

## **CC-7 : HISTORY OF INDIA(c.1206-1526)**

### **II. SULTANATE POLITICAL STRUCTURE**

#### **(A-1) FOUNDATION, EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE SULTANATE OF DELHI.**

Muizuddin Mohammad Ghori was the last Turkish conqueror of North India. After his sudden death in 1206 CE there began a tussle for supremacy among his three most important generals-Tajuddin Yalduz, Nasiruddin Qubacha and Qutubuddin Aibak. Yalduz held Karman and Sankuran the route between Afghanistan and upper Sindh. Qubacha was the governor of Multan and Uchch. While Aibak had already been deputed as the viceroy of Mohammad Ghori, the overall commander of the army in India. Though technically a slave the title of Sultan was conferred upon him soon after the death of his master.

Qutubuddin Aibak established a Turkish State in India after being acknowledged by the other Turkish officers as the Sultan of India and this ultimately resulted in the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate. Five different dynasties-the Slave, the Khalji, the Tughlaq, the Sayyids, the Lodhis are collectively referred to as the Delhi Sultanate. The rulers referred to as Sultans were of Turkish and Afghan origin. Not only they extended their rule over North India (i.e., Malwa and Gujrat), but they also penetrated into Deccan and South India.

The chronology of the period of Delhi Sultanate is as follows-

#### **Delhi Sultanate Period(c. 1206-1526CE)**

- 1. Slave/Ilbari Dynasty (1206-90 CE)**
- 2. Khalji Dynasty(1290-1320CE)**
- 3. Tughlaq Dynasty(1320-1413CE)**
- 4. Sayyid Dynasty(1414-51 CE)**
- 5. Lodhi Dynasty(1451-1526 CE)**

The Slave dynasty was also called the Mameluk dynasty. The Arabic word Mameluk means 'owned' which was used to distinguish the important Turkish slaves chiefly meant for military service from the lower slaves who were used as domestic labours or artisans.

Three dynasties were established during this period. They were:-

1. Qutbi dynasty(c. 1206-1211 CE) founded by Qutubuddin Aibak
2. First Ilbari dynasty(c. 1211-1266 CE) founded by Iltutmish
3. Second Ilbari dynasty(c.1266-1290 CE) founded by Balban.

Qutubuddin Aibak is regarded as the founder of the Slave dynasty as well as also the real founder of Muslim rule in India. He assumed the title of Sultan and made Lahore his capital. Qutubuddin Aibak was known as Lakh Baksh or giver of lakhs for his magnanimity as he gave a lot of liberal donations. He built the first mosque in India-Quwwat-ul-Islam in Delhi. He started the construction of Qutub Minar in the memory of the famous Sufi saint, Khwaja Qutubuddin Baktiyar Kaki but could not complete it due to his sudden death. Qutubuddin Aibak fell down from horseback while playing polo or Chaugan and died in 1210 CE

Qutubuddin Aibak was succeeded by his son Aram Shah who was weak and incapable as a ruler and therefore had to face opposition from the Turkish Amirs. He could rule for mere eight months only before Iltutmish the Governor of Badayun and also the son-in-law of Qutubuddin Aibak disposed him and became the Sultan. Iltutmish became the Sultan and took the name Shamsuddin and it is with him largely lies the credit of consolidating the Delhi Sultanate.

At the time Iltutmish's accession, Ali Mardan Khan had declared himself the king of Bengal and Bihar, while Qubacha, had declared himself an independent ruler of Multan and seized Lahore and parts of the Punjab. At first, even some of the fellow officers of Iltutmish near Delhi were reluctant to accept his authority. The Rajputs found an opportunity to assert their independence. Thus, Kalinjar, Gwalior and the entire eastern Rajasthan, including Ajmer and Bayana, threw off the Turkish yoke.

During the early years of his reign, Iltutmish's attention was concentrated on the northwest. A new danger to his position arose with the conquest of Ghazni by Khwarizm Shah. The Khwarizmi empire was the most powerful state in Central Asia at this time, and its eastern frontier now extended up to the Indus. In order to avert this danger, Iltutmish marched to Lahore and occupied it. In 1218, the Khwarizmi empire was destroyed by the Mongols who founded one of the strongest empires in history, which at its height extended from China to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and from the Caspian Sea to the river Jaxartes. While the Mongols were busy elsewhere, Iltutmish also ousted Qubacha from

Multan and Uchch. The frontiers of the Delhi Sultanate, thus, reached up to the Indus once again.

Secure in the west, Iltutmish was able to turn his attention else where. In Bengal and Bihar a person called Iwaz who had taken the title of Sultan Ghiyasuddin had assumed independence. He was a generous and able ruler, and built many public works. While made raids on the territories of his neighbours, the Sena rulers of East Bengal, and the Hindu rulers of Orissa and Kamrup (Assam) continued their sway In 1226-27, Iwaz was defeated and killed in battle with Iltutmish's son near Lakhnauti. Bengal and Bihar passed under the suzerainty of Delhi once again. But they were a difficult charge, and repeatedly challenged the authority of Delhi. At about the same time, Iltutmish took steps to recover Gwaliyar and Bayana. Ajmer and Nagor remained under his control. He sent expeditions against Ranthambhor and Jalor to reassert his suzerainty He also attacked Nagda, the capital of Mewar (about 22 km from Udaipur), but had to beat a retreat at the arrival of the Gujarat armies, which had come to aid the Rana. As a revenge, Iltutmish despatched an expedition against the Chalukyas of Gujarat, but it was repulsed with losses.

Iltutmish divide his empire into iqtas (assignment of land in lieu of salary) Every iqtadar had to maintain law and order and collect revenue. After deducting his salary and expenses they had to send the surplus to the central government. It is important to mention the the iqtadars were transferable. Iltutmish organished a new class of ruling elite of forty powerful military leaders known as turkan-i-chahalgani or the Forty. These were Turkish military noble who would advice and help the Sultan in administering the Sultanate. After the death Iltutmish this group assumed great power in its hand and quite also became the king makers for a couple a next Sultans in the line. This group was finally eliminated Balban.

The authority of Iltutmish was recognised by the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad and from him ,he received the mansur by which he became the legal sovereign ruler of India. Iltutmish issued purely Arabic coinage of silver tanka. Iltutmish also completed the construction of the Qutub Minar.

During his last year, Iltutmish was worried over the problem of succession. He considered none of his surviving sons to be worthy of the throne. After anxious consideration, he finally decided to nominate his daughter, Raziya, to the throne, and induced the nobles and the theologians (ulama) to agree to the

nomination. Although women had ruled as queens, both in ancient Iran and Egypt, and had acted as regents during the minority rule of princes, the nomination of a woman in preference to sons was a novel step. In order to assert her claim, Raziya had to contend against her brothers as well as against powerful Turkish nobles, and could rule only to three years. Though brief, her rule had a number of interesting features. It marked the beginning of a struggle for power between the monarchy and the Turkish chiefs, sometimes called 'the forty the chahalgani. Iltutmish had shown great deference to these Turkish chiefs. After his death, these chiefs, drunk with power and arrogance, wanted to install on the throne a puppet whom they could control. They soon discovered that though a woman, Raziya was not prepared to play their game. She discarded the female apparel and started holding court with her face unveiled. She even hunted, and the army in war. Iltutmish's wazir, Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi, who had opposed her elevation to the throne, and backed and supported Rajputs She sent an expedition: against Ranthambhor to control the Rajputs successfully established law and order in the length and breadth of her kingdom. But her attempt to create a party of nobles loyal to her and to raise a non-Turk to high office led to opposition. The Turkish nobles accused her of violating feminine modesty, and of being too friendly to an Abyssinian noble, Yaqut Khan. Yaqut Khan- had been appointed Superintendent of the Royal Stable which implied closeness to the sovereign. But contemporary writers have not accused Raziya of any personal intimacy with him: the charge that he used to lift her from the arms-pit to her horse is wrong because Raziya always appeared in public on an elephant, not on horse-back Rebellions broke out at Lahore and Sirhind. Razia personally led an expedition against Lahore, and compelled the governor to submit. On the way to Sirhind, an internal rebellion broke out in which Yaqut Khan was killed, and Raziya imprisoned at Tabarhinda. However Raziya won over her captor, Altunia, and after marrying him made a renewed attempt on Delhi. Raziya fought valiantly, but was defeated and killed in a forest by bandits while she was in flight. Razia Sultana was the first and the only female Muslim ruler of medieval India and ruled from 1236-1239 CE.

With the fall of Razia struggle for supremacy broke out between the nobles and the sultan and the next two subsequent rulers Bahram Shah and Alauddin Mahsud Shah ruled for very brief period(1240-1246 CE) and more importantly as puppets in the hands of the Turkish nobles.

The struggle between the monarchy and the Turkish chiefs continued, till one of the Turkish chiefs, Ulugh Khan, known in history by his later title of Balban, gradually arrogated all power to himself, and finally ascended the throne in 1265. During the earlier period, Balban held the position of naib or deputy to Nasiruddin Mahmud, a younger son of Iltutmish, whom Balban had helped in securing the throne in 1246. Balban further strengthened his position by marrying one of his daughters to the young sultan. The growing authority of Balban alienated many of the Turkish chiefs who had hoped to continue their former power and influence in the affairs of government, since Nasiruddin Mahmud was young and inexperienced. They, therefore, hatched a conspiracy (1253) and ousted Balban from his position. Balban was replaced by Imaduddin Raihan who was an Indian Muslim. Although the Turkish chiefs wanted that all power and authority should remain in their hands, they consented to the appointment of Raihan because they could not agree among themselves which one of them should succeed to Balban's post. Balban agreed to step aside, but carefully continued to build his own group. Within one and a half years of his dismissal, he managed to win over some of his opponents. Balban now made preparations for a military show-down. It seems that he had also established some contacts with the Mongols who had overrun a large part of the Punjab. Sultan Mahmud bowed to the superior strength of Balban's group and dismissed Raihan. After some time, Raihan was defeated and killed. Balban got rid of many of his other rivals by means fair or foul. He even went so far as to assume the royal insignia, the chhatra. But he did not assume the throne himself, probably due to the sentiments of the Turkish chiefs. In 1265, Sultan Mahmud died. Some historians are of the opinion that Balban poisoned the young king, and also did away with his sons, in order to clear his way to the throne. Balban's methods were often harsh and undesirable. But there is no doubt that with his accession to the throne there began an era of strong, centralised government.

Balban constantly sought to increase the prestige and power of the monarchy, because he was convinced that this was the only way to face the internal and external dangers facing him. It was an age in which authority and power was supposed to be the privilege of those born in noble houses or those who could boast of an ancient pedigree. Hence, Balban tried to strengthen his claim to the throne by declaring that he was the descendant of the legendary Iranian king Afrasiyab. In order to prove his claim to noble blood, Balban stood forth as the champion of the Turkish nobility. He refused to entertain for important government posts anyone who did not belong to a noble family. This virtually

meant the exclusion of Indian Muslims from all positions of power and authority. He sometimes went to ridiculous lengths. For instance, he refused to grant audience to an important trader because he was not high born.

While claiming to act as a champion of the Turkish nobility Balban was not prepared to share power with anyone, not even with member of his own family. His despotism was such that he was not prepared to hear any criticism even from his own supporters. Balban was determined to finally break the power of the chahalgani, i.e., the Turkish nobles, and to exalt the power and prestige of the monarchy He did not hesitate even to poison his cousin, Sher Khan, to achieve this objective. At the same time, in order to win the confidence of the public, he administered justice with extreme impartiality. Not even the highest in the land were to be spared if they transgressed his authority. Thus, the father of the governor of Badaun as also the father of the governor of Awadh were given exemplary punishment for cruelty to their personal slaves. To keep himself well informed Balban appointed spies in every department. He also organized a strong centralised army, both to deal with internal disturbances, and to repel the Mongols who had entrenched themselves in the Punjab and posed a serious danger to the Delhi Sultanate. For the purpose, he reorganized the military department (diwan-i-arz), and pensioned off those soldiers and troopers who were no longer fit for service Since many of the troopers were Turks who had come to India in the time of Iltutmish, they raised a hue and cry against this decision, and Balban had to relent to some extent.

The law and order situation in the area around Delhi and in the doab had deteriorated. In the Ganga-Jamuna doab and Awadh, the roads were infested with robbers and dacoits, so much so that communication with the eastern areas had become difficult. Some of the Rajput zamindars had set up forts in the area, and defied the government. Near Delhi, the Mewatis had become so bold as plunder people upto the outskirts of the city. To deal with the elements, Balban adopted a policy of blood and iron', The Meos were ruthlessly hunted down and killed, the forests around Delhi cut down, and many military out-posts (thanas) established there. the doab and in Katehar (modern Rohilkhand) Balban ordered forests to be cleared, rebellious villagers destroyed and the men, women and children enslaved. Colonies of Afghan soldiers were settled there to safeguard the roads, and to deal with the Rajput zamindars whenever they raised a disturbance against the government.

By these harsh methods, Balban controlled the situation. In order to impress the people with the strength of his government and to awe them, Balban maintained a magnificent court. Whenever he went out, he was surrounded by a large force of bodyguards with drawn swords. He refused to laugh and joke in the court, and even gave up drinking wine so that no one may see him in a non-serious mood. To emphasize that the nobles were not his equals, he insisted on the ceremony of sijada and paibos (prostration and kissing the monarch's feet). These and many other ceremonies which he copied were Iranian in origin and were considered un-Islamic. However, little objection could be raised because at the time when most Muslim states of Central and West Asia had disappeared in the face of the Mongol onslaught, Balban and the Sultanate of Delhi stood out almost alone as the champions of 'Islam'. Although Balban had a strong army he did not lead any distant expeditions except the one to Bengal, or to expand the empire for fear of Mongol attack on Delhi. But he exercised his army by arranging elaborate hunting expeditions. Balban died in 1286. He was undoubtedly one of the main architects of the Sultanate of Delhi, particularly of its form of government and institutions. By asserting the power of the monarchy, Balban strengthened the Delhi Sultanate. But even he could not fully defend northern India against the inroads of the Mongols. Moreover, by largely excluding non-Turks from positions of power and authority and by trying to base the government on a very narrow group, he made many people dissatisfied. This led to fresh disturbances and troubles after his death.

After the death of Balban his grandson Kaiqubad was raised to the throne by the nobles but he was soon replaced by his son Kaimurs who ruled for three months till 1290CE Kaimurs was murdered by Firoz ,the Minister of War who later took the title of Jalaluddin Khilji.A group of Khilji nobles under the leadership of Jalaluddin Khilji established the Khilji dynasty putting an end to the Slave dynasty.

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## REFERENCE

Chandra , S , History of Medieval India (800-1700)

