

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

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

#### **(A-2). THE KHALJIS AND THE TUGHLAQS**

After the death of Balban in 1286, there was again confusion in Delhi had died for some time. Balban's chosen successor, Prince Mahmud, earlier in a battle with the Mongols. A second son, Bughra Khan preferred to rule over Bengal and Bihar although he was invited by the nobles at Delhi to assume the throne. Hence, a grandson of Balban was installed in Delhi. But he was too young and inexperienced to cope with the situation. There had been a good deal of resentment and opposition at the attempt of the Turkish nobles to monopolize high offices. Many non-Turks, such as the Khaljis, had come to India at the time of the Ghurid invasion. They had never received sufficient recognition in Delhi, and had to move to Bengal and Bihar for an opportunity for advancement. They had also found employment as soldiers, many of them being posted in the northwest to meet the Mongol challenge. In course of time, many Indian Muslims had been admitted to the nobility. They also were dissatisfied at being denied high offices, as may be inferred from the manner in which Imaduddin Raihan was put up against Balban. Balban's own example of setting aside the sons of Nasiruddin Mahmud had demonstrated that a successful general could ascend the throne by ousting the scions of an established dynasty, provided he had sufficient support in the nobility and the army.

#### **THE KHALJI DYNASTY**

A group of Khalji nobles led by Jalaluddin Khalji overthrew the incompetent successors of Balban in 1290CE. Jalaluddin Khalji laid the foundation of the Khalji dynasty which remained in power from 1290CE to 1320CE. The Khalji rebellion was welcomed by the non-Turkish sections in the nobility. The Khaljis who were of a mixed Turkish-Afghan origin, did not exclude the Turks from high offices, but the rise of the Khaljis to power ended the Turkish monopoly of high offices.

Jalaluddin Khalji ruled only for a brief period of six years(1290-1296 CE). He tried to mitigate some of the harsh aspects of Balban's rule. He was the first ruler of the Delhi Sultanate to clearly put forward the view that the state should be based on the willing support of the governed, and that since the large

majority of the people in India were Hindus, the state in India could not be a truly Islamic state. He also tried to gain the goodwill of the nobility by a policy of tolerance and avoiding harsh punishments. However, many people, including his supporters, considered this to be a weak policy which was not suited to the times. Jalaluddin Khalji was succeeded by his ambitious nephew and son-in-law Alauddin Khalji.

Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) came to the throne by treacherously murdering his uncle and father-in-law, Jalaluddin Khalji. As the governor of Awadh, Alauddin had accumulated a vast treasure by invading Deogir in the Deccan. Jalaluddin had gone to visit his nephew at Kara in the hope of getting hold of this treasure. He had left most of his army behind and had crossed the river Ganges with only a few followers so that his nephew might not take fright and run away. After murdering his uncle, Alauddin won over most of the nobles and soldiers to his side by a lavish use of gold. But for some time, Alauddin had to face a series of rebellions-some by disgruntled nobles, and some by Alauddin's own relations. To overawe his opponents, Alauddin Khalji adopted methods of utmost severity and ruthlessness. Most of the nobles who had defected to him by the lure of gold were either killed or dismissed and their properties confiscated. Severe punishments were given to the rebellious members of his own family. He resorted to a Wholesale massacre of the Mongols, a couple of thousands of them having settled down in Delhi after embracing Islam in the time of Jalaluddin. These new converts had rebelled, demanding a larger share in the loot in Gujarat having campaigned there. Alauddin gave harsh punishments even to the wives and children of these rebels.

The military conquest of Alauddin Khalji included his expedition against Gujrat, Rajputana and Deccan. Early in 1299, an army under two of Alauddin Khalji's noted generals marched against Gujarat by way of Rajasthan. On their way, they raided and captured Jaisalmer also. The Gujarat ruler, Rai Karan, was taken by surprise, and fled without offering a fight. The chief cities of Gujarat, including Anhilwara where many beautiful buildings and temples had been built over generations, were sacked. The famous temple of Somnath which had been rebuilt in the twelfth century was also plundered and sacked. An enormous booty was collected. Nor were the wealthy Muslim merchants of Cambay spared. It was here that Malik Kafur, who later led the invasions of south India, was captured. He was presented to Alauddin, and soon rose in his estimation.

After the conquest of Gujarat, Alauddin turned his attention to the consolidation of his rule over Rajasthan. The first to invite his attention was Ranthambhor which was being ruled by the Chauhan successors of Prithviraj. Its ruler, Hamirdeva, had embarked on a series of war-like expeditions against his neighbours. He is credited with having won victories against Raja Bhoj of Dhar, and the Rana of Mewar. But it were these victories which proved to be his undoing. After the Gujarat campaign, on their way back to Delhi, the Mongol soldiers rebelled, following a dispute regarding the share of the booty. The rebellion was crushed and a wholesale massacre followed. Two of the Mongol nobles fled for refuge to Ranthambhor. Alauddin sent messages to Hamirdeva to kill or expel the Mongol nobles. But Hamir Deva, with a high sense of dignity and obligation to those who had sought refuge with him, and being confident of the strength of his fort and his armies, sent haughty replies. He was not far wrong in his estimation, for Ranthambhor was reputed to be the strongest fort in Rajasthan and had earlier defied Jalaluddin Khalji. Alauddin despatched an army commanded by one of his reputed generals but was repulsed with losses by Hamirdeva. Finally, Alauddin himself had to march against Ranthambhor. The famous poet, Amir Khusrau, who went along with Alauddin, has given a graphic description of the fort and its investment. After three months of close siege, the fearful jauhar ceremony took place: the women mounted the funeral pyre, and all the men came out to fight to the last. This is the first description we have of the jauhar in Persian. All the Mongols, too, aided fighting with the Rajputs. This event took place in 1301.

Alauddin, next, turned his attention towards Chittor which, after Ranthambhor, was the most powerful state in Rajasthan. It was, therefore, necessary for Alauddin to subdue it. Apart from this, its ruler Ratan Singh had annoyed him by refusing permission to his armies to march to Gujarat through Mewar territories. Chittor also dominated the route from Ajmer to Malwa. Alauddin closely invested Chittor. After a valiant resistance by the besieged for several months, Alauddin stormed the fort (1303).

Even before completing the subjugation of Rajasthan, Alauddin had conquered Malwa which, according to Amir Khusrau, was so extensive that even wise geographers were unable to delimit its frontiers. Unlike Rajasthan, Malwa was brought under direct administration, and a governor was appointed to look after it. In 1306-07, Alauddin planned two campaigns. The first was against Rai Karan who after his expulsion from Gujarat, had been holding Baglana on the

border of Malwa. Rai Karan fought bravely, but he could not resist for long. The second expedition was aimed against Rai Ramachandra, the ruler of Deogir, who had been in alliance with Rai Karan. Rai Ramachandra who surrendered to Kafur, was honourably treated and carried to Delhi where, after some time, he was restored to his dominions with the title of Rai Rayan.

Between 1309 and 1311, Malik Kafur led two campaigns in south India-the first against Warangal in the Telengana area and the other against Dwar Samudra (modern Karnataka), Mabar and Madurai (Tamil Nadu). For the first time, Muslim armies penetrated as far south as Madurai, and brought back untold wealth. They provided first-hand information about conditions in the south though they hardly provided any fresh geographical knowledge. Kafur was able to force the rulers of Warangal and Dwar Samudra to sue for peace, to surrender all their treasures and elephants, and to promise an annual tribute. The rulers there had avoided a pitched battle. Kafur had plundered as much as he could including a number of wealthy temples, such as those at Chidambaram. But he had to return to Delhi without being able to defeat the Tamil armies

Despite the troubles following the death of Alauddin in 1316CE, within a decade and a half of his death, all the southern kingdoms mentioned above were wiped out, and their territories brought under the direct administration of Delhi. Following the death of Alauddin, the Delhi Sultanate was plunged into confusion. Malik Kafur sat on the throne for a few days but was disposed by Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah who ruled from 1316-1320 CE. He was murdered by Nasiruddin Khusrau Shah in 1320CE who ascended the throne after him.

The rule of Nasiruddin Khusrau Shah did not last long on the throne as some dissatisfied officers led by Ghazi Malik, the Governor of Dipalpur killed Khasrau and ascended the throne of Delhi under the title of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in 1320 CE. Thus only four years after the death of Alauddin Khalji, the Khalji dynasty came to an end and the power passed into the hands of the Tughlaqs.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS OF ALAUDDIN KHALJI**

### **MILITARY REFORMS**

Alauddin Khalji was the first Sultan to have a large permanent standing army and paid them in cash from the royal treasury. He imported horse and according to Historian Ferishta, he recruited 4,75,000 cavalymen. An innovative Chehra and

Dagh system was introduced by him wherein the Chehra (detailed description of each soldier) and Dagh (branding of horses) was maintained. In order to ensure maximum efficiency a strict review of the army from time to time was carried out.

### MARKET REFORMS

In order to keep his soldiers satisfied with their salary the Sultan introduced strict price control measures based on production cost. To ensure these measures he established four separate markets in Delhi, one for grain, one for cloth, sugar, dried fruits, herbs, butter and oil; a third for horses, slaves and cattle; and the fourth for miscellaneous commodities. The supply of grain was ensured by collecting tax in kind in the Doab and keeping it in the royal storehouses. The growers were ordered to sell their grains in their fields at fixed price and were not allowed to take any grain home for private sale. The Shahna (market controller), the barids (intelligence officer), and the munhias (Sultan's secret agent) submitted their individual reports to the Sultan. Even a minor violation of the rules was not tolerated. Every merchant was registered with the commerce ministry and had to sign a bond guaranteeing a regular supply of the goods they traded. The prices fixed for the Delhi market were also applied in the provincial capitals and towns.

### LAND REVENUE REFORMS

Alauddin Khalji was the first Sultan of Delhi who ordered for the measurement of land. Even the big landlords could not escape from paying the land tax. Land tax was collected in cash. The state officials measured the cultivable land and fixed the revenue accordingly. Biswa was the standard unit of measurement. State demand was one-fifth of the produce and along with it house tax (Grahi) and pasture tax (chari) was imposed. His land revenue reforms provided a basis for the future reforms of Sher Shah and Akbar. He centralized administration and even confiscated religious endowments and free lands (Inam and Wakt).

## **THE TUGHLAQ DYNASTY**

In 1320, a group of officers led by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq raised the banner of revolt against the last Khalji Sultan Nasiruddin Khusrau Shah. They broke out into open rebellion, and in a hard fought battle outside the capital, Khusrau was defeated and killed. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq established a new dynasty which ruled till 1412CE. The Tughlaqs provided three competent rulers: Ghiyasuddin

Tughlaq, his son Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1324-51), and his nephew Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1351-88). The first two of these sultans ruled over an empire which comprised almost the entire country. The empire of Firuz Shah Tughlaq was smaller but even then it was almost as large as that ruled over by Alauddin Khalji. After the death of Firuz Shah Tughlaq, the Delhi Sultanate disintegrated and north India was divided into a series of small states. Although the Tughlaqs continued to rule till 1412, the invasion of Delhi by Timur in 1398 may be said to mark the end of the Tughlaq empire.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq ruled from 1320-1325 CE, was the first ruler to take the title of Ghazi/Slayer of infidels. He was also the first Sultan to start irrigation works. He built a strong fort called Tughlaqabad near Delhi. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq dispatched his son Muhammad bin Tughlaq to re-establish authority in Warangal and Madurai.

Next to Alauddin Khalji, Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1324-51) is best remembered as a ruler who undertook a number of bold experiments, and showed a keen interest in agriculture. In some ways, Muhammad bin Tughlaq was one of the remarkable rulers of his age. He was deeply read in religion and philosophy, and had a critical and open mind.

The most controversial step which Muhammad Tughlaq undertook soon after his accession was the so-called transfer of the capital from Delhi to Deogir. As we have seen, Deogir had been a base for the expansion of Turkish rule in south India. Muhammad Tughlaq himself had spent a number of years there as a prince. The attempt to bring the entire south India under the direct control of Delhi had led to serious political difficulties. The people of the area were restive under what they felt was an alien rule. A number of Muslim nobles had tried to take advantage of this situation to proclaim their independence there. The most serious rebellion was that of cousin of Muhammad Tughlaq, Gursasp, against whom the sultan had to proceed personally. It appears that the sultan wanted to make Deogir a second capital so that he might be able to control so make India better. For this purpose, he ordered many of the officers and their followers and leading men, including many Sufi saints, to shift to Deogir which was renamed Daulatabad. It seems that a good deal of official pressure was exerted on these sections to migrate. No attempt was made to shift the rest of population. Delhi remained a large and populous city in the absence of the sultan. Coins minted in Delhi, while the sultan was at Deogir testify to this. Though Muhammad Tughlaq had built a road from Delhi to Daulatabad and set up rest houses on the

way to help the travellers, Daulatabad was more than 1500 km away. Many people died due to the rigours of the journey and the heat, since this movement took place during the summer season. Many of those who reached Daulatabad felt homesick, for some of them had lived for several generations in Delhi and looked upon it as their home. Hence there was a good deal of discontent. After a couple of years, Muhammad Tughlaq decided to abandon Daulatabad, largely because he soon found that just as he could not control the south from Delhi, he could not control north India from Daulatabad. Though the attempt to make Deogir a second capital failed, the exodus did have a number of long-range benefits. It helped in bringing north and south India closer together by improving communications.

Another step which Muhammad Tughlaq took at this time was the introduction of the 'token currency'. Since money is merely a medium of exchange, all countries in the world today have token currencies-generally paper currency so that they do not have to depend upon the supply of gold and silver. There was a shortage of silver in the world in the fourteenth century. Muhammad Tughlaq decided to introduce a bronze coin which was to have the same value as the silver tanka. Specimens of this coin have been found in different parts of India, and can be seen in museums. The idea of a token currency was a new one in India, and it was difficult to induce the traders as well as the common man to accept it. Muhammad Tughlaq might still have been successful if the government had been able to prevent people from forging the new coins. The government was not able to do so, and soon the new coins began to be greatly devalued in the markets. Finally Muhammad Tughlaq decided to withdraw the token currency.

The failure of these two experiments affected the prestige of the sovereign, and also meant wastage of money. However, the government quickly recovered. The Moroccan traveller, Ibn Battuta, who came to Delhi in 1333, could not see any harmful after-effects of these experiments. A far more serious problem with which Muhammad bin Tughlaq had to contend was that of the security of the frontiers. Administration, especially revenue administration, and his relations with the nobles also presented some serious problems.

The steady expansion of the Mongol power into the Punjab, and their assaults on Delhi posed a serious problems to the Delhi Sultanate. Although the Mongols had by then become weak due to their internal dissensions, they were still strong enough to threaten the Punjab and the areas near Delhi. In the early

years of Muhammad Tughlaq's reign, the Mongols under their leader Tarmashrin burst into Sind, and a force reached up to Meerut, about 65 km from Delhi. Muhammad Tughlaq not only defeated the Mongols in a battle near the Jhelum, but also occupied Kalanaur and for some time his power extended beyond the Indus upto Peshawar. This showed that the sultan of Delhi was now in a position to go over to the offensive against the Mongols. After coming back from Deogir, the sultan recruited a large army in order to occupy Ghazni and Afghanistan. According to Barani his object was to occupy Khurasan and Iraq. For which he organised a huge army but as the conditions improved in Iraq he abandoned the plan and disbanded the army. Many of the princes and others who had fled from Central Asia and taken shelter at the court of Muhammad Tughlaq may have thought that it was a good opportunity to oust the Mongols from the area. After a year, and following the failure of the experiment of establishing a token currency, and improvement of relations with the Mongols, the army was disbanded. Meanwhile, the situation in Central Asia changed rapidly. In due course, Timur united the entire area under his control and posed a fresh threat to India. The effects of the Khurasan project should not be exaggerated, or confused with the Qarachil expedition. This expedition was launched in the Kumaon hills in the Himalayas which met with several setbacks.

Muhammad Tughlaq undertook a number of measures to improve agriculture. Most of these were tried out in the doab region. Muhammad Tughlaq did not believe in Alauddin Khalji's policy of trying to reduce the khuts and muqaddams (headmen in the villages) to the position of ordinary cultivators. But he did want an adequate share of the land revenue for the state. The measures he advocated had a long term impact, but they failed disastrously during his reign. It is difficult to say whether the measures failed because of bad planning, or faulty implementation by officials who lacked experience.

Right at the beginning of Muhammad Tughlaq's reign, there was serious peasant rebellion in the Gangetic doab. Peasants fled the villages and Muhammad Tughlaq took harsh measures to capture and punish them. Although the share of state remained half as in the time of Alauddin, it was fixed arbitrarily, not on the basis of actual produce. Prices were also fixed artificially for converting the produce into money. A severe famine which ravaged the area for half a dozen years made the situation worse. Efforts at relief by giving advances for cattle and seeds, and for digging wells came too late.



After returning to Delhi after two and half years, Muhammad Tughlaq launched a scheme to extend and improve cultivation in the doab. He set up a separate department called diwan-i-anmir-i-kohi. The area was divided into development blocs headed by an official whose job was to extend cultivation by giving loans to the cultivators and to induce them to cultivate superior crops-wheat in place of barley, sugarcane in place of wheat, grapes and dates in place of sugarcane, etc. The scheme failed largely because the men chosen for the purpose proved to be inexperienced and dishonest, and misappropriated the money for their own use.

The nobility of Muhammad Tughlaq consisted of many divergent sections. No sense of cohesion could develop among them nor any sense of loyalty towards the sultan. On the other hand the vast extent of the empire provided favourable opportunities for rebellion, and for striving to carve out independent spheres of authority. Thus, the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, while marking the zenith of the Delhi Sultanate, also saw the beginning of the process of its disintegration. Muhammad bin Tughlaq died in 1351CE.

After his accession, Firuz Tughlaq was faced with the problem of preventing the imminent break-up of the Delhi Sultanate. He adopted a policy of trying to appease the nobles, the army and the theologians, and of asserting his authority over only such areas which could be easily administered from the centre. He, therefore, made no attempt to re-assert his authority over south India and the Deccan. He led two campaigns into Bengal, but was unsuccessful in both. Bengal was, thus, lost to the Sultanate. Even then, the Sultanate continued to be as large as it was during the early years of the reign of Alauddin Khalji. Firuz Tughlaq led a campaign against the ruler of Jajnagar (Orisa). He desecrated the temples there and gathered a rich plunder, but made no attempt to annex Orissa. He also led a campaign against Kangra in the Punjab hills. His longest campaigns were to deal with rebellions in Gujarat and Thatta. Although the rebellions were crushed, the army suffered great hardship due to losing its way in the Rann of Kutch.

Thus, Firuz Tughlaq was by no means a distinguished military leader. But his reign was a period of peace, and of quiet development. He decreed that whenever a noble died, his son should be allowed to succeed to position, including his iqta, and if he had no son, his son-in-law, and in his absence, his slave. However, in the long run, the policy of making offices and iqta hereditary was bound to be harmful. It reduced the chance of competent men being recruited

into the service outside a small circle, and made the sultan dependent on a narrow oligarchy. Firuz Tughlaq extended the principle of heredity to the army as well. Old soldiers were allowed to rest in peace and to send, in their place, their sons or sons-in-law, and if they were not available, their slaves. The soldiers were not to be paid in cash, but by assignments on the land revenue of villages. This meant that a soldier either had to go to the villages to collect his salary and absent himself from service, or to give the assignment to some middleman who would give him half or one-third of its value. Thus, the soldier did not benefit in the long run.

It was during the time of Firuz Tughlaq that jizyah became a separate tax. Earlier, it was a part of land revenue. Firuz Tughlaq refused to exempt the Brahmans from the payment of jizyah since this was not provided for in the sharia. Only women, children, the disabled and the indigent who had no means of livelihood were exempt from it. These narrow views of Firuz Tughlaq were certainly harmful. At the same time, Firuz Tughlaq was the first ruler who took steps to have Hindu religious works translated from Sanskrit into Persian, so that there may be a better understanding of Hindu ideas and practices. Many books on music, medicine and mathematics were also translated from Sanskrit into Persian during his reign. Firuz also took a number of humanitarian measures. He banned inhuman punishments such as cutting of hands, feet, nose, etc., for theft and other offences. He set up hospitals for free treatment of the poor, and ordered the kotwals to make lists of unemployed persons. He provided dowries for the daughters of the poor.

Firuz Tughlaq was keenly interested in the economic improvement of the country. He set up a large department of public works which looked after his building programme. Firuz Tughlaq repaired and dug a number of canals.

Firuz Shah Tughlaq died in 1388CE following again power struggle for the throne broke out. Sultan Muhammad, son of Firuz Tughlaq, was able to stabilize his position with their help. But one of his first steps was to break up the power of the slaves, killing and imprisoning many of them and scattering the rest. However, neither he nor his successor, Nasiruddin Mahmud, who ruled from 1394 to 1412, could control the ambitious nobles and the intransigent rajas. Perhaps, the major reason for this were the reforms of Firuz Tughlaq which had made the nobility too strong and the army inefficient.

The weakness of the Delhi Sultanate was made even worse by Timur's invasion of Delhi (1398). The invasion of Taimur delivered a death blow to the Tughlaq dynasty. Daulat Khan, the last of the Tughlaq Sultans was defeated by Khizr Khan who founded the Saiyyid dynasty.

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#### REFERENCE

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