

The Sultans of Delhi

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ABSTRACT

The invasion and conquest change the structure of society and politics, various Muslim invaders like Muhammad-Bin-Qasim, Subuktigin, and Mahmud Ghazni laid the way of foundation of Muslim rule. Delhi Sultanate emerged by invasion of Muhammad Ghori of Afghanistan between 1175 and 1206. A nail is sufficient to kill a large elephant, here military slave Qutub-Ud-Din-Aibak created Mamluk dynasty and referred as founder of Delhi sultanate. Change is the common phenomenon in Indian political structure. The collapse of Rajput rule and rise of Sultan power provided various new things in socio-political structure as well as economy of the period. Muslim rule change the administrative structure and architectural style which is greatly influenced by Central Asian and Persian style. During the Sultanate regime various cities constructed like Jahanpanah, Siri, Delhi-i-Kuhna together make Delhi and hence it made possible to transform Delhi in to capital. Sultan's nature considered as great organizer, strength, authority and rulership. Sultan managed to integrate the Indian sub-continent in to global cosmopolitan culture. It reshaped the Indian culture by Islamic and Indian traditions. It was no doubt the Sultanate reign is turning point in Indian history. It changes the Indian cultural landscape by preserving the Islamic nature of the state as well as to rule and defend the empire. Within the period of 320 years Sultanate period provided various political transformation in northern India.

In 320 years of rule Sultanate period divided in to five dynasties the Slave dynasty (1206-1290), Khilzi dynasty (1290-1320), Tuglaq dynasty (1320-1413), Sayyid dynasty (1414-51), Lodhi dynasty (1451-1526).

After the death of Muhammad Ghori a struggle from supremacy ensued between slaves of Ghori, Tajuddin Yalduz, Nasiruddin Qubacha and Qutubuddin Aibek.

Qutub-ud-din Aibak was the founder of first independent Turkish kingdom in northern India. For his generosity he was given the title of Lakh Baksh. Aibek was great patron of learning and patronized writer like Hasan-un Nizami author of Taj-ul-Massir and Fakhr-ud-Din, author of Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi.

¹He was most capable slave among the slaves of Sultan Muhammad. He was a self-made man who rose to status of Sultan by his own merit and its efforts. Professor A.B.M Habibullah writes He combined the intrepidity of the Turks with refined taste and generosity, courage and sense of justice. He was capable ruler, commander and just a generous individual, he administered the territory as military jagir which lacked the elements of stability. He constructed mosques out of the material of the Hindu temple which he destroyed. It was a proof religious intolerance. Beside, due to lack of time Qutub-Ud-Din could not complete his task in India. Neither could he entirely free Delhi Sultanate from the claim of suzerainty by the rulers of Ghazni or could he provided stability to it, both of these tasks were left unfinished. Therefore, Iltutmish, had to strive again in order to complete his tasks.

Iltutmish had to face number of problems during the time of his coronation, number of Rajput states declare their independence, the revolt of governors of Bengal, challenges given by Yalduz and Qabacha, the fear of Mongol invasion and invaders. Although Ghurib and Aibek founded the state of Delhi Sultanate in northern India but they could not established their administrative structure. The newly founded state of Delhi Sultanate, So far could not get the approval from Caliph.

The Iltutmish tried to have the problem one by one. Firstly, he reconquered a number of Rajput states e.g in 1226, he conquered Ranthambore, In 1227, he conquered Mandasor, then Jalor, Bayana, plundered Bhilsa. As we know the governor of Bengal, Ali Mardan Khan revolted against him, then his successor Imaz became the independent ruler, in the name of Ghiyasuddin Iltutmish sent a number of expedition against Bengal and finally in 1230-1231 A.D. Bengal was recaptured. Likewise other slave of Ghori Yalduz who was at the time ruler of Ghazni. Asserted his sovereignty on Indian region And sent a royal umbrella to Iltutmish to accept his partition, Likewise, another ambitious slave of Ghori Qabacha

¹ Sharma LP –History of Medieval India 1000-1740 A.D 3rd ed. 2008 (Page-32)

captured same region in Punjab, here the Illutmish solved the problem with proper mix between military valour and diplomatic suggestivity. Initially as a tactical measure he accepted the nominal leadership of Yalduz. He was great opportunistic when Yalduz expelled from Ghazni after defeated by ruler of Khwarizm then Illutmish defeated Yalduz in battle of Tarain in 1217. After death of Chengez Khan in 1228, he took massive step against Qabacha and he was defeated and killed.

To become a successful ruler, he organized group of forty slaves i.e Turk –i-Chihalgani, defeat of Yalduz, the impending Mongol invasion, defeat of Qabacha, the conquest of Bengal, Fight against Hindu chiefs, investiture from Caliph, etc.

But inspite of limitation, it was Illutmish who was real founder of Delhi Sultanate and also consolidator of Delhi Sultanate. Last but not least it was Illutmish who prepared the way for the strong rule of Balban and finally for Khalzi imperialism.

After his death in ten years, four Sultans of Delhi got murdered and fifth one ruled as puppet in hand of Balban. The coronation of Razia as the Sultan of Delhi was unique event in the history of Muslims rule in India. Unlike the palace women who played the role of king makers and worked from behind the curtain, she was first women ruler in Sultanate.

Though Illutmish had nominated his daughters Razia as the successors, the nobles placed Ruknudin firoz on the throne, however Razia got rid of Ruknudin and ascended the throne.

Razia was the most competent among the successor of Illutmish and possibly she was a favourite choice of her father. She revolted against the corrupt rule of Rukun-din-Firoz and with the help of people of Delhi.

Razia was popular among the people but was not acceptable to the nobles and theologians. So she dealt with recalcitrant nobles who just established military barricade around Delhi, likewise She punished the disloyal Wazir “Junaid”.

When she succeeded against governor, She tried to destroy the monopoly and power base of Turkish nobles through giving important posts to non-Turks like Yaqut so Turkish nobles were threatened and they started a propaganda campaign against the relationship between Razia and Yakut. Having been emboldened enough, the governor of Lahore and Multan revolted but Razia punished him. So according to Minhaz-us-Shiraz all the noble between Debal and Lakhnauti were compelled to accept her Suzerainty.

As Razia was enjoying the support of people of Delhi, so she could toppled only after She came out of Delhi and with the help of an association of provincial and court officer, so when she suppress the revolt of Altunia, the governor of Tabarhind she was defeated and captured once again she tried to regain the throne but she was defeated, finally in battle of Kaithal. In 1240 A.D, Razia became the victim of conspiracy and was assassinated near Kaithal. It was no doubt, she had unique personality and she has all merits of Sultan, but she declined due to jealousy of the corps of Forty.

After the fall of Razia, Ghiya-ud-din Balban came to throne in 1265 A.D. He adopted Persian model of monarchy. He declared himself to the successor of Persian warrior “Afrasiyab”, he even tried to lay divinity to royal post, for example he declared royal post to be a Niyabat-i-Khudai (gift from god), likewise, he took the title of Jil-i-Ilahi (shadow of god on earth) in order to uplift the regional power. Sometime even he made the compromise with Islamic value, for example he introduced in his court Sijda (prostration) and paibos (kissing the feet).

He introduced the strict disciplines and specific regulations in his courts and officers Amir-e-Hajib was appointed to regularize the proceedings of the courts, nobles were supposed to appear in the court, while being well dressed, even Balban was addressing the court with proper pomp and show, Even Barni accept that from 100 to 200 kos, the Hindu nobles like khut and Muqadaam, simply to have glimpse of pomp and show of monarchy.

He was consistently destroying the power of member of Turk-e-Chihalgani, some were transferred from one region to another region. Some were suppressed and killed, Balban was so much conscious about his power and position that he was not ready to give share even to the member of his family. For example, he supposed to have given poison to his even powerful and ambitious nephew Sher khan Sunkar.

But if we recognize, carefully we find he declare himself as protector of Turkish interest,he provided racial theory of kingship,he was much consciosus in theory about the purity of blood and race. Professor² A.B.M Habibullah writes Balban's greatest single achievement lay in the revival of the monarchy as the supreme factor in the state,in the this field, he completed the work started by Aibak and Illtutmish.Illtutmish had provided legal monarchy for the Delhi Sultanate but made it dependent on the power of his nobility.Balban removed this weakness.Balban,in fact was a real Sultan who instead of depending on anybody made everybody dependent on himself in the state.

One remarkable feature in Balban reign is his theory of kingship, his theory of kingship can be explained in the context of relationship between Sultan and Turk-i-chihalgami.A part from that possibly he was the regicide,so he was trying to uplift his position in the eyes of common people,he borrowed the Persian model of kingship and linked his relationship to a Persian warrior Afrasiyab ,he tried to say divinity to monarchy through unislamic system like Sijda and paibos.

He strictly enforced the decorum in his court with the help of an officer Amir -e-hajib.In order to strengthen the military base of state. He organized a new department Diwan-i-Ariz.He consciosaly tried to destroy the power base of the member Turk-e-chihalgani,some of them were transferred, some of them were subordinated and many killed.But here Balban adopted to prove to two strategy,for example at the sametime he declared himself to the protector of interest of the Turkish nobles, it was in this context that he propounded a racial policy of kingship and gave emphasis over the superiority of Turkish race to exist the support of the common people for his monarchy through giving much emphasis over justice for common people.So like French ruler Louis XIV even Balban made monarchy a serious profession.

The establishment of Khalzi dynasty after the decline of Illbari dynasty came to be known as Khalzi revolution in the history of Delhi Sultanate,but this Khalzi revolution was not simply a dynastic change but it was something more than it.Firstly, Khalzi rulers rejected the racial policy of Balban ,for example Alauddin Khalzi declared kingship knows no kinship. The Khalzi rulers strengthen the social basis of state not simply for Non -Turks but also for Indian Muslims and others ,infact the Khalzi themselves came from lower stalk. So coronation of Khalzi rulers symbolized the ascendancy of unprivileged. Secondly Khalzi rulers did something for secularization of state policy .For example Alauddin Khalzi tried to separate religion from politics in his talks to Ghazi Muhsuddin he made that point clear.Thirdly, the Khalzi rulers got the powers not at the support of Ulema class nor the support of common people ,rather they got power by virtue of military strengthth,so they proved that even without the support of Ulema the state could survive,likewise in one sense it was a revolt of Indian Muslims against those who were looking towards Ghuri or Ghazni.

The revolution gave too much emphasis over military powers, but still it was a pastime landmark in the history of Delhi Sultanate. With the coronation of Alauddin Khalzi the era of imperialism started that reached up to climax under Muhammad -Bin-Tuglaq.Alauddin annexed Gujarat (1298), Ranthambor (1301), Mewar (1303), Malwa (1305), Jalor (1311).

In the northern territory he follow the policy direct control,and hence resulted in formation of big empire.By this he enhance the expansion empire as well as trade commerce in western region.

He followed a different approach to conquer Deccan.³Dr.KS Lal has expressed that the temptation of glory and wealth which had always been the source of inspiration for all conquerors also inspired Alauddin to attack the states of the Deccan one after another,his primary aim was to capture wealth of the Deccan by every means and attainment of glory was the secondary means.

In Deccan,Alauddin army led by Malik Kafur defeated Yadava rulers of Devagiri,Kakatiya rulers of Warrangal,Hoysalas of Dwarsamudra and Pandayas of Madurai.For easy rule and he made these states as sovereign and hence got revenue on regular basis without involved in administrative affairs.His Deccani policy can be compare with Samudragupta expansion in Deccan.,the difference is that he made regular contact with Deccan.He utilized wealth of Deccan to consolidate his position in northern states.

Beside, he was a great administrative reformer due to problem created by the nobles,Alauddin issued for important ordinances his first ordinance aim at confiscation of religious endowments free grants of lands,in second ordinance Alauddin reorganized the spy system,an army of informers was created and their duty was to spy on all that happened in empire and submit reports of Sultan. In third ordinance he prohibited the use of wine.In fourth ordinance he was against social gathering of nobles and they should not inter-marry without his permission.

² Sharma LP-History of Medieval India 3rd ed 2008 (page-61).

³ Sharma Lp History of Medieval Indias 1000-1740 3rd ed 2008 (page 109)

Alauddin sought to fix cost of all commodities, for the purpose he set up three markets at Delhi. One market for food grains, the second for costly cloth and third for horses ,slaves and cattles .Each market was called the high officer called Shahna who maintained the register of the merchants and strictly controlled the shopkeepers and the prices .The check on market was kept by two officers Diwan-i-Riyasat and Shahna-i-Mandi.All goods for sale were brought to an open market called Sarai-Adl.

A reknown historian Barni says the objective of land revenue system of Alauddin Khalzi was that rich man should not be shifted on weaker section ,so he call his policy the policy poor vs rich,it is on this ground that a modern scholar declared it a rural revolution.⁴Barani states the market reforms of Alauddin were applicable only to Delhi.If that was so,it was hardly necessary to control the supply of food grains all over the doab,also soldiers and their families did not live at Delhi alone ,but in various towns and qasbas from Lahore to Awadh.

Therefore, Alauddin was the first Muslim administrator of India.

After Alauddin,Mubarak Shah khalzi came to throne major happenings during his reign were suppression of revolt of Gujarat,re-conquest of Devagiri,due to his cruel and suspicious nature, he was killed by his followers in April 1320.

Nasir-ud-din Khusrav Shah a covert Muslim came to throne,he got killed and blinded the remaining son of Alauddin Khalzi.He was corrupt and disloyal.so within a four and half month his rule came to end.

Every great dynasties collapsed so Khalzi rule also came to end the reason is that policy of bloodshed, lack of element of stability and based on terror and finally due to cruel and foolish behaviour of Mubarak Shah.

The Ghiyasuddin Tuglaq laid the foundation of Tuglaq dynasty.Ghiyasuddin attempted to improve the finances of the state and for that purpose pursued the policy of encouraging agriculture and protecting cultivation.Ghiyas-ud-din proved himself more aggressive imperialist than even Alauddin.

After the death of his father,Muhammad Bin Tuglaq ascended the throne of Delhi.He tried to introduce many administrative reform, he had five ambitious projects for which he has become particularly debatable.

Taxation in Doab-The Sultan made an ill-advised financial experiment in the Doab between the river Ganga and Yamuna to increase the revenue for raising strong army. ⁵According to A.L Srivastava the sultan afterward abolished the taxes, gave seeds,bullocks,etc to cultivators and arranged for digging of wells for irrigation. The policy of sultan proved to be perfect failure, even the usual revenue could not collected from Doab ,besides Sultan became unpopular among the subject.

Transfer of capital-The most controversial step which Muhammad Bin Tuglaq undertook soon after his accession was the so called transfer of capital from Delhi to Devagiri,it's a base for Turkish rule in south India.It appears that Sultan wanted to make Devagiri second capital so that he might be able to control south India better.Devagiri was thus called as Daulatabad,after a couple of years Muhammad bin Tuglaq decided to abandon Daulatabad largely because he soon found that just as he could not control south India from Delhi he could not control north from Daulatabad.

Karachil Expedition- We have conflicting idea about the exact location of Karachil according to one views somewhere near Himalayas but according to other view it was located near Kangara ,it was buffer region between India and China,in order to classify the boundary of the state Muhammad Tuglaq sent an army of 1000 under Khusru Malik to conquer Karachil,but due to some tactical mistake the whole contingent was destroyed in this expedition,although the nominal sovereignty of Karachil region was established.

Khurasan Expedition-The Sultan had a vision of universal conquest,he decided to conquest Khurasan and Iraq and mobilized a huge army for the purpose,he was encouraged to do so by Khurasani nobles who had taken shelter in his court ,moreover there was instability in Khurasan on account of the unpopular rule of Abu Said. It was not his personal view but it was due to changing scenario in west Asia and central Asia,infact decline of Mongolian power, some sort of power vaccum was created there ,so Md.Bin Tughlaq tried to make benefit from the situation,he concluded treaty with Mongol ruler Tamashirin and ruler of Egypt,then he created a large army of 37000 for his purposed Khurasana expeditions and gave the soldier one year salary in advanced ,in the meantime due to dramatic change in political scenario in west Asia and central Asia he was compelled to give up this project ,this project turned to be a failure and it took a form of tragedy.

⁴ Chandra Satish-from Sultanate to Mughals (1206-1526) (page-86)

⁵ Sharma LP- History of Medieval India 3rd ed 2008 (page-116).

Introduction of Token currency-Muhammad –bin- Tughlaq decided to introduce bronze coins ,which were to have same value as the silver ones ,MBT might have been successful if he could prevent people from forging the new coins, he was not able to do so and so on the new coins began to be greatly devalued in markets, finally MBT decided to withdraw the token currency, he promised to exchange silver pieces of bronze coin.

Likewise the experiment of token currency was not the first experiment in the world before it Kublai khan in China,Khikaqtu in Persia experimented with token currency, so the measure of Muhammad –Bin- Tuglaq turned failure due to the fact he did not take rotational steps to check the corruption.

His personality attracted the modern historian,his scholarship,imaginative vision,personal valour and religious tolerance provided him a high place in the Sultan of Delhi.

After MBT Firoz Tuglaq came to throne,he faced the problem of eminent break up of Sultanate,he adopted to appease the nobility, the army, and theologians.As we know nobles and military officials were dissatisfied with policy of MBT,so he tried them to appease by following measures,firstly he made post of officer hereditary,he declared whenever noble died his son should be allowed to succeed to his position including his iqta and if he had no sons ,his son in law and in absence his slaves.Firoz extended the principle of heredity to the army,Soldiers were allowed to rest in peace and to sent in their place of their sons.

Secondly,he received Jagir system,now soldiers were paid in cash but by assignments on land revenue of villages. In order to gain confidence in Ulema class,he followed orthodox religious policy.Firoz tried to win over the theologians proclaiming that he was a true Muslim king and that state under him is Islamic.For promoting satisfaction he appointed various theologians as high officers.

For economic reform,he utilized new form of taxation,four kinds of taxes sanctioned by the Quran were imposed and those were Kharaz,zakat,Jaziyas and Khams,Kharaz was the land tax which was equal to 1/10 of the produce of particular land.Zakat was 2.5% tax on particular property.Jaziya was levied on non Muslims. He repaired various canals like from Satluz to Ghaggar,from Yamuna to the city of Hissar etc for better irrigation.He also considered as great builder due to construction of cities like Hissar,Fatehabad,Jaunpur and Firozabad.He also brought Ashokan pillars one from Meerut and other from Topra to Delhi.

It was no doubt, he was virtual ,wise and great organisor,after the death of Firoz Shah Tuglaq there were weak successors,so, downfall started automatically, invasion of Timur lang in 1398 AD during the reign of Nasiruddin Muhammad Shah which was immediate cause of disintegration. Finally due to plundering raids, Tuglag dynasty came to end in 1414 AD.

In the March 1414 governor of Multan Khizr Khan and its protectorate in behalf of Timur,marched against him and took possession of Delhi.As it was believed that Khizr Khan was descendant of prophet and so dynasty founded by him styled as Sayyid dynasty.

The Sayyid dynasty was fourth dynasty in Delhi Sultanate,there were only four rulers and it has not so importance in Indian history.Their ruled planned from 1414-51 covering only 37 years of rule.First one is Khizr Khan(1414-21)during his rule authority is limited to few districts of Delhi.

After his death his son Mubarak Shah came to power his reign is (1421-34 AD).He gave his full strength to suppress the rebellion in Bhatinda and in the Doab.During his reign Yahiya- Bin-Sarhindi wrote Tarikh –i-Mubarak Shahi.

Muhammad Shah (1434-45AD),He was nephew of Mubrak Shah,he was not a successful ruler due to indulgence in sensual pleasure and poor leadership.

The last ruler was Alauddin Alam Shah (1445-51), he was the son of Muhammad Shah,he considered as weakest ruler of Sayyids,he quarrelled with his wazirs and so surrendered his throne to Bahlul Lodi and retired to his favourite place Badaun.

After that Lodhi dynasty came to power,which is last rulling dynasty of Delhi Sultanate,Bahlul was the founder of this dynasty.Sultan Bahlol (1451-88) belong to the Shahu Khel clan of Lodis.He reorganized the Delhi Sultanate and hence conquered territory around Delhi.His coronation changed the complexion of Muslim society,making Afgan as important element,he invited various Afgan warriors to India.His greatest achievement were conquest of Jaunpur,suppression of the



rebellious nobles, particularly Rajput chief of Doab, he achieved much for his dynasties and prepared the way for his successors.

Sikander Lodi (1489-1517) son of Bahlul Lodi, contemporary of Mahmud of Begarha of Gujarat and Rana Sanga of Mewar. He gained Bihar and West Bengal especially Tirhut, also succeeded in Dholpur and Gwalior, selected the site for the city of Agra and hence Agra became a large town and second capital of Lodi.

He made all highways safe from robbers and bandits, he made Gaz-i-Sikanderi for measuring cultivated fields, he wrote Persian verses under the name Gulrukhi and recruited Hindu in various administrative posts. But even he was considered as an orthodox Muslim, he was against visiting of women to graves of saints, he reimposed Jaziya to Hindus, and demolished the Jawalamukhi temple of Nagarkot and also destroyed the temples of Mathura. He was the greatest ruler of Lodi dynasty and ruled for twenty-nine years full of glory as well as distinction.

After that his son Ibrahim Lodi (1517-26) son of Sikander Lodi last Sultan of Delhi came to power. He asserted absolute power of Sultan as a result some nobles turned against him. The power of Rana growing in Malwa and due to extension of his power in Agra and Bayana province made a bone of contention between Lodhi and Mewar. Ibrahim fought a battle near Gwalior against Rana in 1517-18, he injured Rana Sanga but was defeated, again in 1518-19 he was defeated near Dholpur. Hence, he failed to conquer Mewar.

The Daulat Khan Lodi governor of Punjab made a conspiracy against Ibrahim, he invited Babur to overthrow Ibrahim, Babur accepted the opportunity and defeated Ibrahim Lodi in 1526 AD in the battle of Panipat. It was no doubt he was capable and laborious but he was quick tempered and failed to gain the sentiments of others, it was the reason for his defeat.

As we know that time never remains the same, it changes according to demand and situation so, Sultanate rule collapsed and a new dynasty came to power known as Mughal dynasty.

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