol pressure.
1306	Dawa Khan died, followed by civil war among the Mongols.	Ended the immediate threat, enabling recovery of Lahore and movement toward the Indus.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Mameluk military slaves and ordinary slaves	Mameluks were imported Turkish slaves trained chiefly for military service; the source contrasts them with domestic or economic slaves.
Yalduz and Qubacha	Yalduz ruled Ghazni and claimed Delhi; Qubacha ruled Multan independently and seized Lahore and Punjab territory.

Often confused	The distinction
Khwarizm Shah and Jalaluddin	Khwarizm Shah's empire reached the Indus; Jalaluddin was its defeated crown prince who fled across the river in 1221.
Iwaz and Tughril	Iwaz challenged Iltutmish in Bengal and Bihar; Tughril rebelled against Balban and was destroyed in 1280.
Raziya's political challenge and the Yaqut scandal	Her real conflict concerned control of nobles and promotion of a non-Turk; contemporary writers do not support allegations of intimacy.
Nasiruddin Mahmud and Prince Mahmud	Nasiruddin Mahmud was the sultan under whom Balban served as naib; Prince Mahmud was Balban's eldest son killed on the frontier.
Halaku's Il-Khans and Dawa Khan's Chaghatais	Iran's Il-Khans generally maintained friendly Delhi relations; the Chaghatai ruler of Trans-Oxiana organised later invasions.
1299 and 1303 invasions	Qutlugh Khwaja reached Delhi in 1299 and Zafar Khan died; in 1303 Alauddin fortified himself at Siri during a two-month confrontation.
Formal allegiance and effective control	Bengal's governors sometimes acknowledged Delhi when convenient, while functioning independently in practice.
Muslim rebellion and "Hindu resistance"	Muslim governors also rebelled, while Rajput chiefs fought Turks and one another; resistance had diverse motives and no single identity.

Self-test

1. Why does the chapter consider the separation of Delhi from Ghazni fortunate?

2. Why is Iltutmish called the real consolidator of Turkish conquest in north India?
3. What political conflict lay behind Raziya's rise and fall?
4. How did Balban move from naib to sultan, and what does this reveal about the chahalgani?
5. Identify four methods Balban used to exalt or centralise monarchy.
6. What were the achievements and costs of Balban's "blood and iron" policy?
7. Why was the northwest frontier structurally difficult to defend?
8. Compare Iltutmish's, Balban's and Alauddin Khalji's responses to the Mongol threat.
9. Why were the Mongol invasions of 1299 and 1303 turning points?
10. Why did Bengal and Bihar repeatedly escape Delhi's control?
11. Why does the chapter reject the label "Hindu resistance" for all internal rebellions?
12. How did thirteenth-century consolidation prepare the Sultanat for later expansion?

Answer key

1. Aibak's rejection of Yalduz kept Delhi from being pulled into Central Asian politics and enabled the Sultanat to develop independently within India.
2. Iltutmish defeated accession rivals, restored Lahore, Multan and Uchch toward the Indus, reasserted suzerainty in Bengal-Bihar and recovered or subordinated strategic Rajput centres.
3. Iltutmish chose Raziya over unworthy sons, but the chahalgani wanted a controllable monarch. Her independent rule, public military conduct and promotion of non-Turk Yaqut challenged their political and ethnic monopoly; rebellion defeated her.
4. Balban built authority as Nasiruddin Mahmud's naib, survived removal in 1253 by rebuilding a coalition, displaced Raihan, eliminated rivals and took the throne in 1265. The sequence shows both the chahalgani's power and its inability to remain

united.

5. He destroyed the chahalgani, used spies, reorganised the diwan-i-arz and central army, claimed noble Iranian ancestry, staged an awe-inspiring court, and required sijada and paibos. Any four earn the recall point.
6. Forest clearance, thanas, Afghan colonies, killing, plunder and enslavement restored roads and order around Delhi, the doab, Mewat and Katehar. The same methods caused mass suffering and displayed an intensely coercive state.
7. Deep defence required Kabul, Ghazni and Qandahar beyond the Hindukush, but Delhi could not control them. The fertile Punjab therefore remained exposed through mountain passes and became a contested buffer.
8. Iltutmish avoided provoking Changez, denied Jalaluddin asylum and strengthened Lahore-Multan. Balban fortified the Beas line, stayed near Delhi and negotiated with Halaku. Alauddin fought off direct attacks, enlarged the army and repaired frontier forts.
9. They were serious attempts to conquer Delhi itself, yet Delhi's armies held and the Mongols withdrew. The attacks proved parity while warning Alauddin to establish a larger permanent defence.
10. Distance required autonomous governors, regional sentiment supported independence, Lakhnauti had its own political base and neighbouring Orissa and Assam resisted. Delhi's campaigns produced submission but rarely lasting administration.
11. Muslim chiefs as well as Rajput rulers rebelled; Rajputs also fought one another, and motives included independence, expansion and advantage rather than one coordinated religious purpose.
12. Stronger monarchy, Mongol resistance, safer communications in the Ganga-Jamuna doab and control of eastern Rajasthan secured the core from which Delhi could move toward Malwa, Gujarat and the Deccan.

Closing perspective

Delhi's survival was not inevitable: Mongol power blocked the ideal Kabul-Ghazni-Qandahar defence line while internal factions and regional revolts repeatedly weakened the centre. The break with Ghazni converted a conquest regime into an India-centred state, but Iltutmish's campaigns were required to give that state practical territorial substance.

Expansion and Crisis in the Khalji-Tughluq Century, c. 1300-1400

The fourteenth century expanded the Delhi Sultanate and exposed its limits. Alauddin Khalji used military success, revenue pressure, market regulation, and tighter control of the nobility to support a more demanding state. The Tughluqs inherited that scale and pushed it further through campaigns, taxation, administrative experiments, and claims over distant regions.

Ambition outran control. Distance, local resistance, fiscal strain, political mistrust, and the cost of repeated mobilization turned expansion into fragmentation. The century is not a lesson that every bold policy must fail. It shows that a policy can be intelligible in purpose and destructive in operation when information, enforcement, resources, and consent do not match its scale.

The Khaljis and the Tughlaqs

Balban's chosen heir Prince Mahmud died fighting Mongols; Bughra Khan preferred Bengal-Bihar, and a young grandson proved incapable in Delhi. Balban had already shown that an established dynasty's heirs could be displaced by a successful commander supported by nobles and army.

Turkish monopoly generated resentment among Khaljis, Indian Muslims and other non-Turks. Khaljis of mixed Turkish-Afghan origin had served in Bengal, Bihar and on the Mongol

frontier but lacked Delhi recognition; this broader social pressure enabled dynastic change.

The Khaljis (1290-1320)

Revolution and Jalaluddin. Frontier commander Jalaluddin Khalji overthrew Balban's successors in 1290 with non-Turkish noble support, ending exclusive Turkish control without excluding Turks. During six years he softened Balban's harshness, argued that rule required willing support and that Hindu-majority India could not be a truly Islamic state, but critics treated tolerance as weakness.

Alauddin's seizure and control. Alauddin, governor of Awadh, used Deogir treasure to win nobles after murdering uncle and father-in-law Jalaluddin at Kara in 1296. He confiscated or destroyed defectors, punished rebellious relatives and families, massacred converted Mongol rebels, restricted feasts and marriages, banned intoxicants and created spies. These measures stopped rebellions in his lifetime.

Dynastic cost. By destroying the old nobility and teaching the new one to obey whoever seized Delhi, Alauddin weakened succession. After his death in 1316, Malik Kafur installed a minor, disabled other sons and was killed; Hindu convert Khusrau then ruled without broad racial or religious protest, showing a widened social base.

Tughlaq takeover. Contemporary charges that Khusrau uniquely violated Islam are rejected by the chapter; even Nizamuddin Auliya accepted his gifts. In 1320 Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's officers defeated and killed Khusrau outside Delhi, ending Khalji rule.

The Tughlaqs (1320-1412)

- Ghiyasuddin founded the dynasty; the chapter identifies three capable rulers: Ghiyasuddin, his son Muhammad bin Tughlaq,

AD 1324-51, and nephew Firuz Shah, AD 1351-88. Ghiyasuddin and Muhammad ruled nearly the entire country, and Firuz's smaller empire still approximated Alauddin's early realm. After Firuz, north India fragmented; Timur's 1398 invasion marks the effective end of Tughlaq imperial power although the line continued to 1412.

I. Expansion of the Delhi Sultanat

Scale and opportunity. Alauddin began a twenty-five-year expansion that took Gujarat, Malwa, most of Rajasthan, the Deccan and the south to Madurai; Muhammad bin Tughlaq reached the climax. Rivalries among Malwa, Gujarat, Deogir, Warangal, Hoysalas and Pandyas prevented a united defence and pulled invaders southward.

Economic motive. Fertile, populous Malwa and Gujarat controlled western ports and routes to the Ganga valley. Overseas trade concentrated gold and silver, while Gujarat improved access to Arabi, Iraqi and Turki horses when Mongol conflict disrupted land supply from Central and West Asia.

Gujarat, 1299. Alauddin's generals captured Jaisalmer en route, surprised Rai Karan, sacked Anhilwara and Somnath and plundered Cambay's wealthy Muslim merchants too. Malik Kafur was captured there and entered Alauddin's service. Gujarat's easy fall may reflect Rai Karan's unpopularity, ministerial betrayal, weak troops and lax administration, but the source preserves these as suggestions.

Aftermath. Gujarat passed to Delhi, though Rai Karan retained part of south Gujarat with Deogir ruler Ramachandra's help, creating another cause of conflict with the Yadavas.

Rajasthan

Ranthambhor, 1301. Hamirdeva, Chauhan successor of Prithviraj, sheltered two Mongol nobles who fled Alauddin's massacre

after a booty dispute. He repelled a first army, but Alauddin personally conducted a three-month siege. Amir Khusrau records the first Persian description of jauhar: women entered the pyre and Rajput and Mongol defenders died fighting.

Chittor, 1303. Ratan Singh had denied Delhi passage through Mewar, while Chittor controlled the Ajmer-Malwa route. After months of siege the fort fell, jauhar occurred, and Ratan Singh apparently survived temporarily as a captive. Khizr Khan received the fort and a garrison, though charge later passed to Ratan Singh's cousin.

Padmini debate. The chapter reports her sacrifice but rejects the popular motive that Alauddin invaded from desire for Padmini. The story first appeared over a century later and was elaborated by Malik Muhammad Jaisi with improbable adventures; the mirror-viewing demand also conflicts with the stated Rajput code of honour.

Settlement. Jalor and most major Rajasthan states submitted. Alauddin generally left Rajput rulers in place under tribute and commands, while garrisoning important centres such as Ajmer and Nagaur rather than imposing direct administration everywhere.

Deccan and South India

Different models. Malwa received a governor and direct administration. In 1306-07 Rai Karan lost Baglana, while Ramachandra of Deogir surrendered over unpaid tribute. Restored as Rai Rayan with one lakh tankas, a canopy, a Gujarat district and a marriage alliance, Ramachandra became a valuable Delhi partner.

Malik Kafur, 1309-11. Expeditions to Warangal, Dwar Samudra, Mabbar and Madurai produced treasure, elephants and promised tribute from Warangal and Dwar Samudra. They reached known trade routes and Muslim merchant communities as far as Virachala. Mabbar avoided decisive battle; temples including Chidambaram were plundered, but Tamil armies were not defeated. The campaigns elevated Kafur to malik-naib while

requiring future expeditions to enforce tribute.

Turn to direct rule. After loyal Ramachandra died in 1315, his sons rebelled; Kafur crushed them and administered Deogir directly. Mubarak Shah re-subdued Deogir, installed a Muslim governor and extracted a district and forty gold bricks annually from Warangal. Khusrau Khan sacked Masulipatnam in Mabbar without conquest.

Tughlaq completion. After 1320 Muhammad bin Tughlaq renewed Warangal's siege; initial defeat after a false rumour of Ghiyasuddin's death was reversed, and Warangal and Mabbar were annexed. He raided Orissa and subdued Bengal; by 1324 Delhi reached Madurai. Kampili, which sheltered his rebel cousin, was annexed in 1328, producing an enormous but administratively strained empire.

II. Internal reforms and experiments

- Consolidation of the upper Ganga valley and eastern Rajasthan let rulers shift from basic warfare and order to administration, army strength, land revenue, cultivation and urban welfare. The experiments were important new departures even when they failed: some suffered from inexperience, poor design or vested interests, but they show the Turkish state had acquired stability and wider ambitions.

Market control and agrarian policy of Alauddin

Three markets and enforcement. Delhi had separate markets for grain; fine cloth; and horses, slaves and cattle. A shahna registered merchants, enforced fixed prices and punished false weights. Banjaras and their families bore collective responsibility against hoarding; state warehouses released grain during famine or shortage.

Military logic. Mongol danger required a large army without exhausting treasure. Alauddin took doab revenue directly rather than assigning villages as iqta, raised demand to half the produce and pushed cash payment, forcing grain sales at low fixed prices. Cheap food permitted lower cash salaries.

Prices and supply. Barani gives wheat at 7.5 jitals per man, barley at 4 and rice at 5, allegedly unchanged even during famine. With 48 jitals to a tanka and a man about 15 kg, one tanka bought roughly 96 kg wheat, 144 kg rice or 180 kg barley. First-grade horses cost 100-120 tankas and ponies 10-25; fine-cloth traders received advances.

Cash army and distributional effect. Alauddin was the first Sultanat ruler to pay soldiers in cash; a cavalryman received 238 tankas yearly for himself, horse and equipment. Barani's claim that control punished Hindus is inadequate because Muslim Khurasani and Multani traders were affected, while army and townspeople of all faiths benefited. Whether the rules extended beyond Delhi is uncertain.

Agrarian reforms

Alauddin assessed cultivated doab land by measurement, preventing rich villagers from shifting burdens to poorer people. Khuts and muqaddams paid house and milch-cattle taxes and lost illegal cesses and privileges.

Direct collection required honest amils. Despite adequate salaries, strict audits brought beating and imprisonment for defaults; Barani's claim that no one would marry officials' daughters is treated as exaggeration.

The policy targeted privileged rural groups more than Hindus as a whole and was not socialist. Universal price control produced intrusive rules, evasion, punishment and resentment; half-produce revenue also hurt ordinary cultivators, though not enough to cause general rebellion or flight.

Market controls ended with Alauddin's death, but they helped finance cavalry that drove Mongols beyond the Indus. Measure-

ment and direct revenue linked the state more closely to villages and influenced successors and later Sher Shah and Akbar reforms.

Muhammad Tughlaq's experiments

Character and accession. Muhammad, AD 1324-51, studied religion and philosophy, spoke with Muslim mystics, Hindu yogis and Jain Jinaprabha Suri, and promoted merit beyond noble lineage. Orthodox critics called him a rationalist. His haste and impatience inspired the label “ill-starred idealist.” Rumours blamed him for Ghiyasuddin’s death when a hastily built reception pavilion collapsed, but the chapter does not confirm them.

Daulatabad. To control a restless south and suppress nobles such as cousin Gurshasp, Muhammad tried to make Deogir, renamed Daulatabad, a second capital. Officers, leading men and Sufis faced pressure but also grants and accommodation; Delhi’s general population was not transferred, as its size and continued coinage show. The 1,500-km summer journey killed many despite road and rest houses. After a few years he abandoned the plan because neither half of India could be ruled effectively from the other, yet migration improved communications and north-south cultural exchange.

Token currency. With fourteenth-century silver shortage and precedents under Qublai Khan and Ghazan Khan, bronze coins received silver-tanka value. Public distrust and uncontrolled forgery caused devaluation. Muhammad withdrew them, exchanging genuine bronze for silver and leaving detected forgeries piled outside the fort. Prestige and money suffered, but Ibn Battuta saw no lasting damage in 1333.

Frontier and Khurasan project. Muhammad defeated Tarmashrin’s Mongols near Jhelum, took Kalanaur and briefly reached beyond the Indus to Peshawar. He then raised an army for Ghazni-Afghanistan, perhaps Khurasan-Iraq or a Hindukush-Qandahar “scientific frontier”; the true aim is uncertain. Better Mongol relations and token-currency failure led to disbandment

after a year.

Qarachil. The Kumaon Himalayan expedition may have aimed toward Kashmir and control of horse entry from Sinkiang, not China. After initial gains, overextension in hostile terrain produced the reported return of only 10 from 10,000, though hill rajas apparently accepted Delhi overlordship; a later Kangra expedition helped secure the hills.

Agrarian reforms and nobility

Doab crisis. Muhammad retained a half-produce demand but allegedly assessed it arbitrarily and used artificial conversion prices. Peasant flight and harsh suppression combined with a six-year famine; cattle, seed and well advances came too late. Delhi deaths became severe, and the sultan spent two and a half years at Swargadwari near Kanauj.

Agricultural development. The diwan-i-amir-i-kohi divided the doab into blocks, lent to cultivators and promoted higher-value crops, from barley to wheat, wheat to sugarcane, and sugarcane to grapes and dates. Inexperienced, dishonest officials misappropriated funds; loans failed, Firuz wrote them off, but the improvement ideal continued under Firuz and later Akbar.

Noble inclusion and backlash. Muhammad appointed descendants of converts, some Hindus and people from barber, cook, weaver and wine-maker backgrounds, with no basis for assuming incompetence. He also welcomed foreigners. Old families resented this, and Barani made it central to his denunciation.

Disintegration within zenith. A diverse nobility developed neither cohesion nor loyalty; a vast empire offered rebel opportunities. Muhammad's suspicion, haste and extreme punishments intensified division, so the Sultanat's territorial zenith also began its disintegration.

III. Decline and disintegration of the Delhi Sultanat: Firuz and his successors

Muhammad's collapse. Sequential rebellions in Bengal, Mabar, Warangal, Kampili, West Bengal, Awadh, Gujarat and Sind wore out armies because Muhammad trusted no lieutenant. Plague reportedly killed two-thirds of his southern army. Harihara and Bukka founded expanding Vijayanagara; foreign nobles near Daulatabad created the Bahmani state; Bengal became independent. Muhammad suppressed Awadh, Gujarat and Sind but died in Sind.

Firuz's strategic retreat. Firuz abandoned the Deccan and south, failed twice in Bengal, raided but did not annex Jainagar, campaigned in Kangra and crushed Gujarat and Thatta rebellions despite Rann of Kutch hardships. The realm remained large and peaceful, though he lacked military distinction.

Appeasement and military decay. Noble offices and iqtas became hereditary through sons, sons-in-law or slaves; audit torture ended. Soldiers also inherited service and received village-revenue assignments rather than cash, often losing value to middlemen or leaving duty to collect it. Bribed musters admitted useless horses. Peace came at the cost of a narrow oligarchy and inefficient army.

Religion, welfare and economy. Firuz made jizyah separate, denied Brahman exemption and exempted only women, children, disabled and indigent people. He persecuted some Muslim sects, restricted women's shrine visits and burnt a preaching Brahman, yet retained policy control, patronised music and wine, and sponsored Sanskrit-Persian translations. He banned mutilation, opened free hospitals, listed unemployed people, gave dowries, built towns and dug canals including a roughly 200-km Sutlej-Hansi line; welfare probably favoured distressed Muslims of good family.

Slaves, succession and Timur. Firuz gathered about 180,000 slaves for workshops and a loyal corps, but after 1388 they became a faction. His son Sultan Muhammad broke them; neither he nor Nasiruddin Mahmud, AD 1394-1412, controlled nobles,

rajas or governors, reducing Delhi’s realm proverbially to Delhi-Palam. Timur’s 1398 plundering raid killed Hindus and Muslims, drained wealth and artisans to Samaraqand, and ended strong rule more symbolically than through direct political change. Structural conflicts, overextension and Firuz’s weakening reforms, not one ruler alone, explain disintegration.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1286	Balban died after Prince Mahmud’s earlier death.	Opened succession disorder and non-Turk resentment.
1290	Jalaluddin Khalji overthrew Balban’s successors.	Ended Turkish monopoly of high office.
1296	Alauddin murdered Jalaluddin and seized power.	Began harsh centralisation and wider conquest.
AD 1296-1316	Reign of Alauddin Khalji.	Expansion, market control and agrarian reform reached their Khalji peak.
Early 1299	Alauddin’s army conquered Gujarat and captured Malik Kafur.	Secured ports, wealth and horse supply.
1301	Ranthambhor fell after a three-month siege and jauhar.	Broke the strongest Rajasthan fort’s resistance.
1303	Chittor was stormed; Alauddin then issued major market orders.	Completed a central Rajasthan conquest and preceded price regulation.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1306-07	Campaigns defeated Rai Karan and re-stored Ramachandra under Delhi.	Made Deogir an allied base for southern expeditions.
1309-11	Malik Kafur campaigned at Warangal, Dwar Samudra, Mabar and Madurai.	Brought treasure and tribute but limited permanent control.
1315	Ramachandra died; his sons rebelled and Kafur imposed direct rule.	Began transition from tribute to annexation.
1316	Alauddin died.	Noble obedience turned into unstable palace succession.
1320	Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq defeated Khusrau and founded a dynasty.	Opened sustained direct expansion.
AD 1324-51	Reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq.	Territorial zenith, major experiments and onset of disintegration.
By 1324	Delhi territory reached Madurai after Warangal, Mabar, Orissa and Bengal campaigns.	Near-subcontinental maximum.
1328	Kampili was annexed.	Removed the last named Hindu principality in the southern expansion zone.
1333	Ibn Battuta reached Delhi.	Reported no continuing damage from capital and currency failures.
AD 1351-88	Reign of Firuz Shah Tughlaq.	Peace, welfare and appeasement accompanied institutional weakening.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1370	Timur began his career of conquest.	Built the transregional power that later raided Delhi.
1388	Firuz died.	Slave, noble and dynastic factional struggles re-emerged.
AD 1394-1412	Reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud.	Tughlaq title survived amid severe territorial contraction.
1398	Timur invaded and sacked Delhi.	Marked the effective end of strong Tughlaq rule.
1412	Tughlaq dynasty ended.	Formal close of the dynasty after imperial collapse.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Jalaluddin and Alauddin	Jalaluddin preferred consent and mildness; Alauddin used coercion and preventive control.
Rajasthan and Malwa settlement	Rajasthan rulers mostly retained tributary rule; Malwa received direct administration.
Raid, tribute and annexation	Raid extracted booty; tribute required recurring payment; annexation placed territory under Delhi officials.
Ranthambhor and Chittor	Ranthambhor fell in 1301 after sheltering Mongol nobles; Chittor fell in 1303 for strategic-political reasons.
Market control and agrarian reform	Market rules fixed supply and prices; agrarian measures assessed and collected rural revenue. Together they financed the army.

Often confused	The distinction
Alauddin's doab policy and Muhammad's	Alauddin measured land and avoided mass flight; Muhammad kept half demand but allegedly assessed arbitrarily amid famine and rebellion.
Daulatabad move and total evacuation of Delhi	Selected officers, elites and Sufis were moved; ordinary inhabitants were not all transferred, and Delhi remained populous.
Khurasan project and Qarachil expedition	Khurasan involved a recruited western-frontier army later dismissed; Qarachil was an actual Himalayan disaster and never a China conquest.
Muhammad's intent and implementation	Several aims had logic or precedents; haste, coercion, forgery, corruption, distance and environment caused failure.
Firuz's peace and state strength	Appeasement reduced rebellion in his life but hereditary privilege and land-paid troops weakened future central control.
Firuz's orthodoxy and cultural policy	He made harmful orthodox concessions yet sponsored Sanskrit-Persian translations, music and welfare.

Self-test

1. Why did the Khalji revolution end Turkish monopoly without becoming anti-Turkish?
2. How did Alauddin's noble policy secure his reign yet weaken the dynasty?
3. Why were Gujarat and Malwa strategically and economically valuable?
4. Compare Alauddin's political settlement in Rajasthan, Malwa and the far south.
5. Why does the chapter reject the Padmini legend as the cause of the Chittor invasion?

6. Explain how Alauddin's market and agrarian policies supported Mongol defence.
7. What evidence shows the Daulatabad plan was a second-capital move rather than a total evacuation?
8. Why did the token currency fail despite rational motives and foreign precedents?
9. Distinguish the Khurasan project from the Qarachil expedition.
10. How did Muhammad's agrarian policy and noble policy contribute to instability?
11. Why did Firuz's measures produce peace in the short term but weakness in the long term?
12. Why should Timur's invasion be treated as a marker rather than the sole cause of disintegration?

Answer key

1. Khaljis and other non-Turks opposed exclusive Turkish access to office, but Jalaluddin's regime retained Turks in high posts. The change broadened, rather than simply reversed, the elite.
2. Spies, bans, confiscation and severe punishment prevented conspiracies and rebellion during his life. Destroying the old nobility and making obedience depend on the current throneholder left no loyal group to defend his sons after 1316.
3. Both were fertile and populous and linked western ports to the Ganga valley. Gujarat's trade accumulated bullion and supplied imported Arabi, Iraqi and Turki horses needed by Delhi's cavalry.
4. Most Rajasthan rulers remained tributaries under orders and garrisons; Malwa received a governor and direct rule; distant southern rulers initially surrendered treasure and annual tribute, but successors later annexed them.
5. The story appears more than a century later and was embellished by Jaisi with improbable adventures. Strategic control, Ratan Singh's refusal of passage and Chittor's power provide the source's grounded motives.
6. Half-produce direct revenue and cash collection financed a

cash-paid cavalry. Fixed grain and horse prices, registered carriers, warehouses and punishment kept soldiers' living and equipment costs within those salaries.

7. Orders targeted officers, followers, leading men and Sufis, while Delhi remained populous and continued minting coins. The aim was to control both north and south through a second centre, not remove every Delhi resident.
8. Traders and ordinary users distrusted bronze at silver value, and government failed to prevent forgery. Counterfeits devalued the currency, forcing withdrawal and silver redemption.
9. The Khurasan project recruited an army for an uncertain western or deep-frontier objective and ended without campaign after a year. Qarachil actually entered the Himalayan region, overreached and suffered catastrophic losses; it did not aim to conquer China.
10. Arbitrary half-produce assessment, famine and late relief drove flight and rebellion; corrupt development officers ruined loans. Simultaneously, socially diverse appointments angered old nobles without creating cohesion, while suspicion and extreme punishment encouraged revolt.
11. Hereditary office and iqta, audit leniency and inherited military service appeased nobles and troops. They also blocked merit recruitment, empowered a narrow oligarchy, encouraged absentee or underpaid soldiers and corrupted musters.
12. Structural weakness preceded 1398: provinces were independent, army and nobility had decayed, and Delhi's authority had contracted. Timur inflicted immense death, plunder and wealth loss, but direct political effects were limited; the raid signalled the end of strong rule.

Closing perspective

The Khalji revolution was a social and political widening of the ruling class, not the replacement of Turks by an anti-Turk regime. Alauddin's conquests followed material logic: Gujarat joined ports, bullion and horses to Delhi, while divided southern pow-

ers let military momentum continue toward Madurai.

Governing the Delhi Sultanate

The Delhi Sultanate rested on more than a court and an army. It needed assignments of revenue, chains of command, judicial and religious authority, urban markets, craft production, village intermediaries, and a way to connect a mobile military elite to an overwhelmingly agrarian society.

Terms such as *iqta*, *khalisa*, *kharaj*, and *jizya* matter because they name different parts of that connection. They should not be memorized as a glossary detached from use. Each one answers a governing question: who received revenue, who paid, what the center retained, how officials were controlled, and where religious status entered taxation or law. The system worked unevenly because administration traveled through people with interests of their own.

The Sultan

Caliphal link. By styling themselves deputies of the faithful and naming the Abbasid caliph in the Friday khutba, Delhi sultans affirmed membership in the Islamic world, not the caliph's legal rule over India.

Concentrated office. The sultan was chief administrator, commander-in-chief, guardian of security, and final source of justice. He appointed judges, heard appeals, and could receive complaints against officials; Balban's severity and Muhammad Tughlaq's punishment of ulama illustrate this claim.

No fixed succession. Election remained the theory, but any ruler's son could succeed and primogeniture was not established. Nomination, including Iltutmish's preference for a daughter, required noble acceptance.

Power and opinion. A successful military commander could usurp the throne, making force decisive, but legitimacy and public opinion still mattered. After overthrowing Balban's successors, the Khaljis delayed entering Delhi and founded Siri.

Central Administration

Wazir and finance. Ministers served at the sultan's pleasure. By the fourteenth century the wazir had shifted from military leadership to revenue expertise, overseeing income and spending with an Auditor General and Accountant General. Khwaja Jahan managed Muhammad Tughlaq's capital; Khan-i-Jahan's eighteen years under Firuz marked the office's high point before his son's failed kingmaking weakened it.

Diwan-i-arz. The ariz-i-mamalik recruited, equipped, and paid troops but did not command them. Balban and Alaaddin strengthened the department; Alaaddin required musters, horse branding or dagh, descriptive rolls, and cash salaries of 238 tankas for a trooper plus 78 for a second horse.

Army. Alaaddin abolished hereditary salary villages and maintained the largest standing force, although Barani's 300,000 figure may be exaggerated. Its efficiency helped contain Mongols and conquer the Deccan. Elephants, sappers, and miners supplemented troops; Turks and Afghans dominated prestigious cavalry, while Hindus increasingly served mainly in infantry.

Justice and records. Diwan-i-risalat managed religion, pious grants, and stipends under the chief sadr, often also chief qazi. Qazis applied sharia civil law to Muslims, Hindu personal law remained with panchayats and caste leaders, and rulers framed criminal regulations. Diwan-i-insha handled official and confidential correspondence.

Information and court. Barids reported provincial affairs; the

wakil-i-dar managed the household, precedence, stores, and karkhanas. Firuz created separate slave and public-works departments, the latter building canals and public structures.

Local Administration

Iqta structure. Conquered territory was divided among nobles as iqtas under muqtis or walis, later provinces or subas. Muhammad Tughlaq's twenty-four provinces extended to Mabar.

Centralization. Early muqtis kept order, collected revenue, paid troops, and retained the balance. Stronger rulers assessed actual income, fixed cash salaries, demanded remittance of surplus, and audited accounts, sometimes with imprisonment or torture; Firuz later relaxed this harshness.

Lower units. Provinces contained shiqs and parganas, possibly based on village groupings known as chaurasi. The amil headed a pargana; khuts, muqaddams, and patwaris were central village figures.

Continuity and conflict. Older collectors and methods initially remained, helping Turkish authority spread quickly. Villages were probably left alone if they paid revenue; Alauddin's early-fourteenth-century changes produced conflict and peasant rebellions.

Economic and Social Life

Source limit. Sultanat historians concentrated on court affairs, so ordinary economic life is poorly recorded. Prices and travellers partly fill the gap.

Ibn Battutah. The Tangier traveller spent eight years at Muhammad Tughlaq's court, travelled widely, and described roads, people, crops, fruits, flowers, and herbs.

Agriculture and village craft. Rice and sugarcane grew in the east and south, wheat and oilseeds in the north, and sesame, indigo, and cotton more broadly. Fertility allowed two annual crops

and, according to Ibn Battutah, rice three times yearly; produce supported oil pressing, jaggery, weaving, and dyeing.

Peasants and Rural Gentry

Majority hardship. Peasants formed the overwhelming population and commonly survived near subsistence; recurring war and famine intensified their labour and insecurity.

Rural layers. Sharecroppers and artisans coexisted with owner-cultivators regarded as original settlers who dominated panchayats. Khuts and muqaddams held concessional land and sometimes shifted their own revenue burden onto ordinary peasants.

Privilege and restraint. Rural magnates rode Arab and Iraqi horses, dressed finely, and imitated elites. Alauddin curtailed privileges, but their living standards stayed higher and old practices likely revived after his death.

Hindu rais. Autonomous Hindu rulers retained estates and power even inside directly controlled Sultanat territory and appeared at Balban's court.

Trade, Industry and the Merchants

Urban-commercial base. Consolidation, safer communications, silver tankas, and copper dirhams expanded trade and towns. Ibn Battutah called Delhi the eastern Islamic world's largest city and Daulatabad its equal; Lahore, Multan, Kara, Lakhnauti, Anhilwara, Cambay, and Sonargaon were other major centres.

Industry and technology. Bengal and Gujarat produced fine cloth; Cambay also worked gold and silver, while Sonargaon specialized in raw silk and fine cotton. Leather, metal, carpets, wood, stone, paper, spinning wheels, the dhunia bow, improved looms, rahat irrigation, glass, armour, and superior mortar broadened production.

International exchange. Indian textiles reached the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and China, where fine cloth was valued above silk. India imported West Asian luxury cloth, glass, and horses, Chinese silk and porcelain, African ivory, and Southeast Asian spices; its favourable balance brought gold and silver.

Merchant specialization. Arabs led Indian Ocean trade without displacing Tamil, Kalinga, or Gujarati merchants. Marwaris, Gujaratis, Jains, and Bohras handled coastal trade; Multanis and West-Central Asian Muslims dominated overland routes. Wealthy merchants built fine houses and temples and lent to extravagant nobles.

Roads and relays. Royal roads and sarais reduced, but did not remove, danger. Routes linked Peshawar with Sonargaon and Delhi with Daulatabad; mounted and runner relays moved messages, Khurasani fruit, and even Ganga water across a forty-day journey.

The Sultan and the Nobles

Courtly awe. Sultanat elites matched West and Central Asian ruling standards. Balban cultivated splendour; Ibn Battutah described Muhammad Tughlaq's three guarded gates and vast thousand-pillared public hall.

Gift economy and karkhanas. Muhammad Tughlaq reportedly distributed 200,000 seasonal robes yearly. Royal workshops produced and stored silk, precious metalwork, brocade, and rare goods; Firuz once reportedly paid 70,000 tankas for shoes.

Household and imitation. Queens, female relatives, foreign slaves, servants, and guards filled the haram. Nobles copied royal palaces, dress, retainers, feasts, and patronage of arts and letters.

Income and inheritance. Tughlaq expansion brought huge salaries and fortunes: Khan-i-Jahan received fifteen lakhs and Bashir left thirteen crores. Noble property usually passed to heirs, enabling purchase of gardens, orchards, and markets;

Firuz reportedly planted 1,200 orchards near Delhi.

New landed gentry. Wealth converted into landed property, but Sultanat fragmentation in the early fifteenth century interrupted this development.

Town Life: Slaves, Artisans and Others

Urban composition. Garrisons generated towns that later became cultural centres. Nobles, literate clerks, ulama, shopkeepers, artisans, armed beggars, servants, and slaves formed a mixed population; many chroniclers came from the ulama-official milieu and reflected its prejudices.

Slavery. War capture was the main source, alongside household birth, purchase, acquisition, and inheritance. Markets traded Turkish, Caucasian, Greek, Indian, and some Abyssinian slaves for domestic service, company, skills, crafts, or guarding; talented slaves could rise to high office.

Firuz's establishment. Firuz collected about 180,000 slaves, using some in handicrafts and as bodyguards but most in personal service. Treatment could be harsh, though slaves could marry, hold some property, and were owed food and shelter; manumission was meritorious.

Prices and wages. Under Alauddin, about fifteen kilograms of wheat cost 7.5 jitals, barley 4, and rice 5, with 48 jitals to a tanka. Prices rose under Muhammad Tughlaq and fell near Alauddin's level under Firuz, perhaps because cultivation expanded.

Inequality. A Firuz-era family was estimated to need five tankas monthly, but Alauddin-era artisans earned only 2-3 jitals daily or 1.5-2 tankas monthly, and servants less. Festivals and fairs relieved a life otherwise divided between elite ostentation and mass hardship.

Caste, Social Manners and Customs

Hindu hierarchy. Smritis preserved Brahman status, allowed agriculture as a normal Kali Age livelihood in one view, reserved protective arms for Kshatriyas, and assigned Shudras service while allowing most occupations except liquor and meat dealing. Shudras could hear Puranas but not study Vedas; Chandals faced the harshest exclusion.

Women. Early marriage and wifely obedience continued. Annulment and sati were disputed; Ibn Battutah says sati required the sultan's permission. Widow remarriage was prohibited mainly for upper castes, while a widow could dispose of a divided estate inherited from a sonless husband.

Purdah. Seclusion and veiling spread among upper classes through older elite customs, Turkish-Arab example, insecurity, status imitation, and religious justification. The chapter considers social prestige perhaps the strongest cause and stresses its harmful effect on women.

Muslim divisions. Turks, Iranians, Afghans, and Indian Muslims rarely intermarried; converts from lower Hindu groups faced discrimination, creating caste-like ethnic exclusiveness.

Interaction despite barriers. Hindu and Muslim elites had limited social intimacy, yet Hindus served in armies, managed noble households, dominated local administration and trade, and met Muslims continually. Material rivalry and cultural difference produced tension but never total separation.

Nature of the State

Military aristocracy. Turks first monopolized high office; the Tughlaqs broadened the nobility, but birth still restricted most Muslims and Hindus. Urban Muslims had better army and state prospects.

Tacit power-sharing. Hindus dominated commerce, rural aristocracy, and lower administration. Their cooperation with city-based Muslim officials was essential, while conflicts usu-

ally concerned power, land, and agrarian surplus even when expressed religiously.

Islamic form, political autonomy. Sultans affirmed sharia, employed divines, and granted them revenue-free land but resisted clerical control. Under Iltutmish, his wazir rejected an ulama demand for conversion or death as impractical because Muslims were a tiny minority.

Zawabit and jahandari. Sultans supplemented sharia with state rules. Alauddin openly prioritized political need; Barani therefore judged the state worldly rather than truly Islamic.

Zimmis and jizyah. Hindu protected status rested on accepting rule and paying a graduated tax in lieu of military service; women, children, and the indigent were exempt. Brahmans were initially exempt, but Firuz separated jizyah from land revenue and taxed them. The larger order rested on privilege, not equality.

Religious Freedom under the Sultanat

Conquest and settlement. Early sacks targeted temples for ideological justification and wealth. Quwwat-ul-Islam reused a Vishnu temple and other pillars; Ajmer saw similar conversion. Once settled, Turks built new mosques.

Legal limits. Sharia discouraged new non-Muslim places of worship but allowed repair of old ones; village temples and private shrines remained possible. War suspended this limited protection.

Open worship in peace. Submitted communities worshipped publicly. Barani reports Jalaluddin Khalji observing Hindu preaching, idols, processions, music, and Yamuna immersion even near the palace.

Lapses without general forced conversion. Prisoners or criminals were sometimes induced to convert, and Firuz executed a Brahman for insulting the Prophet, yet both Barani and Nizamuddin Auliya indicated force did not generally overcome Hindu adherence.

Multiple conversion paths. Political or economic advantage,

status, a chief’s example, agrarian settlement in west Punjab, Kashmir, and east Bengal, urban craft patronage, and the moral climate created by Sufis all mattered. The chapter rejects evidence for mass lower-caste conversion chiefly from discrimination or Sufi activity; despite refugees after Mongol invasions and Afghan immigration, Muslims remained comparatively few.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Second, eighth, and fourteenth centuries	Paper-making is known respectively in China, the Arab world, and Europe.	Places Sultanat paper craft within a longer transmission sequence.
Late twelfth century	Turks establish a state in northern India.	Beginning of the centralized Delhi Sultanat order.
End of thirteenth century	A definite central administrative system develops.	Specialized offices become more stable.
Under Balban	Diwan-i-arz appears as a separate Indian department; army training and severe justice are emphasized.	Strengthens military and royal discipline.
Beginning of fourteenth century	Alauddin changes local revenue practice, abolishes military salary villages, and enforces cash pay, muster, dagh, and rolls.	Centralization increases army effectiveness but provokes rural conflict.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Under Alauddin	Trooper receives 238 tankas, plus 78 for maintaining a second horse.	Concrete measure of cash military organization.
Fourteenth century	Wazir becomes chiefly a revenue expert.	Marks administrative specialization.
Under Muhammad Tughlaq	Empire reaches twenty-four provinces to Mabar; Khwaja Jahan and finance officers manage a vast revenue system.	High point of territorial and fiscal scale.
Under Muhammad Tughlaq	Ibn Battutah spends eight years at court and travels India.	Major source for economy, roads, products, and society.
Under Muhammad Tughlaq	Delhi-Daulatabad road and rapid relays operate across a forty-day journey.	Demonstrates communications capacity.
Under Firuz Tughlaq	Khan-i-Jahan serves eighteen years as wazir.	High-water mark of wazirial influence.
Under Firuz Tughlaq	Auditing harshness is relaxed; jizyah is separated and applied to Brahmans.	Changes provincial and religious-fiscal policy.
Under Firuz Tughlaq	Slave establishment reaches about 180,000; public works and 1,200 orchards are attributed to him.	Shows scale of royal household, labour, works, and landed investment.
Second half of fourteenth century	Improved crafts, irrigation, agriculture, and trade produce relative growth and affluence.	Economic high point in the chapter's assessment.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Early fifteenth century	Delhi Sultanat disintegrates into independent states.	Halts emerging landed-gentry trend but spreads Sultanat administrative influence.
Fifteenth century under Lodis	Further Afghan influx occurs.	Broadens Muslim immigration while the total Muslim population remains small.
Sixteenth century	Mughal administration develops under Sultanat influence.	Shows the system's long institutional legacy.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Caliphal moral authority and legal sovereignty	Naming the Abbasid caliph affirmed Islamic affiliation; it did not make him India's ruler.
Election, nomination, and succession	Election was theory, a ruler could nominate, nobles had to accept, and military strength often decided.
Wazir and ariz-i-mamalik	Wazir managed revenue and general finance; ariz administered troops but the sultan commanded them.
Diwan-i-risalat and diwan-i-insha	Risalat handled religious matters, grants, and stipends; insha handled state correspondence.
Muslim civil, Hindu personal, and criminal law	Qazis applied sharia civil law to Muslims; Hindu bodies applied personal law; rulers framed criminal regulations.
Iqta and hereditary property	Iqta was an office-revenue assignment under the state, although holders initially enjoyed autonomy; it was not described as ordinary private land.

Often confused	The distinction
Muqti, amil, khut, muqaddam, and patwari	Muqti governed an iqta; amil headed a pargana; khut was landowner, muqaddam headman, and patwari accountant.
Peasant and rural gentry	Most peasants lived near subsistence; owner-cultivators, khuts, muqaddams, and rais had resources and privileges.
Cheap grain and easy urban life	Low nominal prices aided officials and soldiers, but low wages left artisans and servants in hardship.
Merchant and noble wealth	Merchants earned through trade and credit; nobles drew salaries and political revenue but often borrowed from Multanis.
Slave and free servant	Slavery was degrading and coerced, yet masters owed subsistence; low-paid free servants could face starvation.
Hindu-Muslim separation and interaction	Marriage and dining restrictions existed, but army, trade, management, and local administration created constant contact.
Islamic form and theocratic control	Sharia shaped legitimacy and offices, but sultans rejected clerical dictation and issued pragmatic zawabit.
Jizyah and land revenue	Jizyah marked protected status and was initially difficult to distinguish from cultivator revenue; Firuz made it separate.
Toleration and equality	Existing worship could continue under limits, but the state remained based on unequal privilege.
Sufi influence and organized conversion	Sufi character made Islam receptive to some, but Sufis generally welcomed both communities and did not run mass conversion campaigns.

Often confused	The distinction
Forced and voluntary conversion	Coercive episodes occurred, but the chapter emphasizes political, economic, occupational, personal, and regional motives rather than general conversion by sword.

Self-test

1. What did recognition of the Abbasid caliph mean, and where did actual sovereignty lie?
2. Why did military force remain decisive in succession despite nomination and legitimacy?
3. Distinguish the functions of the wazir, ariz-i-mamalik, diwan-i-*risalat*, and diwan-i-*insha*.
4. How did the *iqta* change as central government strengthened?
5. What evidence shows both rural poverty and rural privilege?
6. Which factors supported the growth of trade, towns, and industry?
7. How did roads and postal relays integrate the Sultanat?
8. Compare the lives of nobles, merchants, slaves, artisans, and ordinary townspeople.
9. Why is complete Hindu-Muslim social separation an inaccurate model of the period?
10. Why does the chapter call the state Islamic in form but militaristic and aristocratic in character?
11. What did limited religious toleration permit and prohibit?
12. Why does the chapter reject a single explanation for conversion to Islam?

Answer key

1. Khutba recognition gave the caliph moral prestige and linked Delhi to the Islamic world; supreme political, military, administrative, and appellate legal authority remained with the sultan.

2. There was no accepted primogeniture, every son could claim, nominations needed nobles, and usurpers could succeed. Military capacity therefore decided many contests, though legitimacy and public opinion constrained rulers.
3. The wazir managed revenue and finance; the ariz recruited, equipped, and paid troops; risalat handled religion, pious grants, and stipends; insha handled formal and confidential correspondence.
4. Early muqtis kept order, collected revenue, paid troops, and retained balances with near autonomy. Later the centre measured income, fixed cash salaries, demanded surplus, and audited accounts.
5. Most peasants endured subsistence, famine, and war, but owner-cultivators dominated panchayats, khuts and muqaddams held concessions and horses, and Hindu rais retained estates and political influence.
6. Consolidation, tankas and dirhams, roads, sarais, postal systems, urban demand, skilled artisans, international merchants, irrigation, and improved paper, textile, metal, glass, and building technologies reinforced one another.
7. Roads joined Peshawar-Sonargaon and Delhi-Daulatabad; sarais protected travellers, while horse and runner relays carried news and high-value supplies across long distances.
8. Sultans and nobles lived with extraordinary consumption, merchants could be rich creditors, and some skilled slaves rose, but most slaves served households and artisans and servants earned too little to benefit fully from cheap grain.
9. Elite marriage and dining barriers and ethnic discrimination were real, yet Hindus served in Muslim armies, managed noble affairs, dominated trade and village administration, and continually interacted with Muslims.
10. Sultans claimed sharia legitimacy and favoured Muslim elites, but military leaders monopolized privilege, clerics could not dictate policy, Hindus remained essential, and rulers issued secularly motivated zawabit.
11. In peace, old temples could be repaired, village and private shrines built, and worship practised openly. New public tem-

ples faced limits, and war or occasional rulers brought destruction, punishment, or coerced conversion.

12. The chapter finds personal ambition, political and economic advantage, status, ruler or chief example, agrarian change, urban craft patronage, regional conditions, and Sufi reputation, while rejecting mass conversion solely by force, caste oppression, or Sufi activity.

Closing perspective

Centralization depended on separating administration from command: the sultan retained military supremacy while diwans measured revenue, paid troops, carried information, and controlled provincial surplus. Institutional continuity helped conquest. Keeping village collectors and practices initially unchanged reduced disruption, but deeper Alauddin-era intervention generated rural resistance.

Vijayanagara, the Bahmani Kingdom, and the Portuguese, c. 1350-1565

The Deccan and southern India were not a stage waiting for northern empires. Vijayanagara and the Bahmani kingdom built their own political systems around forts, fertile zones, ports, military labor, horse imports, local elites, and contested frontier regions such as the Raichur Doab.

Their rivalry was persistent without being a simple religious war. Alliances crossed religious lines, internal factions mattered, and competition for revenue and strategic space usually explains more than civilizational labels. The Portuguese arrival added a maritime power with ships, fortified ports, and an interest in controlling trade. That new pressure altered commerce and diplomacy without immediately replacing the states already rooted in the region.

Opening frame

Vijayanagara and Bahmani rule dominated India south of the Vindhyas for over 200 years, supporting law and order, commerce, handicrafts, cities, architecture, arts, and letters while north India experienced disintegration.

Bahmani breakup came near the end of the fifteenth century; Vijayanagara's decisive defeat followed at Bannihatti in 1565. Portuguese arrival initiated a long confrontation between Asian land powers and European sea powers, while Mughal arrival began a new phase of northern integration.

The Vijayanagara Empire: Its Foundation and Conflict with the Bahmani Kingdom

Foundation and southern expansion. Harihara and Bukka belonged to five brothers. Tradition makes them former Kakatiya feudatories and Kampili ministers who were captured and converted after Muhammad Tughlaq conquered Kampili, then returned to Hinduism under Vidyaranya and founded Vijayanagar. Some modern scholars reject the conversion story and regard them as rebel Karnataka nayaks. Harihara's coronation is placed in 1336; Hoysala dissolution enabled Vijayanagara to absorb that kingdom by 1346. The brothers and relatives shared administration in an early cooperative commonwealth; Bukka ruled from 1356 to 1377. Madurai was eliminated by 1377, extending rule to Rameshwaram, Tamil country, and Kerala.

Bahmani foundation and conflict zones. Alauddin Hasan founded the Bahmani kingdom in 1347. Known as Hasan Gangu from service under a Brahman named Gangu, he took the title Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah; claimed Iranian descent and Ferishta's alternative Brahman-patron explanation remain competing traditions. The empires fought over the 30,000-square-mile Tungabhadra doab, the fertile and port-rich Krishna-Godavari delta, and Marathwada access to the Konkan. Goa exported regional produce and imported essential high-quality horses from Iran and Iraq.

War and attempted restraint. Both sides burned settlements, enslaved civilians, and destroyed life and property. After Bukka slaughtered all but one defender at Mudkal in 1367, the Bahmani sultan crossed the Tungabhadra in person, using superior artillery and cavalry to defeat Vijayanagara but failing to

capture its king or capital. Exhaustion produced a treaty restoring the divided doab and promising not to kill helpless civilians. The agreement was imperfectly observed but made warfare somewhat more humane.

Harihara II and Deva Raya I. Harihara II (1377-1404) competed with Reddis, Warangal, Orissa, and Bahmanis for the eastern coast. A Bahmani-Warangal alliance lasting over fifty years checked Vijayanagara, though Harihara took Belgaum and Goa and sent an expedition to northern Sri Lanka. Deva Raya I (1404-22) lost to Firuz Shah, paid ten lakh huns plus pearls and elephants, and married his daughter to Firuz with Bankapur as dowry; spectacular political marriage did not secure lasting peace. Warangal then joined Vijayanagara to divide Reddi territory, enabling Deva Raya to defeat Firuz and reach the Krishna's mouth. His Tungabhadra dam supplied city canals and irrigation, reportedly adding 350,000 pardaos to revenue; he also dammed the Haridra.

Deva Raya II, military reform, and wealth. Deva Raya II (1425-46), considered the dynasty's greatest ruler, enlisted 2,000 Muslim cavalymen with jagirs and ordered Hindu troops to learn archery from them; Deva Raya I had reportedly already employed 10,000 Muslims. Ferishta's claimed totals of 60,000 Hindu archers, 80,000 cavalry, and 200,000 infantry may be exaggerated. Large standing cavalry centralized the polity but strained resources because Arab-controlled horse imports were costly. Three battles after his 1443 crossing of the Tungabhadra left Bahmani frontiers unchanged. Nuniz's claim that Quilon, Sri Lanka, Pulicat, Pegu, and Tenasserim paid tribute is doubtful for the distant eastern states and may refer to embassies and gifts; repeated Sri Lankan invasion does imply naval capacity.

Foreign descriptions. Nicolo Conti in 1420 described a sixty-mile city and estimated 90,000 men fit for arms. Ferishta thought Bahmani valor offset Vijayanagara's superior wealth, power, and territory. Abdur Razzaq reported a fertile, populated realm with 300 ports, eleven lakh troops, and land spanning three months' travel; such figures record perceived scale, not necessarily exact measurement. He described seven concen-

tric fortifications, four broad bazaars, occupational quarters, separate Muslim quarters, stone canals, and great royal bullion stores. Hoarded wealth, the chapter notes, left circulation and could invite attack.

The Bahmani Kingdom: Its Expansion and Disintegration

Firuz Shah as scholar-ruler. Firuz Shah Bahmani (1397-1422) knew religious and natural sciences, calligraphy, poetry, and, according to Ferishta, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Telugu, Kannada, and Marathi. His multilingual household, reading of the Old and New Testaments, respect for religions, and nightly scholarly gatherings served his aim of making the Deccan India's cultural center; Ferishta still calls him orthodox, while noting wine and music.

Administration and commerce. Firuz inducted Hindus extensively, making Deccani Brahmans prominent especially in revenue work and using local Hindus to balance foreign newcomers. He built an observatory near Daulatabad and promoted Chaul and Dabhol, which connected the kingdom with Persian Gulf and Red Sea luxury trade.

Expansion and political marriage. Firuz defeated Narsing Rai of Kherla, received forty elephants, five maunds of gold, fifty maunds of silver, and married the rai's daughter; Kherla was restored and Narsing became an amir. His marriage with Deva Raya I's daughter likewise failed to end rivalry.

Ahmad Shah I. Defeat by Deva Raya I in 1419 weakened Firuz and led him to abdicate for his brother Ahmad Shah I, called **wali** through association with Sufi Gesu Daraz. Ahmad avenged Warangal's support for Vijayanagara by killing its ruler and annexing most territory, then moved the capital from Gulbarga to Bidar to consolidate control before turning toward Malwa, Gondwana, and the Konkan.

Mahmud Gawan

Rise and conquests. Iranian-born Gawan began as a trader, received the title **Malik-ut-Tujjar**, became peshwa, and dominated government for nearly twenty years. He annexed eastern territory, raided to Kanchi, and took western Goa and Dabhol, severely hurting Vijayanagara while expanding overseas trade with Iran and Iraq, internal trade, and manufacture.

Northern settlement and interstate politics. Bahmanis and Malwa contested Gondwana, Berar, and Konkan; Gujarat supported the Bahmanis. An agreement assigned Kherla to Malwa and Berar to Bahmani rule, but Mahmud Khalji of Malwa continued trying to seize Berar until Gawan prevailed with Gujarat's help. These alliances show politics, strategy, and trade overriding religious division. Malwa, Gujarat, Orissa, Bengal, and Deccan affairs were connected; Orissa's post-1450 raids reached Madurai and its territory reached the Krishna, worsening Vijayanagara weakness after Deva Raya II.

Administrative reforms. Gawan divided the kingdom into eight **tarafs** under **tarafdars**, fixed nobles' pay and obligations, and assigned 100,000 huns yearly for maintaining 500 horses. Payment could be cash or jagir, with collection expenses allowed; each province contained **khalisa** land for the sultan. He attempted land measurement and fixed cultivator dues.

Education and factional collapse. His tiled, three-storeyed Bidar madrasa housed 1,000 teachers and students with free food and clothing and attracted Iranian and Iraqi scholars. Conflict between established **Deccanis** and newcomer **afaqis or gharibs** defeated his conciliatory policy. Rivals persuaded the young sultan to execute Gawan in 1482 when he was over seventy. Governors then became independent, dividing Bahmani rule into Golconda, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Berar, and Bidar; the first three remained leading Deccan powers until seventeenth-century Mughal absorption.

Cultural significance. Bahmani culture bridged north and south while developing distinct Deccan features. Successor states continued these traditions, which later influenced Mughal

culture.

Climax of the Vijayanagara Empire and Its Disintegration

Dynastic crisis and restoration. After Deva Raya II died in 1446, absence of primogeniture caused civil wars, feudatory independence, ministerial exactions, popular distress, and contraction to Karnataka and western Andhra. Minister Saluva usurped the throne, restored order, and founded a short dynasty. The Tuluva line followed, with Krishna Deva Raya (1509-30) as its greatest ruler.

Military supremacy. Krishna Deva faced Bahmani successor states, Orissa, and a coercive Portuguese presence on coastal vassals. Over seven years he forced Orissa to return land to the Krishna. He then took Raichur and Mudkal and decisively defeated Bijapur in 1520, driving its ruler across the Krishna; Vijayanagara forces reached Belgaum, sacked Bijapur, and destroyed Gulbarga before peace. Vijayanagara became the south's strongest land power but neglected naval development and the Portuguese threat.

Rule and cultural patronage. Paes praised Krishna Deva's justice and concern for subjects but noted sudden anger. The king removed nayaks from the Tungabhadra doab for direct administration, built a new town and irrigation tank, and wrote in Telugu and Sanskrit; one Telugu polity work and one Sanskrit drama survive in the chapter's account. His reign shifted Telugu literature toward independent composition and patronized Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil poets. Barbosa, Paes, and Nuniz praised prosperity and administration.

Religion and toleration. Vijayanagara rulers supported Hindu temples, schools, and maths and enlarged temples with halls and pavilions. Barbosa nevertheless described freedom for Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others to live by their own faith and praised Krishna Deva's justice and equity.

Rama Raja and 1565. After Krishna Deva's death in 1530 and succession struggle, Sadashiva Raya ruled nominally from 1543 to 1567 while Rama Raja dominated a triumvirate. Rama Raja used rival Deccan powers against each other and a Portuguese treaty to block horses to Bijapur, humiliating Bijapur, Golconda, and Ahmadnagar without a larger program beyond a favorable balance. They united and crushed Vijayanagara at Bannihatti near Talikota in 1565, also called Talikota or Rakshasa-Tangadi. Rama Raja was captured and executed; a reported 100,000 Hindus died, and Vijayanagara was looted and ruined. The kingdom survived almost another century but continually contracted and lost political importance.

State and Economy under Vijayanagara

Kingship and hierarchy. Krishna Deva's polity work required the king to protect the good, punish wrongdoing, neglect nothing observed, and tax moderately. A noble council advised him. Territorial units descended from **rajya or mandalam** to **nadu, sthala, and grama**.

Provincial autonomy. Chola village self-government weakened under hereditary nayakships. Governors were first royal princes and later nobles or vassal-family members; they kept courts, officers, and armies, issued low-denomination coins, imposed or remitted taxes, and remained as long as ability and strength allowed. They owed fixed men and money. Of an estimated 12,000,000-pardao imperial income, only half reached the center.

Amaram and nayaks. Defeated subordinate rulers sometimes retained restored kingdoms. In centrally ruled areas, the king granted revenue-bearing **amaram** to military chiefs called **palaiyagars, palegars, or nayaks**, who supplied fixed infantry, horses, elephants, and money. Their power made control difficult, contributed to 1565 and disintegration, and enabled Tanjore and Madurai nayaks to become independent.

Peasants and taxation. Travelers knew little of villages, so

rural conditions remain uncertain. General descriptions show small thatched houses, bare feet, little upper-body covering, elite shoes and silk turbans, and ornament use across classes. An inscription gives crop-specific shares: one-third of winter **kuruvai** rice, one-fourth of sesame, ragi, and horsegram, and one-sixth of millet and other dry crops; soil and irrigation also mattered. Property, produce-sale, profession, emergency military, and marriage taxes supplemented land revenue. Nikitin contrasted miserable rural people with luxurious nobles.

Urban and temple economy. Towns, many centered on large temples, expanded with trade. Temples needed food and commodities for worship, personnel, pilgrims, and **prasadam**; their wealth supported internal and overseas commerce. Historians therefore treat Vijayanagara as a transition from an old to a new economy.

The Advent of the Portuguese

Debated turning point and European pressures. Vasco da Gama reached Calicut in 1498 with two ships guided from Africa by Gujarati pilots. The older claim that this immediately transferred ocean control to Europeans and began inevitable colonial dominance has been questioned since World War II. Portuguese voyages arose from European agricultural and commercial growth, larger towns, and demand for Chinese silk and Asian spices and drugs; pepper preserved or flavored salted winter meat.

Ottoman and western European setting. Asian goods moved through Levant, Egyptian, and Black Sea routes. Ottoman expansion, including Constantinople in 1453 and later Syria and Egypt, did not oppose trade but created an alarming pepper monopoly and naval power. Spain and Portugal, supported by northern money and men and Genoese ships and knowledge, pursued direct routes as Venice accommodated the Turks. This broader movement included Columbus and Henry the Navigator.

Exploration, religion, and technology. From 1418 Henry

sent annual voyages down western Africa to displace Arab and Venetian trade and convert African and Asian peoples. A 1453 papal bull promised Portugal lands beyond Cape Nor to India in perpetuity if it Christianized them. Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1488. Compass and astrolabe aided navigation, although the technologies were known in China and the Arab-Indian world and European ships were not necessarily superior to Chinese junks. European commercial rivalry and Renaissance inquiry accelerated adoption and improvement of gunpowder, printing, telescopes, navigation, and metallurgy.

Calicut, monopoly, and naval supremacy. Calicut's Arab merchants opposed da Gama, but the Zamorin allowed Portuguese purchases. The cargo was valued in Portugal at sixty times expedition cost, yet direct trade grew slowly because the crown excluded rival nations and private Portuguese traders. An Egyptian-Gujarati fleet initially killed governor Don Almeida's son but was routed in 1509, leaving Portugal's navy supreme enough to operate toward the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

Albuquerque's fortified system. Albuquerque argued that naval power required forts. He captured Goa from Bijapur in 1510; its harbor and position near Malabar, Deccan, and Gujarat trade made it the eastern headquarters. Portuguese forces extended to the mainland, blockaded Danda-Rajouri, and sacked Dabhol. Forts or stations followed at Colombo, Achin, Malacca, Socotra, and Ormuz; Aden resisted, leaving the Red Sea outside Portuguese control.

Ottoman-Gujarat challenge. Portuguese success remained incomplete. Gujarat sought Ottoman help; a 1529 Turkish fleet aided Bahadur Shah, and Rumi Khan became a noted gunner and governor. He repelled a 1531 Portuguese attack on Daman and Diu, though Portugal fortified Chaul. Mughal pressure from Humayun then induced Bahadur to grant Bassein and permit a Diu fort; while later trying to restrict Portugal, he drowned in a 1536 shipboard clash. A 1538 Ottoman fleet of 45 galleons and 20,000 men besieged Diu for two months, but commander Sulaiman Pasha's arrogance cost Gujarati support and a Portuguese relief force prompted withdrawal. Attacks under Peri

Rais in 1551 and Ali Rais in 1554 also failed. In 1566 Ottomans and Portuguese agreed to share trade and avoid conflict in Arab seas, preventing Ottoman-Mughal alignment against Portugal.

Portuguese Impact on Indian Trade, Society and Politics

Coercive regulation. Portugal could not police the whole ocean or control all traders. It monopolized pepper, weapons, ammunition, and war horses; other ships needed permits and were pressed to pass Goa and pay duty. Officials claimed search rights and treated resistance as war, allowing capture, sinking, and enslavement. This violated Asian open-trade practice and created costly land hostility; armed Asian ships often carried protection against pirates rather than intending war on Portugal.

Resilient Asian networks. Gujaratis and Arabs retained profitable exchanges of Indian textiles, rice, and sugar for Southeast Asian spices, West Asian gold and horses, and Chinese silk and porcelain. Portugal monopolized European pepper briefly, but by the late sixteenth century Levant and Egyptian supply recovered through Mughal-Safavid-protected overland routes and a Gujarati Achin-Lakshadweep-Red Sea route. Goa did not eclipse Cambay or Surat, though Portuguese predation hurt Malabar and Bengal's trade through Chittagong.

New routes and products. Portuguese links brought Japanese copper and silver and opened Philippine trade; Indian textiles went from the Philippines to South America for silver. Portugal showed how a navy could harass established commerce and create routes. It transmitted potato, tobacco, maize, peanut, and other American crops, though slowly. It did not transmit Europe's new science effectively because Portugal was less transformed by the Renaissance and later Jesuit reaction opposed new science.

Political limits and survival. Vijayanagara's 1565 defeat freed Deccan states to attack Portuguese coasts without fear of losing horse imports to their southern rival. In 1570 Bijapur,

Ahmadnagar, and the Zamorin coordinated assaults on Goa and Chaul, but strong defenses and the navy prevailed. Portugal therefore remained master of the Indian seas and Deccan coast in the chapter’s closing assessment, without having mastered Asian trade itself.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1336	Harihara’s coronation is placed at this date.	Conventional beginning of Vijayanagara rule.
1346	Hoysala kingdom absorbed.	Vijayanagara expanded beyond its small base.
1347	Bahmani kingdom founded by Alauddin Hasan.	Created Vijayanagara’s enduring northern rival.
1356-1377	Bukka ruled.	Consolidated the cooperative commonwealth and southern expansion.
1367	Mudkal conflict and retaliatory Bahmani invasion.	First reported artillery use by both sides; civilian-protection treaty followed.
By 1377	Madurai Sultanate eliminated.	Vijayanagara reached Rameshwaram, Tamil country, and Kerala.
1377-1404	Harihara II ruled.	Expanded eastward and took Belgaum and Goa.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1397-1422	Firuz Shah Bahmani ruled.	Cultural growth, Hindu recruitment, trade, and renewed Vijayanagara wars.
1404-1422	Deva Raya I ruled.	Political marriage, Reddi expansion, and irrigation works.
1419	Firuz lost to Deva Raya I.	Led toward Firuz's abdication and Ahmad Shah's rise.
1420	Nicolo Conti visited Vijayanagara.	Early foreign account of the capital's scale.
1425-1446	Deva Raya II ruled.	Military reform and Vijayanagara's first fifteenth-century peak.
1443	Deva Raya II crossed the Tungabhadra.	Three battles ended with existing frontiers restored.
After 1450	Orissa raided deep into south India.	Added to post-1446 Vijayanagara instability.
1482	Mahmud Gawan executed.	Noble factionalism accelerated Bahmani disintegration.
1488	Diaz rounded Cape of Good Hope.	Established the direct Europe-India route's basis.
1498	Vasco da Gama reached Calicut.	Began direct Portuguese commercial contact with India.
1509	Egyptian-Gujarati fleet defeated.	Portuguese navy gained Indian Ocean supremacy.
1509-1530	Krishna Deva Raya ruled.	Vijayanagara's military and cultural climax.
1510	Albuquerque captured Goa.	Established principal Portuguese eastern base.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1520	Krishna Deva de- feated Bijapur.	Restored Vijayana- gara supremacy in the doab.
1529-1531	Ottoman aid reached Gujarat; Daman-Diu attack repelled.	Serious regional chal- lenge to Portugal.
1536	Bahadur Shah drowned in clash with Portuguese.	Portugal retained its Gujarat foothold.
1538	Ottoman fleet be- sieved Diu and with- drew.	Largest Turkish naval demonstration failed.
1543-1567	Sadashiva Raya nomi- nally ruled.	Rama Raja held real power.
1551 and 1554	Peri Rais and Ali Rais expeditions failed.	Ottoman challenge weakened.
1565	Vijayanagara de- feated at Bannihatti or Talikota.	Ended its great age, though the kingdom survived.
1566	Ottoman-Portuguese agreement.	Divided trade inter- ests and ended major Arab-sea conflict.
1570	Bijapur-Ahmadnagar- Zamorin attacks failed.	Portuguese coast and naval position survived.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Harihara-Bukka conversion story and modern interpretation	Tradition describes capture, con- version, and reconversion; some modern scholars see them as Karnataka nayaks who rebelled without conversion.
Tungabhadra doab and Krishna- Godavari delta	Doab was a land frontier be- tween rivers; delta combined fertility, ports, and foreign trade.

Often confused	The distinction
Political marriage and durable peace	Deva Raya-Firuz and Kherla-Firuz marriages accompanied settlements but did not remove strategic rivalry.
Deva Raya I and Deva Raya II	I built dams and shifted alliances; II reorganized the army and presided over a great fifteenth-century peak.
Reported tribute and proven subordination	Nuniz's distant tribute claim may describe gifts and embassies, especially for Pegu and Tenasserim.
Deccanis and afaqis	Deccanis were established local nobles; afaqis or gharibs were newer foreign arrivals.
Taraf and amaram	Bahmani taraf was a province under a tarafdar; Vijayanagara amaram was revenue territory granted to a military chief.
Governor and nayak	Governor administered a province with broad autonomy; nayak held amaram in exchange for troops and cash.
Vijayanagara defeat and immediate extinction	Bannihatti ended its great age in 1565, but a shrinking kingdom survived almost another century.
Naval supremacy and trade monopoly	Portugal could dominate battles and key coasts without policing the ocean or replacing Asian commercial networks.
Goa and Cambay-Surat	Goa was Portugal's main base; it never displaced Gujarat's leading Asian trade centers.
Asian armed ships and Portuguese enforcement	Asian cannon often deterred pirates; Portugal asserted a wider coercive right to search, seize, enslave, and tax.
Portuguese technology and Asian inferiority	Navigation aided voyages, but key instruments had Asian precedents and European ships were not inherently superior to Chinese junks.

Often confused	The distinction
New trade links and scientific transfer	Portugal opened Japan-Philippines routes and moved crops but did not effectively transmit Renaissance science.

Self-test

1. What three regions drove Vijayanagara-Bahmani conflict, and why did each matter?
2. What is uncertain about Harihara and Bukka's conversion story?
3. Why is the treaty after the 1367 Mudkal war significant?
4. How did Deva Raya II reform the army, and what new burden followed?
5. What do the accounts of Conti, Abdur Razzaq, and Nuniz reveal, and why must some claims be qualified?
6. How did Firuz Shah and Mahmud Gawan strengthen Bahmani political and cultural life?
7. Why did Mahmud Gawan's execution accelerate Bahmani disintegration?
8. What made Krishna Deva Raya's reign a climax, and what strategic weakness remained?
9. How did governors and nayaks both support and weaken Vijayanagara?
10. Why did the Portuguese search for a direct route to India, and why was Goa crucial?
11. Why did Portuguese naval supremacy fail to produce full trade monopoly?
12. Identify two destructive and two connective effects of the Portuguese presence.

Answer key

1. Tungabhadra doab supplied wealth and a frontier; Krishna-Godavari combined fertile land and ports; Marathwada-Konkan access led to Goa, coastal commerce, and imported horses.

2. Tradition says the brothers were captured, converted, and later restored to Hinduism by Vidyaranya; some modern scholars instead identify them as Karnataka nayaks who rebelled against Turkish rule.
3. After extreme reciprocal violence, the states restored the divided doab and formally agreed not to massacre helpless civilians, making warfare somewhat more humane despite incomplete observance.
4. He recruited Muslim cavalry, granted jagirs, trained Hindu troops in archery, and built large standing cavalry; imported horses imposed high costs and resource strain.
5. They show an immense, fortified, commercial, fertile, wealthy capital and realm; exact military, port, and tribute numbers may be exaggerated or describe diplomacy rather than subordination.
6. Firuz promoted multilingual learning, Hindu administration, observatory work, and ports; Gawan conquered coasts, reformed tarafs and revenue, and founded the Bidar madrasa.
7. It removed the conciliator between Deccani and afaqi nobles, intensified faction, and allowed governors to create five independent principalities.
8. He restored order, defeated Orissa and Bijapur, centralized the doab, built irrigation works, and patronized multiple languages and faiths; he neglected naval development and the Portuguese danger.
9. Governors and amaram-holding nayaks supplied administration, troops, elephants, horses, and cash, but their autonomy and hereditary power made central control fragile.
10. European demand, Ottoman pressure, commercial rivalry, conversion aims, and navigational capacity drove the search; Goa's harbor and position connected Malabar, Deccan, Gujarat, and horse trade.
11. The ocean was too vast to police, Asian merchants and states maintained established networks and alternate routes, and Portugal could not make Goa replace Cambay or Surat.
12. Destructive: forced searches, seizures, enslavement, monopolies, or damaged Malabar-Bengal commerce. Connective:

trade with Japan and the Philippines, movement of textiles and silver, and introduction of American crops.

Closing perspective

Vijayanagara-Bahmani rivalry cannot be reduced to religion.

Control of fertile zones, ports, western access, horse supply, and interstate balance repeatedly overrode communal alignment. Military centralization carried a contradiction: standing cavalry, taraf reform, and amaram obligations strengthened conquest, but expensive imports and powerful nobles or nayaks weakened long-term central control.

North India between Sultanate and Mughal Rule, c. 1400-1526

The weakening of Tughluq authority did not leave a political vacuum. Provincial kingdoms, Afghan chiefs, Rajput houses, and the later Sayyid and Lodi rulers reorganized power at several scales. Delhi remained symbolically important, but control of Delhi no longer guaranteed command of north India.

The Lodi attempt to strengthen an Afghan-led monarchy brought its own contradiction. Afghan political expectations gave leading nobles a stronger sense of status and autonomy than a tightly centralized sultan might accept. Conflict at the center therefore widened opportunities for regional opponents and for Babur, whose victory at Panipat in 1526 began a new contest rather than instantly creating a settled Mughal Empire.

Opening frame: regional balance of power

Delhi's weakness and Timur's 1398 invasion encouraged governors and autonomous rulers to break away. Bengal, Sindh and Multan moved early; Gujarat, Malwa and Jaunpur followed, while Rajput states revived after Ajmer's Muslim governor was expelled.

Gujarat, Malwa and Mewar balanced one another in the west;

Bengal faced Orissa and Jaunpur; Lodis and Jaunpur fought for the Ganga-Yamuna valley. Lodi absorption of Jaunpur and Malwa's internal decay intensified the three-way Gujarat-Mewar-Lodi contest.

Because Malwa linked the rival zones, its mastery appeared to offer north Indian supremacy. The chapter suggests this heightened contest may have led Rana Sanga to invite Babur, expecting Lodi destruction to leave Mewar strongest.

Eastern India: Bengal, Assam and Orissa

Independent Bengal. Distance, climate and waterways weakened Delhi control, and Bengal broke away in 1338. Four years later Ilyas Khan took Lakhnauti and Sonargaon as Shamsuddin Ilyas Khan, expanded from Tirhut toward Banaras, and resisted Firuz at Ekdala. Their treaty fixed the Kosi as boundary; gifts did not imply Ilyas's subordination. Sikandar repeated his father's fort strategy against Firuz, after which Bengal avoided Delhi invasion for about two centuries, until Sher Shah overran it in 1538.

Government and culture. Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, AD 1389-1409, became famous for submitting to a qazi's justice, corresponded with Hafiz and exchanged missions with China; the 1409 Chinese request for Buddhist monks indicates Buddhism survived. Chittagong trade flourished. Raja Ganesh briefly ruled as a Hindu, but his sons ruled as Muslims, and frequent dynastic changes did not greatly disturb common life. Pandua and Gaur gained distinctive stone-brick architecture, while Maladhar Basu and later Hussain-era Bengali writers received patronage.

Hussain Shah and Assam. Alauddin Hussain, AD 1493-1519, restored order and placed Hindus, including a wazir, physician, bodyguard chief, mint master and Vaishnava brothers Rupa and Sanatan, in high office; he also respected Chaitanya. Bengal destroyed Kamta with Ahom support and planted an Afghan colony, but Nusrat Shah's probable attack on the Ahoms failed. The Ahoms, described as a north Burma Mongoloid tribe from which Assam's name derived, had become Hinduized; Suhungmung

or Svarga Narayana expanded their power while Shankaradeva spread Vaishnavism.

Eastern and coastal limits. Bengal took Chittagong from Arakan and Tipperah, but Ilyas's earlier push to Gauhati could not hold beyond Karatoya. The Ganga rulers of Orissa had resisted Bengal and built Puri and Konark; raids by Ilyas and Firuz in 1360 damaged their prestige, enabling the Gajapati dynasty.

Gajapati balance. Gajapatis were builders and warriors who expanded toward Karnataka but could not retain southern conquests against Vijayanagara and Bahmani power. In Bengal, Orissa held land to the Saraswati, including much of Midnapore and part of Hugli; Bengal raids reached Puri and Cuttack but could not dislodge this frontier. Simultaneous fighting in Bengal and Karnataka demonstrated Orissan strength.

Western India: Gujarat, Malwa and Mewar

Rich soil, handicrafts and ports made Gujarat a premier Delhi province. Its tolerant governor under Firuz was succeeded by Zafar Khan, whose converted Rajput father Sadharan had a marriage tie to Firuz. Gujarat became effectively independent after 1398; Zafar formally took the title Muzaffar Shah in 1407.

Ahmad Shah I, AD 1411-43, was the real founder: he controlled nobles, settled administration, consolidated territory and shifted the capital from Patan to Ahmedabad, founded in 1413. Jain traditions informed a distinct style with slender turrets, ornate brackets and stone carving, exemplified by Jama Masjid and Tin Darwaza.

Ahmad captured Girnar but restored its raja as tributary, destroyed temples at Sidhpur, imposed jizyah and subordinated Idar, Jhalawar, Bundi and Dungarpur. Yet the chapter rejects a one-dimensional judgment: Hindu ministers Manik Chand and Motichand served him, he executed his own son-in-law for murder, and he fought Muslim Malwa as fiercely as Hindu rulers.

Gujarat and Malwa remained opposite camps. Muzaffar once imprisoned and reinstated Hushang Shah; Malwa then supported Gujarat's rebels and hostile rajas, while Gujarat promoted Malwa claimants. This rivalry weakened both and limited their north Indian role.

Mahmud Begarha

Mahmud ruled AD 1459-1511. The source explains Begarha mainly by two captured garhs, Girnar and Champaner, while a footnote gives an alternative moustache-like-cow-horns story. Full annexation of prosperous Saurashtra promised revenue, ports, control of robbers and sea pirates, and a Girnar base toward Sindh.

Girnar fell after gallant resistance, allegedly aided by a wronged kamdar's treason. Its raja converted and entered service. Mahmud founded Mustafabad below the hill as Gujarat's second capital; he later sacked Dwarka for sheltering pirates against Mecca traffic and also destroyed its temples.

Champaner served plans toward Khandesh and Malwa. The source prints its fall after jauhar in 1454, although it also dates Mahmud's reign from 1459; this internal chronology conflict is preserved rather than corrected. Mahmud founded Muham-madabad, built gardens and resided there; its Jama Masjid combined a covered courtyard with Jain architectural principles.

Mahmud allied with Egypt unsuccessfully against Portuguese interference in West Asian trade. At home, long peace, safe roads, caravanserais and inns supported commerce. Arabic works were translated into Persian, and Sanskrit poet Udayaraja served at court.

Barbosa's stories of poison immunity and enormous appetite belong to traveller lore, while Mahmud's administrative outcome is clearer: Gujarat reached maximum extent and became powerful enough to challenge Humayun later.

Malwa

The Narmada-Tapti plateau commanded trunk routes between Gujarat and north India and between north and south. A strong Malwa checked Gujarat, Mewar, Bahmanis and Lodis; its conquest could enable a bid for northern supremacy.

The capital moved from Dhar to defensible, scenic Mandu. Its massive architecture used lofty plinths and coloured glazed tiles; Jama Masjid, Hindola Mahal and Jahaz Mahal are the named examples.

Succession disputes and competing noble groups invited intervention by Gujarat and Mewar. Hushang Shah nevertheless followed toleration: Rajputs received jagirs, temples could be built, and Jain merchant Nardeva Soni became treasurer and adviser.

Mahmud Khalji, AD 1436-69, destroyed temples while fighting Kumbha and neighbouring rajas, a reprehensible setback but not a general temple-destruction policy in the chapter's assessment. He fought Gujarat, Gondwana, Orissa, Bahmanis and Delhi, concentrating especially on south Rajputana and Mewar.

Mewar

After Chauhan decline, Marwar with Jodhpur founded in 1465, Muslim Nagaur and contested Ajmer joined the Rajput field. Mewar's early tradition traces to Bapa Rawal of the Guhilot clan, supposedly a seventh-century migrant from Gujarat; after Ratan Singh, Chittor passed to former Guhilot feudatories, the Sishodias. Rao Lakha and Mokal built regional strength.

Rana Kumbha, AD 1433-68, defeated internal rivals and sought Bundi, Kotah and Dungarpur, clashing with Malwa and Gujarat. Nagaur's khan appealed to Gujarat, Kumbha supported a Malwa claimant, and Mahmud Khalji aided Kumbha's rivals. Rao Jodha also freed Marwar from Mewar.

Despite sieges of Kumbhalgarh and a Malwa occupation of Ajmer, Kumbha retained most gains except outliers such as

Ranthambhor. He wrote books, patronised learning, built the palace and Victory Tower or Kirti Stambha at Chittor, and created irrigation lakes and reservoirs.

Kumbha's son Uda murdered him but was ousted. After fraternal struggle, grandson Rana Sanga took the throne in 1508. Sanga backed Medini Rai against Malwa's Mahmud II, defeated and captured the sultan in 1517, and gained eastern Malwa including Chanderi; the claimed six-month captivity and hostage arrangement remain claims.

Ibrahim Lodi attacked Mewar but suffered a sharp reverse at Khatoli and withdrew. With Sanga's power extending toward Lodi interests and Babur approaching, a decisive supremacy struggle appeared inevitable by 1525.

Northwest and north India: the Sharqis, the Lodi sultans and Kashmir

Sharqi state. Malik Sarwar, former wazir and Malik-us-Sharq, established Jaunpur's line after Timur shattered Delhi. Sharqi territory at its height ran Aligarh-Darbhanga and Nepal-Bundelkhand. It restored order, blocked Bengal, built an independent lofty-gate and huge-arch style, and made Jaunpur the "Shiraz of the East," associated with Malik Muhammad Jaisi.

Sharqi fall and Lodi rise. Repeated assaults on Delhi failed, and Bahlul Lodi annexed Jaunpur in 1484. Bahlul, holder of Sirhind iqta, checked Salt Range Khokhars, dominated Punjab and took Delhi in 1451 as the Saiyid line ended.

Afghan transformation. Unlike earlier Turkish sultans, Lodis were Afghans. Bahlul invited poor Afghans of Roh; Abbas Sarwani's "like locusts" phrase may exaggerate, but immigration helped defeat Jaunpur and made Afghans a major element across north and south Indian Muslim society.

Sikandar's administration. Sikandar Lodi, AD 1489-1517, made independent-minded Afghan nobles stand before him, honour royal orders and audit jagirs, though partition ideas persisted. He secured highways, kept essentials cheap, en-

couraged agriculture, abolished grain octroi, created the gazz-i-Sikandari and prepared rent rolls later used by Sher Shah.

Religion, culture and expansion. Sikandar restricted un-sharia Muslim practices, reimposed jizyah, executed a Brahman for equating scriptures and destroyed some campaign temples such as Nagarkot. Yet he patronised scholars from Arabia and Iran, translated Sanskrit and music works, recruited Persian-learning Hindus, and advanced cultural rapprochement. He took Dholpur and Gwalior, founded Agra in 1506 to command Rajasthan and Malwa routes, and drew Delhi toward conflict with Mewar.

Kashmir

Kashmir, a guarded centre of Saivism, suffered Dalucha's 1320 Mongol devastation: reported massacre, enslavement and burning destroyed public trust in Hindu government. Central Asian refugees entered via Baramulla, while syncretic Rishi Sufis helped conversions alongside coercion.

Under Sikandar Shah, AD 1389-1413, Brahmans and learned Hindus were ordered to convert or leave; temples were destroyed and precious idols melted for currency, reportedly at converted minister Suha Bhatt's urging.

Zainul Abidin, AD 1420-70, cancelled persecution, recalled non-Muslims, allowed reconversion, restored libraries, land grants and temples, abolished jizyah and cow slaughter, and withdrew the sati ban to respect Hindu wishes. Hindus held high office; Sriya Bhatt was justice minister and physician, while the sultan's first two queens were Jammu princesses and mothers of his four sons.

A poet versed in Persian, Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Tibetan, he sponsored scholars and Persian versions of the Mahabharata and Kalhana's Rajatarangini, updated to his time. Gwalior's raja sent Sanskrit music works. He imported paper-making and book-binding skills from Samarqand and fostered stone work, bottles, gold-beating, shawls, muskets and fireworks.

Dams, canals, bridges and the artificial Zaina Lanka island in Woolur Lake expressed economic and engineering policy. Zainul defeated a Ladakh Mongol invasion, took Baltistan and held Jammu and Rajauri, unifying Kashmir; wide fame and the name Bud Shah reflected this achievement.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1320	Dalucha devastated Kashmir.	Prelude to political and religious transformation in the valley.
1338	Bengal broke from Delhi.	Beginning of durable regional independence.
Four years after 1338	Ilyas Khan took Lakhnauti and Sonargaon.	Founded an expansive independent Bengal sultanate.
1360	Firuz raided Orissa and desecrated Puri.	Helped destroy Ganga prestige before Gajapati rise.
AD 1389-1409	Reign of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah.	Justice, Persian links and renewed Chinese diplomacy.
AD 1389-1413	Reign of Kashmir's Sikandar Shah.	Period of severe Brahman and temple persecution.
1398	Timur invaded Delhi.	Accelerated Gujarat, Malwa and other regional independence.
1407	Zafar Khan became Muzaffar Shah.	Formal Gujarat sovereignty.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1409	Chinese emperor sent gifts and requested Buddhist monks.	Evidence of diplomacy, trade and surviving Bengal Buddhism.
AD 1411-43	Reign of Ahmad Shah I.	Administrative consolidation and true foundation of Gujarat kingdom.
1413	Ahmedabad was founded as the new capital.	Centre of a distinctive Gujarat style.
AD 1420-70	Reign of Zainul Abidin.	Kashmir's tolerant, cultural and economic high point.
AD 1433-68	Reign of Rana Kumbha.	Mewar became a major regional power.
AD 1436-69	Reign of Malwa's Mahmud Khalji.	Aggressive regional campaigns, especially against Mewar.
1451	Bahlul Lodi crowned himself at Delhi.	Ended Saiyid rule and began Afghan Lodi power.
1454, as printed	Source dates Chamaner's fall before Mahmud's stated accession.	Preserve the packet's unresolved internal chronology conflict.
AD 1459-1511	Reign of Mahmud Begarha.	Gujarat's maximum extent, prosperity and administration.
1465	Jodhpur was founded as Marwar's capital.	Marks Marwar's separate Rajput rise.
1484	Bahlul annexed Jaunpur.	Unified much of the Ganga valley under Lodis.
AD 1489-1517	Reign of Sikandar Lodi.	Administrative reform, Agra foundation and imperial preparation.
AD 1493-1519	Reign of Alauddin Hussain Shah.	Bengal's liberal and literary high point.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1506	Sikandar selected and founded Agra.	Strategic second capital toward Rajasthan, Malwa and Gujarat.
1508	Rana Sanga took Mewar's throne.	Began final Mewar ascent.
1517	Sanga defeated Mahmud II; Sikandar Lodi's reign ended.	Eastern Malwa passed under Mewar influence as Lodi rivalry sharpened.
By 1525	North Indian supremacy contest approached decision.	Mewar, Lodis and incoming Babur converged.
1538	Sher Shah overran Bengal.	Ended the roughly two-century freedom from Delhi invasion noted by source.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
Gift exchange and subordination	Ilyas exchanged gifts with Firuz but remained independent.
Kamta or Kamrup and Ahom kingdom	Kamta was the western kingdom annexed by Bengal; Ahoms ruled the eastern Brahmaputra valley and repelled Bengal.
Ganga and Gajapati dynasties	Ganga rulers built Puri-Konark and lost prestige after raids; Gajapatis succeeded them and expanded south.
Ahmad Shah and Mahmud Begarha	Ahmad founded the consolidated Gujarat state and Ahmedabad; Mahmud brought it to maximum territorial strength.
Begarha nickname versions	Main explanation is capture of two garhs; another source version links the name to cow-horn-shaped moustaches.

Often confused	The distinction
Champaner date and Mahmud's reign	Packet prints the fall in 1454 but Mahmud's reign from 1459; retain the inconsistency rather than silently correcting it.
Ahmad Shah's bigotry and administration	Temple destruction and jizyah were real, but Hindu ministers and impartial justice complicate a single-label verdict.
Hushang Shah and Mahmud Khalji	Hushang promoted Rajput-Jain inclusion; Mahmud was an aggressive neighbour and destroyed temples in war.
Gujarat and Mandu architecture	Gujarat favoured slender carved Jain-influenced forms; Mandu used massive buildings, lofty plinths and glazed tiles.
Rana Kumbha and Rana Sanga	Kumbha consolidated Mewar against Gujarat-Malwa; Sanga exploited Malwa's collapse and challenged Lodis.
Sharqi and Lodi roles	Sharqis preserved eastern Ganga order and culture; Lodis annexed Jaunpur and reunified a wider northern base.
Turkish Delhi and Afghan Lodi rule	Earlier sultans were Turks; Lodis mobilised Afghans whose tribal equality complicated central kingship.
Sikandar Lodi's orthodoxy and cultural rapprochement	Restrictions and jizyah coexisted with translations, Persian education and Hindu recruitment.
Sikandar Shah and Zainul Abidin	Sikandar persecuted Kashmiri Hindus; Zainul reversed the measures and restored plural institutions.
Regional balance and stability	Mutual checking prevented easy conquest but did not deliver peace; cultural growth coexisted with constant war.

Self-test

1. Why did Malwa become the cockpit of the struggle for north India?
2. How did Ilyas Shah preserve Bengal's independence against Firuz Tughlaq?
3. What were the achievements and limits of Bengal's expansion into Assam and Orissa?
4. Why should Ahmad Shah I not be described only as either tolerant or bigoted?
5. How did Mahmud Begarha combine fort conquest, urbanisation and commercial policy?
6. What factors prevented Malwa from converting strategic location into north Indian supremacy?
7. Compare the achievements of Rana Kumbha and Rana Sanga.
8. What did the Sharqi state contribute despite its failure to conquer Delhi?
9. How did Afghan recruitment help Bahlul and complicate Sikandar Lodi's rule?
10. Assess Sikandar Lodi's administrative and religious-cultural record.
11. How did Zainul Abidin reverse Sikandar Shah's Kashmir policies?
12. Why did the regional balance create cultural growth without political stability?

Answer key

1. Malwa controlled routes between Gujarat and north India and between north and south. Any Gujarat, Mewar or Lodi power controlling it could bid for wider domination, while its factionalism invited all three.
2. He used Ekdala's fort, survived Firuz's feigned retreat tactic, returned to shelter after battlefield defeat and concluded a treaty fixing the Kosi boundary. Gifts maintained friendship without surrendering sovereignty.
3. Bengal annexed Kamta with Ahom help, gained Chittagong and Tipperah and raided deep into Orissa. It failed to retain

land beyond Karatoya, lost heavily against Ahoms and could not move Orissa's Saraswati frontier.

4. He destroyed temples and imposed jizyah, yet appointed Hindu ministers, judged his own son-in-law impartially and fought Muslim Malwa as strongly as Hindu neighbours. The source asks for a complex verdict.
5. He replaced tribute with direct rule at Girnar and Champaner, founded Mustafabad and Muhammadabad, secured roads and travellers, supported inns and commerce and sought to protect maritime trade, though his anti-Portuguese alliance failed.
6. Succession struggles and noble factions weakened Malwa; Gujarat and Mewar repeatedly backed rebels and claimants. Constant wars under Mahmud Khalji spread resources without producing consolidation.
7. Kumbha held Mewar against Gujarat, Malwa and Marwar while building, writing and irrigating. Sanga exploited Malwa's later collapse, captured Mahmud II, acquired Chanderi and defeated Ibrahim Lodi.
8. It maintained law and order after Delhi's collapse, blocked Bengal in eastern Uttar Pradesh, created a distinct architectural style and made Jaunpur a centre of literature and learning remembered after 1484.
9. Roh Afghan immigration expanded Bahlul's military base and helped defeat Jaunpur, transforming Muslim society. Afghan nobles' tribal equality and partition expectations made them resist Sikandar's efforts to raise the sultan above them.
10. Sikandar secured roads, cheap prices, agriculture, audits, grain-tax reform, measurement and Agra. He also enforced orthodox restrictions, jizyah and some temple destruction, yet sponsored scholarship, translation, music and Hindu Persian education.
11. Zainul recalled exiles, allowed reconversion, restored libraries, grants and temples, abolished jizyah and cow slaughter, and appointed Hindus. He paired tolerance with multilingual scholarship, economic crafts and territorial unification.
12. States checked one another and repeatedly intervened in

neighbours, so no equilibrium stayed peaceful. Competition and strong regional courts nevertheless financed local architecture, language, translation, trade and religious interaction.

Closing perspective

The fifteenth century was not simply an age of Delhi decline: regional states created administration, trade networks, languages and architectural forms even while fighting constantly. Geography structured political limits. Bengal's waterways, Assam's river valley, Orissa's frontier rivers, Gujarat's ports and Malwa's trunk routes shaped strategy more than formal claims.

Culture and Religious Life, c. 1200-1500

Political conquest changes institutions faster than it changes the whole cultural life of a society. Between 1200 and 1500, Persian literary culture, Sanskrit and regional traditions, architecture, music, Sufi networks, bhakti traditions, court patronage, and vernacular expression met through translation, borrowing, rivalry, and selective distance.

The result was neither a smooth fusion nor 2 sealed civilizations. Power shaped patronage and access, but cultural exchange also moved through towns, shrines, workshops, households, itinerant teachers, and regional courts. The chapter asks where contact produced a shared form, where difference remained important, and where later labels have made a varied field look simpler than it was.

Architecture

Early conversion and construction. Turks first converted or dismantled temples and monasteries for mosques, as at Quwwat-ul-Islam and Arhai Din ka Jhonpra. At Delhi, a three-arched facade replaced the demolished sanctum; Quranic script and floral scrolls replaced human-animal representation.

Technology and synthesis. West Asian architects joined renowned Indian masons and stone-cutters. True arches, domes, and strong light mortar enabled high skylines and unobstructed

halls, while older Indian corbelled and lintel-beam methods continued alongside them.

Decoration and Qutab. Arabesque combined geometry, flowers, and Quranic calligraphy with Indian bells, creepers, swastikas, lotuses, dense carving, red-yellow sandstone, and marble. Aibak began and Iltutmish completed the originally 71.4-metre Qutab Minar, distinguished by balconies, ribbing, and coloured stone rather than dedication to Bakhtiyar Kaki.

Khalji and Tughlaq change. Alauddin's Siri and unfinished double-height tower survive poorly, but Alai Darwaza shows the first scientifically correct dome in the chapter. Tughlaqabad, Ghiyasuddin's high-platform marble-domed tomb, battered walls, greystone austerity, Hauz Khas, Kotla, lotus motifs, and combined arch-lintel systems mark later experimentation; Firuz's buildings did not use batter.

Lodi and regional legacy. Lodi buildings joined arch and beam with Rajasthani-Gujarati balconies, kiosks, eaves, platforms, gardens, and octagonal tombs. Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa, and Deccan styles adapted Delhi forms locally; many devices later entered Mughal architecture and culminated in the Taj Mahal.

Religious Ideas and Beliefs

Older Islamic presence. Islam existed in Sindh from the eighth century and Punjab from the tenth; Arab settlers reached Kerala between the eighth and tenth centuries, and travellers and Sufis moved widely.

Knowledge exchange. Al-Biruni's *Kitab-ul-Hind*, Arabic versions of Indian fables, Buddhist traditions, astronomy and medicine, and travelling yogis made Hindu and Indian ideas known in West Asia.

Influence with uncertainty. Greek and Indian thought contributed in differing proportions to formative Islamic philosophy, but the precise effect of Buddhism and Vedanta remains debated. Similarities later gave Sufis and Hindu mystics common

ground.

Boundary. Early Sufis absorbed practices and rituals, including yogic ones, but scholars in the chapter maintain that Sufism's basic ideological structure remained Islamic.

The Sufi Movement

Tenth-century turn. Turkish rise accompanied the decline of Mutazila rationalism, growth of Quran-Hadis orthodoxy, four schools of Islamic law, and mystic orders. Eastern Turks adopted the relatively liberal Hanafi school.

Love and opposition. Early Sufis rejected imperial luxury and often avoided the state. Rabia and Mansur bin Hallaj made divine love central; orthodox opponents executed Mansur for pantheistic heresy, but mysticism continued spreading.

Reconciliation and organization. Al-Ghazzali, who died in 1112, reconciled mysticism with orthodoxy and privileged revelation over reason. Twelve silsilahs formed around khanqahs, pirs, murids, and nominated walis.

Practices and debate. Penance, fasting, breath control, and organization may show Buddhist-Hindu influence; the Sanskrit *Amrit-kund* entered Persian. Philosophical derivation remains disputed, but shared ideas about God, soul, and world promoted toleration.

Two types. Ba-shara orders followed sharia; be-shara wandering saints did not bind themselves to it or establish formal orders, yet could attract both Hindu and Muslim veneration.

The Chishti and Suharwardi Silsilahs

Chishti beginnings. Muinuddin Chishti reached India around 1192, moved through Lahore and Delhi to Ajmer, wrote no book, and left no authentic activity record; his fame rose through successors such as Bakhtiyar Kaki and Farid-ud-Din Ganj-i-Shakar.

Chishti practice. Farid worked at Hansi and Ajodhan and entered Sikh scripture through some verses. Nizamuddin Auliya and Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi lived austere, mixed with lower groups and Hindus, used Hindawi and Hindi sama, avoided conversion campaigns, and kept away from rulers; Nizamuddin also practised yogic breathing.

Expansion. After Nasiruddin's mid-fourteenth-century death, no commanding Delhi Chishti remained, so saints dispersed east and south.

Suharwardis. The order concentrated in Punjab and Multan; Shihabuddin Suharwardi and Hamid-ud-Din Nagori are named leaders. Unlike Chishtis, Suharwardis accepted wealth, state service, and ecclesiastical office.

Shared outcome. Despite different relations with politics, both orders helped create peace across communities and gave Indian Muslims local saints as centres of devotion while Mecca remained supreme.

The Bhakti Movement

Long roots and southern flowering. Bhakti's seeds lay in the Vedas; personal adoration grew with Mahayana Buddhism and Vishnu worship, and Gupta-era epics recognized bhakti beside jnana and karma. Nayanars and Alvars popularized caste-disregarding vernacular devotion in south India from the seventh to twelfth centuries.

Slow northern movement. Local languages that empowered southern saints also limited wider reach while Sanskrit remained the intellectual link. Namadeva, a Marathi-speaking tailor with a bandit legend, travelled and reportedly debated Delhi Sufis; Ramananda carried Ramanuja's tradition through Prayag and Banaras.

Inclusive discipleship. Ramananda replaced Vishnu worship with Rama, taught all four varnas, and ignored interdining bans. His disciples included Ravidas the cobbler, Kabir the weaver, Sena the barber, and Sadhana the butcher; Namadeva was simi-

larly broad.

Social setting. Turkish conquest weakened Brahman prestige, Nath-Panthis challenged hierarchy, Sufis preached equality, and formal ceremony no longer satisfied reason and emotion. These conditions made north Indian bhakti popular in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries.

Kabir and Nanak. Kabir's origins are uncertain; he preached one God under many names, rejected caste, untouchability, idols, pilgrimage, namaz, asceticism, and empty learning, but sought individual rather than institutional reform through a true guru. Nanak, born in 1469 at Talwandi, joined one-God devotion to moral purity, guru guidance, and household duty; neither intended a new religion, though Sikhism and Kabir Panthis later emerged and their liberal climate influenced Akbar-era thought.

The Vaishnavite Movement

Love as allegory. Rama and Krishna devotion grew beside non-sectarian bhakti. Radha-Krishna love symbolized the individual soul's relation with the supreme soul.

Chaitanya and kirtan. Chaitanya used song, dance, God's name, and ecstasy as caste-open worship. Educated at Nadia, initiated at Gaya at age twenty-two, and associated with travel and revival at Vrindavan, he attracted Muslims and lower castes without rejecting scripture or idols.

Saint-poets. Narsinha Mehta in Gujarat, Meera in Rajasthan, Surdas in western Uttar Pradesh, and Chaitanya in Bengal-Orissa created intense lyrical devotion and welcomed followers across caste and creed. Vallabha's Vedantic monism strongly influenced this broad Hindu framework.

Achievement and limit. Their humanism softened caste rigidity and offered unity through love and beauty but did not break caste structurally.

Sufi reciprocity. Ibn-i-Arabi's Tauhid-i-Wajudi held all being to be divine manifestation and religions essentially one. Jaisi wrote in Hindi, and Abdul Wahid Bilgrami's *Haqaiq-i-Hindi* inter-

preted Krishna vocabulary mystically; Bhakti-Sufi convergence prepared Akbar's later idea of tauhid.

Literature and Fine Arts

Linked fields. Literature and performance reveal both strong separate classical traditions and gradual exchange through language, translation, patronage, paper, music, and devotional practice.

Link languages. Sanskrit carried philosophy and religious learning across regions; Persian linked administration, diplomacy, and upper-class culture. Regional languages increasingly served everyday, literary, and governmental purposes.

Sanskrit Literature

Continued abundance. Sanskrit output was immense in philosophy, *kavya*, drama, fiction, medicine, astronomy, music, and law. Ramanuja, Madhava, Vallabha, and others extended philosophical debate after Sankara.

Institutional network. Schools and academies flourished even under Muslim rule, and paper helped reproduce old texts; some of the oldest surviving paper *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* copies date between the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Law and regions. The twelfth-century-or-later *Mitakshara* of Vijñaneshwar became a principal Hindu law school; Chandeshwar wrote in fourteenth-century Bihar. South India, Bengal, Mithila, western India, and Jain scholars such as Hemachandra Suri sustained production.

Limited Persian engagement. Sanskrit works largely ignored Muslim presence. Rare exchanges included *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, astrolabe material, and research-identified translations in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine.

Arabic and Persian Literature

Different functions. Arabic remained the language of Islamic philosophy, religion, some science, and legal digests. Persian, resurgent in Iran and Central Asia from the tenth century, became Turkish India's literary and administrative language; Lahore was its first Indian centre.

Writers and style. Firdausi and Sadi formed the wider Persian heritage; Masud Sad Salman expressed love for Lahore. Amir Khusrau, born at Patiali in 1252, celebrated India, mastered Persian verse and music, praised Hindavi, and created sabaq-i-hindi, though *Khaliq Bari* was probably by a later namesake.

History and cultural reach. Khusrau joined Nizamuddin's sama and was buried near him after 1325. Barani, Afif, and Isami built a Persian historical tradition; Persian spread from north Indian administration to diplomacy and upper-class culture across the country.

Translation bridge. Zia Nakhshabi's *Tuti Nama* and Persian *Kok Shastra* opened Sanskrit-Persian exchange. Under Firuz, and later Zain-ul-Abidin in Kashmir, medicine, music, *Rajatarangini*, and *Mahabharata* were translated into Persian.

Law. Firuz's reign produced Persian Islamic-law digests with Indian help; Arabic digests continued, later culminating in *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri* under Aurangzeb.

Regional Languages

Maturation. Hindi, Bengali, and Marathi trace back to about the eighth century, while Tamil is older. Khusrau recognized their long everyday use; literary maturity became a major medieval feature.

Causes. Reduced Brahman-Sanskrit prestige, bhakti preaching, saintly literary shaping, and continued administrative use under pre-Turkish and Turkish states all favoured vernaculars.

Courts and administration. Vijayanagara patronized Telugu; Marathi served Bahmani and later Bijapur administration. Sul-

tanat Hindi-knowing revenue accountants and post-Sultanat regional states used local languages beside Persian.

Translation and patronage. Nusrat Shah sponsored Bengali *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* translations; Maladhar Basu translated the *Bhagavata*. Jaisi and Jaunpur Sufis wrote Hindi in accessible Persian forms such as masnavi.

Fine Arts

Musical meeting. Turks brought Arab-Iranian-Central Asian traditions, rabab, sarangi, new modes, and regulations; Indian music may already have influenced Baghdad, but systematic integration occurred under the Sultanat.

Khusrau. Honoured as nayak in theory and practice, he introduced Perso-Arabic airs such as aiman, ghora, and sanam. Sitar invention is unproven, and tabla developed only in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

Court and Sufi patronage. Firuz heard music after Friday prayer and sponsored Persian translation of *Ragadarpan*. Music moved from Sufi centres into noble palaces; Husain Sharqi and Pir Bodhan made Jaunpur prominent.

Regional development. Raja Man Singh's Gwalior produced *Man Kautuhal*, incorporating Muslim modes. Perso-Arabic scales helped differentiate northern music from southern traditions, Kashmir formed a Persian-influenced style, and Sikandar Lodi continued Jaunpur's patronage before the Mughals.

Chapter companion

Use this section after reading the chapter. Reconstruct the sequence or comparison before checking the page.

Chronology

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
Eighth century	Islam established in Sindh; Rabia belongs to this early Sufi phase.	Shows both Islam and love mysticism predated the Sultanat.
Eighth to tenth centuries	Arab settlers reach Kerala.	Establishes long coastal Islamic contact.
Ninth and tenth centuries	Turks absorb Islam and Arabo-Persian culture in West Asia.	Cultural background they later bring to India.
Tenth century	Islam established in Punjab; Mutazila dominance ends as orthodoxy and Sufi orders rise.	Major political-intellectual transition.
Tenth to fourteenth centuries	Firdausi, Sadi, and other major Persian poets flourish.	Wider literary tradition inherited by Turkish India.
1112	Al-Ghazzali dies.	Marks reconciliation of mysticism and orthodoxy.
Around 1192	Muinuddin Chishti comes to India.	Establishes the Chishti order in India.
1235	Muinuddin Chishti dies.	Succession becomes central to Chishti expansion.
1252	Amir Khusrau is born at Patiali.	Beginning of the leading Indian Persian literary career.
Thirteenth century	Qutab Minar is built by Aibak and Iltutmish; Chishti and Suharwardi orders expand.	Architectural and religious institution-building.
First half of fourteenth century	Namadeva flourishes.	Important vernacular link between southern/northern bhakti and Sufis.
1325	Nizamuddin Auliya dies; Khusrau follows soon after in the chapter's account.	Symbolic end of a major Sufi-literary partnership.

Date or period	Event or development	Why it matters
1350	Zia Nakhshabi dies.	Dates an early Sanskrit-to-Persian translator.
Mid-fourteenth century	Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Delhi dies.	Chishtis disperse from Delhi toward east and south.
Late fourteenth to early fifteenth century	Ramananda teaches inclusive Rama bhakti.	Carries bhakti into north Indian caste society.
Fifteenth century	Kabir, Vaishnavite poets, and Ibn-i-Arabi's monism gain broad influence in India.	Liberal, devotional, and monistic currents converge.
1469	Nanak is born at Talwandi.	Beginning of a major non-sectarian devotional mission.
Late fifteenth to early sixteenth century	Vallabha and Chaitanya influence Vaishnavite devotion.	Extends lyrical, Vedantic, and kirtan traditions.
1538	Nanak dies.	His teachings later develop into Sikhism.
Sixteenth to eighteenth centuries	Liberal and orthodox trends continue contesting one another.	Demonstrates the durable impact and limits of the period's movements.
Late seventeenth or early eighteenth century	Tabla develops, according to the chapter.	Corrects its unsupported attribution to Khusrau.

Comparisons that prevent confusion

Often confused	The distinction
True arch and corbelled arch	A true arch used scientifically arranged structural elements; the Indian corbel narrowed stacked stones until a cap or beam closed the gap.

Often confused	The distinction
Arch-dome and lintel-beam systems	Turks spread arch-dome construction, but Indian and later Tughlaq-Lodi buildings deliberately retained and combined lintel-beam methods.
Arabesque and lack of decoration	Figurative images were avoided, but geometry, plants, Quranic calligraphy, Indian motifs, coloured stone, and dense carving produced rich surfaces.
Qutab Minar and Bakhtiyar Kaki	The chapter rejects a dedication to the saint; the tower belonged to the Quwwat-ul-Islam complex and was not then called Qutab Minar.
Khalji and Tughlaq architecture	Alai Darwaza mastered the scientific dome; Tughlaqs emphasized mass, platforms, batter, grey-stone restraint, and combined systems.
Ba-shara and be-shara	Ba-shara followed sharia in organized orders; be-shara wandering saints were not bound by it and often had no order.
Chishti and Suharwardi	Chishtis preferred poverty and political distance; Suharwardis accepted property, state service, and ecclesiastical office.
Borrowed practice and ideological origin	Sufis absorbed yogic practices, but the extent of Hindu-Buddhist philosophical influence is disputed and their basic ideology remained Islamic.
Bhakti, jnana, and karma	Bhakti meant devotion; jnana knowledge; karma action. Gupta-era religious thought recognized all as paths to salvation.

Often confused	The distinction
Kabir and Nanak	Both taught one God and criticized ritual; Kabir stressed anti-discrimination and inner reform, while Nanak emphasized conduct, guru, and household spirituality.
Non-sectarian and Vaishnavite bhakti	Kabir-Nanak crossed formal religious identities; Vaishnavites remained within Hindu Rama-Krishna devotion while welcoming diverse followers.
Social softening and structural reform	Devotional movements widened access and reduced rigidity but did not make a major breach in caste organization.
Sanskrit and Persian	Sanskrit linked philosophy, religion, law, and elite learning; Persian linked administration, diplomacy, history, and upper-class culture.
Arabic and Persian in India	Arabic remained concentrated in Islamic scholarship; Persian became the wider administrative and literary language.
Khusrau's supported and unsupported attributions	His Persian-Hindavi and musical achievements are central; <i>Khaliq Bari</i> and sitar authorship are doubtful, and tabla belongs much later.
Sama and kirtan	Sama was Sufi musical recitation; kirtan was Chaitanya's Vaishnavite song-dance devotion. Both pursued mystical absorption.

Self-test

1. How did Indian and West Asian elements combine in Sultanat architecture?
2. Trace architectural change from early conversions through

Khalji, Tughlaq, Lodi, and regional styles.

3. What evidence and uncertainty surround Indian influence on Sufism?
4. Distinguish ba-shara and be-shara Sufis and compare Chishtis with Suharwardis.
5. Why did bhakti move slowly north, and what conditions later made it popular?
6. How did Namadeva and Ramananda widen the social reach of devotion?
7. Compare Kabir's and Nanak's teachings, methods, and longer-term effects.
8. How did Vaishnavite poets and Sufi monists create a common platform?
9. What proves the continuing strength of Sanskrit, and what limited its cultural exchange?
10. How did Persian develop from an imported language into an Indian link language?
11. Which forces drove the growth of regional languages?
12. What changed in music under the Sultanat, and which popular attributions does the chapter question?

Answer key

1. Turks spread true arches, domes, mortar, arabesque, calligraphy, and coloured stone, while Indian craftsmen supplied skill, corbelled and lintel-beam methods, dense carving, bells, creepers, swastikas, lotuses, and regional forms.
2. Converted buildings came first; Alai Darwaza mastered the scientific dome; Tughlaqs added mass, platforms, batter, greystone, lotus, and mixed structures; Lodis used gardens, octagons, and Rajasthani-Gujarati features; regional kingdoms localized these forms.
3. Yogic breath control, fasting, penance, khanqah-like organization, translated *Amrit-kund*, and shared ideas show contact. Philosophical origin remains disputed, and the chapter says Sufism's basic ideology remained Islamic.
4. Ba-shara followed sharia; be-shara wanderers did not. Chishtis

embraced poverty, popular contact, Hindawi, sama, and distance from rulers; Suharwardis accepted wealth, state service, and office.

5. Southern saints used local languages, limiting transmission while Sanskrit remained dominant. Northern popularity later drew on weakened Brahman prestige, Nath-Panthi challenge, Sufi equality, vernacular teachers, and dissatisfaction with ritual.
6. Namadeva preached intense Marathi devotion and travelled widely; Ramananda taught Rama bhakti to all varnas, ignored interdining barriers, and accepted disciples from stigmatized occupations.
7. Both taught one God and rejected ritual division. Kabir stressed universal equality and guru-led personal reform; Nanak added moral purity and household duty. Their immediate structural impact was limited, but Sikhism, Kabir Panthis, and later liberal thought emerged.
8. Radha-Krishna allegory, inclusive kirtan, vernacular poetry, Vedantic unity, Ibn-i-Arabi's unity of being, Hindi Sufi writing, and mystical reinterpretation of Krishna vocabulary made devotion mutually intelligible.
9. Immense output, schools under Muslim rule, paper manuscripts, philosophy, law, science, and Jain scholarship show strength. Sanskrit authors mostly ignored Muslim presence and rarely translated Persian-Islamic works.
10. Turkish preference, Lahore's writers, Khusrau's Indian style, Persian history, administration, diplomacy, Sultanat expansion, and Sanskrit-Persian translations gave it all-India reach.
11. Bhakti saints, everyday use, reduced Sanskrit prestige, older administrative practice, regional states, Muslim court patronage, epic translation, and Sufi masnavis helped vernaculars mature.
12. Rabab, sarangi, Perso-Arabic airs and scales, Sufi and court gatherings, translated treatises, and regional patronage reshaped northern music. Evidence does not support Khusrau's sitar invention, and tabla developed much later.

Closing perspective

The chapter treats cultural change as neither peaceful fusion nor permanent conflict: destruction, borrowing, resistance, and co-operation varied by region, field, and period. Architectural synthesis was materially grounded. Imported structural knowledge depended on Indian labour, older building systems, local motifs, available stone, mortar, and regional court choices.

Source note

The Medieval India volumes were developed from a chapter-by-chapter revision project based primarily on Satish Chandra's *History of Medieval India* (Orient Blackswan), then reorganized and independently edited for narrative continuity, comparison, and retrieval. The book preserves the distinction between source claims, later interpretation, and editorial synthesis. It does not present the source textbook's language as the author's original research.

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About the author

Gaurav Tiwari is an educator, WordPress developer, and the founder of Gatilab. His teaching work focuses on making difficult material easier to understand without flattening its debates, uncertainties, or consequences.

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