

## GIST OF N.C.E.R.T THE DELHI SULTANAT

### Struggle for the Establishment of a Strong Monarchy

Muizzuddin (Muhammad Ghori) was succeeded (1206) by Qutbuddin Aibak, Turkish slave who had played an important part in the expansion of the Turkish Sultanat in India after the battle of Tarain. Another slave of Muizzuddin, Yalduz, succeeded at Ghazni. As the ruler of Ghazni, Yalduz claimed to rule over Delhi as well. This, however was not accepted by Aibak and from this time, the Delhi Sultanat severed its help to prevent India being drawn into central Asian politics.

### Iltutmish (1210-36)

In 1210, Aibak died of injuries received in a fall from his horse while playing Chaugan (polo). He was succeeded by Iltutmish who was the son-in-law of Aibak. But before he could do so, he had to fight and defeat the son of Aibak.

Iltutmish must be regarded as the real consolidator of the Turkish conquests in North India. At the time of his accession, Ali Mardan Khan had declared himself the king of Bengal and Bihar, while Qubacha, a fellow slave of Aibak 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 took advantage of the situation to assert their independence. Thus, Kalinjar, Gwalior and the entire eastern Rajasthan, including Ajmer and Bayana, threw off the Turkish Yoke.

During the early year of his reign, Iltutmish's attention was concentrated on the north-west. A new danger to his position arose with the conquest of Ghazni by Khwarizm Shah. In order to avert this danger, Iltutmish marched to Lahore and occupied it. In 1220, 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. The danger it posed to India and its effects on the Delhi Sultanat will be discussed in a subsequent section. While the Mongols were busy elsewhere, Iltutmish also ousted Qubacha from Multan and Uchch.

Secure in the west, Iltutmish was able to turn his attention elsewhere. In Bengal and Bihar, a person called Iwaz who had taken the title of sultan Ghiyasuddin had assumed independence. While he made raids on the territory 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 a battle with Iltutmish's son near Lakhanauti. 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 Gwalior and Bayana. Ajmer and Negor remained under his control. He sent expeditions against Ranthambhor and Jalor to reassert his suzerainty. He also attacked Nagda, the capitals 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 dispatched an expedition against the Chalukyas of Gujarat, but it was repulsed with losses.

### Raziya (1236-39)

After anxious consideration, Iltutmish finally decided to nominate his daughter, Raziya, to the throne, and induced the nobles and the theologians (Ulama) to agree to the nomination. The nomination of a woman in preference to sons was a novel step. In order to assuage brothers as well as against powerful Turkish nobles, and could rule only for three years. Though brief, her rule had a number of interesting features. It marked the monarchy and the Turkish chiefs, sometimes called "the

forty” or 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 led army in war. The Wazir, Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi, who had opposed her elevation to the throne, and backed and supported a rebellion of nobles against her, was defeated successfully established law and order in the length and breath of her Kingdom. But the attempt to create a party of noble, Yaqut Khan. Rebellions broke out at Lahore and sirhind. She personally led an expedition against Lahore, and compelled the governor to Submit. On the way to Sirhind, internal rebellion broke out in which Yaqut Khan was killed, an Raziya imprisoned at Tabarhinda (Bhatinda). 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 fight by bandits.

#### Era of Balban (1246-87)

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 of 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 (1250) and ousted Balban from his position. Balban was replaced by Imadduddin Raihan who was an Indian Muslim. 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. 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 fair or foul means. He even went so far as to assume the royal insignia, the Chhatr. 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 to the throne.

Balban constantly sought to increase the prestige and power of the monarchy, 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 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. The historian, Barani, who was himself a great champion of the Turkish nobles, put the following words in Balban's mouth: "Whenever I see a base born ignoble man, my eyes burn and reaching anger for my sword (to kill him). We do not know if Balban actually said these words, but they show his attitude towards the non-Turks.

While Claiming to act as a champion of the Turkish nobility, Balban was not prepared to share power with anyone, not even with members of his own family. His despotism. 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 highest justice in the land were to be spared if they transgressed his authority. To keep himself well informed, Balban appointed strong centralized army, both to deal with internal entrenched themselves in the Punjab and posed a serious danger to the Delhi Sultanat. For the purpose, he reorganized them 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,

but Balban was not moved.

The law and order situation in the area around Delhi and in the doab had deteriorated. In the Ganga-Jamuna doab and Awadh, roads were, poor and were infested with robbers and Dacoits, The Mewatis had become so bold as to plunder people upto the outskirts of Delhi. To deal with these elements, Balban adopted a policy of "Blood and Iron". Robbers were mercilessly pursued and put to Death.

By these Harsh methods, Balban controlled the situation. Order to impress the people with the strength and awe of his government, Balban maintained a magnificent court. He refused to laugh and joke in the court, and even gave up drinking wine he insisted on the ceremony of Sijada and Paibos. These and many other ceremonies which he copied were Iranian in Origin and were considered un-Islamic.

#### THE DELHI SULTANAT-II

(Circa 1200-1400)

AFTER THE death of Balban in 1286, there was again confusion in Delhi for some time. Balban's chosen successor, Prince Muhammad, had died 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.

The Khalijis (1290-1320)

For these reasons, a group of Khalji nobles led by Jalaluddin Khalji, who had been the warden of the marches in the north-west and had fought many successful engagements against the Mongols, overthrew the incompetent successors of Balban in 1290. The Khalji rebellion was welcomed by the non-Turkish sections in the nobility.

Jalaluddin Khalji ruled only for a brief period of six years. He tried to mitigate some of the harsh aspects of Balban's rule. He was the first ruler of the Delhi Sultanat 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 truly Islamic state.

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. 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 adopted methods of utmost severity and ruthlessness. Alauddin gave harsh punishments even to the wives and children of these rebels, a practice which, according to the historian Barani, was a new one and was continued by his successors. Alauddin framed a series of regulations to prevent the nobles from conspiring against him. They were forbidden to hold banquets or festivities, or to form marriage alliances without the permission of the sultan. To discourage festive parties, he banned the use of wines and intoxicants. He also instituted a spy service to inform the sultan of all that the nobles said and did.

By these harsh methods, Alauddin Khalji cowed down the nobles, and made them completely subservient to the crown. The old nobility was destroyed, and the new nobility was taught to accept anyone who could ascend the throne of Delhi. This became apparent after Alauddin Khalji's death in 1316. His favourite, Malik Kafur, raised a minor son of Alauddin to the throne and imprisoned or blinded his other sons, without encountering any opposition from the nobles. Soon after this, Kafur was killed

The Tughlaqs (1320-1412)

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq established a new dynasty which ruled till 1412. The Tughlaqs provided three competent rulers: Ghiyasuddin, 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 Turkish rulers had strong reasons for coveting Malwa and Gujarat. Not only were these areas fertile and populous, they controlled the western sea-ports and the trade routes connecting them with the Ganga valley.

Another reason for the sultans of Delhi to establish their rule over Gujarat was that it would secure them a better control over the supply of horses to their armies. The import of Arabi, Iraqi and Turki horses to India from the western seaports had been an important item of trade since the eighth century.

Early in 1299, an army under two of Alauddin Khalji's noted generals marched against Gujarat by the 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 famous temple of Somnath was plundered and sacked. 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.

### Rajasthan

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. Alauddin despatched an army commanded by one of his reputed generals but it 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 fear uljauhar 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, died 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 this, its ruler Ratan Singh had annoyed him by refusing permission to his armies to march to Gujarat through Mewar territories. There is a popular legend that Alauddin attacked Chittor because he coveted Padmini, the beautiful queen of Ratan Singh. However, many modern historians do not

accept this legend because it is mentioned for the first time more than a hundred years later. In this story, Padmini is the princess of Singhaldivya and Ratan Singh crosses the seven seas to reach her and brings her back to Chittor after many adventures which appear improbable. The Padmini legend is a part of this account.

Alauddin closely invested Chittor. After a resistance by Mewar besieged for several months Alauddin stormed the fort (1303). The Rajputs performed jauhar and most of the warriors died fighting.

Alauddin also overran Jalor which lay on the route to Gujarat.

### Deccan and South India

In 1306-7, 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. In an earlier campaign, Rai Ramchandra had agreed to pay an yearly tribute to Delhi. This had failed into arrears. The command of the second army was entrusted to Alauddin's slave, Malik Kafur. Rai Ramchandra 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. A gift of one lakh tonkas was given to him along with a golden coloured canopy which was a symbol of rulership. He was also given a district of Gujarat. One of his daughters was married to Alauddin. The Alliance with Rai Ramachandra was to prove to be of great value to Alauddin in his further aggrandisement in the Deccan.

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 and Mabar (modern Karnataka) and Madurai (Tamil Nadu). The court poet, Amir Khusrau made them the subject of a book. For the first time, Muslim armies penetrated as far south as Madurai, and brought back untold wealth. The trade routes to south India were well known and when Kafur's armies reached Paintan in Mabar, they found a colony of Muslim merchants settled there. The ruler even had a contingent of Muslim troops in his army. These expeditions

greatly raised Kafur in public estimation and Alauddin appointed him malik-naib or vice-gegent of the empire.

Following the accession of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq in 1320, a sustained and vigorous forward policy was embarked upon. The sultan's son, Muhammad bin Tughlaq, was posted to Deogir for the purpose. On the excuse that the ruler of Warangal had non paid the stipulated tribute, Muhammad bin Tughlaq besieged Warangal again. At first, he suffered a reverse. Following armourofthe sultan's death in Delhi, the Delhiarmies were disorganized, and the defenders fell upon them inflicting heavy losses. Muhammad bin tughlaq had to retreat to Deogir. After reorganizing his armies, the attacked again and this time no quarter was given to the Rai. This was followed by the conquest of Mabar which was also annexed. Muhammad bin Tughlaq them raided Orissa, and returned to Delhi with rich plunder. Next year, he subdued Bengal which had been independent since the death of Balban.

Thus, by 1324, the territories of the Delhi Sultanat reached up to Madurai. The last Hindu principality in the area, Kampili in South Karnataka, was annexed in 1328. A cousin of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, who had rebelled, had been given shelter there, thous providing a convenient excus for attacking it.