

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

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

#### **(B). THEORIES OF KINGSHIP; RULING ELITE; SUFIS, ULAMA AND THE POLITICAL AUTHORITY; IMPERIAL MONUMENTS AND COINAGE**

The Theories of Kingship in the Delhi Sultanate were derived from and inspired by the theories of kingship in the Islamic world. In theory the Muslim state was a theocracy which means the head of the state was also the religious head and derived his position and authority from God. Thus the Caliph was the supreme head of the whole Islamic world. Most of the Sultans kept up the pretence of regarding the Caliph as the legal sovereign while they themselves were the Caliph's representatives. Most of them included the name of the Caliph in the khutba (prayer) and the sikka (coins) and adopted titles indicative of their subordination to the Caliph. But the Caliphate itself had long disintegrated before the coming of the Turks to India and what remained was a mere hereditary monarchy. The political need and the ignorance of the Sultans about the Shariyat or the Islamic laws resulted in the division of the functions of the head of the state. The religious side was looked after by the Ulama or the theologians and the administrative functions were maintained, organised and supervised by the Sultan.

In framing the new rules and regulations the authority of the sultan was circumscribed and every ruler could not govern the kingdom in complete disregard of the advice of the Ulama or theologians as Allauddin Khilji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq has been able to do. Iltutmish treated the great Turkish Nobles as his equals and they were assigned important posts and they became very influential and powerful. They came to be known as Turkan-i-Chahalgani

or the Chalisa( a group of forty) and they were the ruling elite of the period though they served Iltutmish faithfully.

When Balban became the Sultan of Delhi in 1266CE he broke the power of the Chahalgani i.e., the Turkish nobles. Balban asserted and enhanced the power of the monarchy. According to Balban, the Sultan was God's shadow on earth (Zil-i-Ilahi) and the recipient of Divine Grace. He ruled in an autocratic manner and worked hard to elevate the position of the Sultan. Balban introduced rigorous court discipline and new customs such as sijada (prostration) and paibos (kissing the Sultan's feet) to prove his superiority over the nobles. Balban spared only the most obedient nobles and eliminated all others by fair or foul means. Jalaluddin Khilji tried to win the goodwill of the nobility by adopting policy of tolerance. He retained the earlier nobility in his administration. Jalaluddin Khilji's policy of tolerance towards the nobles was reversed by his successor Alauddin Khilji, who awarded drastic punishment to all those who dared to oppose him. He decided to revive Balban's policy of ruthless governance. He decided to curb the power of the nobles and the interference of the Ulama in the matters of the state.

Mohammad bin Tughlaq was a rationalist in religious and philosophical matters. He offended the orthodox Muslim Ulama by curbing their political influence and tried to resolve secular problems by secular methods. He held religious discussions with Hindu Yogis and Jain Saints. He believed in geo-political unity of India and wanted to break all barriers, political as well as cultural.

The founder of the Lodhi Dynasty, Bahlul Lodhi was a able general and was aware of the fact that in order to establish his control over the Sultanate, he would require help and support of the Afghan nobles. The nobles wanted the Sultan to treat them as equals and thus in order to please them Sultan Bahlol

Lodhi publicly declared that he considered himself as one of the Afghan peers and not the king. He did not sit on the throne nor did he insisted his nobles standing in his court. This policy worked well throughout his long reign and he did not face any trouble from his powerful Afghan nobles. Sikandar Lodhi who succeeded Bahlol Lodhi as the Sultan of Delhi, believed in superior position of the Sultan in relation to the nobles. He compelled nobles and amir to show formal respect to the Sultan in darbar and outside and treated them harshly.

The office of the Sultan was the most important in the Sultanate and he was the ultimate authority for the military, legal and political matters. The dispensation of justice was another important function performed by the Sultan and he acted as a court of appeal. Balban dispensed justice with extreme impartiality, not sparing even the high officers of the state. Mohammad bin Tughlaq even gave harsh punishment to the Ulamas who were previously exempted.

There was clearly no law of succession during the time Delhi Sultanate. All the sons of the Sultan had equal claim to the throne. Iltutmish even nominated his daughter Raziya Sultan in preference to his sons. Raziya Sultan went on to become the first and the only female ruler of Medieval India. In many case nephews and also son-in-laws were deserving contenders of the throne in absence of a son or a worthy son of the Sultan. Alauddin Khilji was the nephew and son-in-law of Jalaluddin Khilji.

Qutub-ud-din Aibak was a Turkish slave of Mohammad Ghori who played an important role in the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate of India and was made the Governor of India by Mohammad Ghori. He founded the Ilbari or the Slave Dynasty in India and assumed the title of Sultan. Qutub-ud-din Aibak ascended the throne without any conflict since the Muizzi nobles accepted him as their superior and offered their loyalty to him. Iltutmish gave the country a capital, a sovereign state, monarchical form of government and a governing

class or nobility known as Turkan-i-Chahalgani. Thus Iltutmish's accession to the throne of Delhi constituted an important landmark in the growth of Turkish nobility in India. The Turkish nobility had much influence on the political activity of the Turkish rule in India. At times the Turkish nobles played major roles in deciding who would become the Sultan of Delhi. After the death of Iltutmish it was the Chahalgani who decided the succession issues. When Balban ascended the throne of Delhi the power of the Chahalgani was broken. The Turkish nobles enjoyed major power and prestige during the reign of both Qutub-ud-din Aibak and Iltutmish. This equation was completely changed when Balban became the Sultan of Delhi. He traced his ancestry to the mythical king Afrasiyab of Ajam and also believed in Divine theory of kingship. The hereditary principal of succession was also changed when Balban became the Sultan. Balban was a member of the Chahalgani and aided Nasiruddin Mahmud, a grandson of Iltutmish to ascend the throne. Later to strengthen his power, Balban married his daughter off to Nasiruddin Mahmud. After the death of Mahmud, Balban ascended the throne. During the rule of the Khiljis and the Tughlaks Nobility was no longer confined to the Turkish people. People from diverse backgrounds was welcomed in to the nobility.

The Sufis belonging Later Chishti shilsila and other silsilahs only with the exception Early Chishti silsilah were involved in the affairs of the state and also accepted the endowments made by the state. The Sufis belonging to different silsilahs became an integral part of the state machinery developed by the different Sultans of Delhi. The Early Chishtis helped in spreading communal harmony in the state so that people belonging to different religion and culture could live in peace. Though involved in the state machinery the Sufis never questioned the existing policy of state craft and class structure.

One of the important features of the period of the Delhi Sultanate was the presence of the Ulamas. The Ulamas were present in the court of the Sultan of

Delhi and also in the office of the Qazi in the Provinces. The Ulamas or theologians were people who preached the Islamic religion and guarded the Islamic laws. The Ulamas held high judicial powers and thus gradually rose to power. The primary aim of the Ulama was to spread the words of God and guard the religious order. Religion was the first priority of the Ulamas, but on the other hand the Sultans of Delhi kept political interests ahead of religious interest in order to rule over a land where majority of the masses were non-Muslims. This opposite aim and attitude became a cause of conflict between the Sultans and the Ulama many a times.

### **IMPERIAL MONUMENTS AND COINAGE**

There was an outburst of building activities during the Delhi Sultanate. Earliest example of building activity by a Sultan of Delhi was the Quwat-ul-Islam mosques built by Qutub-ud-din Aibak. Another architectural specimen of this period was the mosques-Arhai Din ka Jhonpra, built at Ajmer. The most magnificent piece of architecture of this era was the Qutub Minar. Qutub-ud-din Aibak started the construction of the Qutub Minar at Delhi but could not complete it during his life time. It was completed by Iltutmish.

Other notable imperial monuments constructed by Iltutmish were Hauz-i-Shamshi, Shamsi-idgah, the Jami Masjid at Badaun and the Atarkin ka Darwaza at Nagpur. A notable landmark in the development of Indo-Islamic architecture was the Tomb of Balban.

Alauddin Khilji founded the city of Siri and built a palace of thousand pillar within it, Jamait Khan Mosque at the shrine of Nizam -ud-din Auliya and the Alai Darwaza at the Qutub Minar. Alauddin Khilji also constructed a magnificent tank known as the Hauz-i-Khas near the city of Siri.

The city of Tughlaqabad constructed by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq was a notable construction of the Tughlaq rule. Mohammad bin Tughlaq constructed the new city of Jahanpanah near the City of old Delhi, the fort of Adilabad and some other buildings in Daulatabad. The city of Firozabad, Firoz Shah Kotla fort-palace were important imperial constructions of the time of Firoz Shah Tughlaq.

The Tombs of Mubarak Shah and Muhammad Shah of the Sayyid Dynasty and the Tomb of Sikandar Lodhi of the Lodhi Dynasty were noteworthy architectural specimens of the Sayyid and Lodhi rule.

Muhammad of Ghur struck gold coins in imitation of the coins of the Hindu kings of Kanauj, with Goddess Lakshmi on the obverse. Such example remains unparalleled in History. For almost the first forty years of Delhi Sultanate copper and billon were the preferred metals for making coins. Hardly any evidence of gold coins of the early years of the Delhi Sultanate has been found. Even silver coins of that time are quite scarce. Iltutmish issued several silver tankas, the earliest of which has a portrait of the king on horseback on the obverse.

Gold coins or dinars became popular during the reign of Alauddin Khilji after he enriched his treasury by conquest in South India. Prior to him, Sultans like Nasiruddin Mahmud, Balban, Jalaluddin Khilji issued coins in gold which were very rare and uncommon.

Most of the coins issued in billon by the early Sultans were uniform in size and weight and were struck in numerous varieties. The billon coins of Alauddin Khilji are the first to bear dates. All copper coins of this period are dateless.

Mohammad bin Tughlaq experimented with token currency and issued several types of coins in gold and silver. His coins surpassed the coins of his predecessor in execution, especially in calligraphy. The gold coins of Firoz Shah Tughlaq are fairly common and six types are known. Copper coins of the

reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq are abundantly known but in case of silver coins only three specimens have come to light. The coinages of the later Sultans were confined to copper and billon though the varieties were numerous.

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