



AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SULTANATE RULED PERIOD AND THEIR ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The rulers who ruled substantial parts of the North India between AD1200 to AD1526 were termed as Sultans and the period of their rule as the Delhi Sultanate. These rulers were of Turkish and Afghan origin. They established their rule in India after defeating the Indian ruling dynasties which were mainly Rajputs in northern India. The main ruler who was overthrown by the invading Turk Muhammad Ghori from Delhi was Prithvi Raj Chauhan. These Sultans ruled for more than 300 years (from around AD 1206 to AD 1526). The last of the Delhi Sultan, Ibrahim Lodi was defeated by the Mughals under the leadership of Babur in AD1526 who established the Mughal Empire in India. The Delhi Sultanate comprises multiple dynasties that ruled over northern India in the medieval period. The Delhi Sultanate was an Islamic empire based in Delhi that stretched over large parts of the Indian subcontinent for 320 years (1206–1526). Five dynasties ruled over the Delhi Sultanate sequentially: the Mamluk dynasty (1206–1290), the Khalji dynasty (1290–1320), the Tughlaq dynasty (1320–1414), the Sayyid dynasty (1414–1451), and the Lodi dynasty (1451–1526). It covered large swathes of territory in modern-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh as well as some parts of southern Nepal. This paper attempts to analyses and focused the period of various Sultans ruled in India as well as their contribution in reforms and administration patterns.

Keywords: Sultans, Medieval, Period, Administration, Empire, Reform, A.D., India etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many researchers often consider Hinduism as one of the most impactful religions in India's history. By that same token, many people frequently forget that from 1206 to 1857, the Indian

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subcontinent was dominated by vast and powerful Islamic dynasties established by Turkic migrants. But before the powerful Mughal Empire (1526-1827) could rise, the Sultanate of Delhi was tasked with defining the shape of Islamic rule in a warm land with a resilient population that even the Mongols had previously failed to conquer.

In Indian history, there are so many powerful dynasties and rulers who left their impact on Indian history. The Sultans of this time are also one of those powerful rulers who have ruled differently in their own ways. The administration process of the Delhi sultanate has such fascinating ways which they have followed. There were such personalities who have demonstrated their power of dominance with individual leadership. It has been seen that in Indian history the effects of such powerful Islam persons have created such unforgettable scenarios which still glitter in every history book of India. In this research paper, there are such brief descriptions of the level of Sultanate dynasties and their impacts on Indian politics.

The Delhi sultanate has five main dynasties that maintained the dominance years after the years the main and the major dynasties of Delhi Sultanate were

- Mamluk Dynasty
- Khilji Dynasty
- Tughlaq Dynasty
- Sayyid Dynasty
- Lodi Dynasty

The above-mentioned dynasties have ruled the territory with their own ideology which has both positive and negative aspects.

2. Literature of Review

The early writings in Persian on the history of Turks who came to India are traceable to 12th Century. As far as Delhi Sultanate is concerned we have a continuity of available texts in Persian till the end of the Sultanate (1526). Many of the authors were attached to the court as officials while a few were independent scholars not associated with any official position. In general, the available histories put forward the official version of events, rather than a critical evaluation of the policies and events.

It is rare that one comes across any critical reference to the reigning Sultan. Even the style is also generally eulogising or flattering to the Sultan under whose reign it is written. In most

cases, the authors borrowed freely from the earlier works to trace the earlier period. We have referred to the constraints faced by various scholars while discussing individual works.

Apart from historical texts a number of other Persian works are available for the period. Abdu'r Razzaq's Matla'us Sa'dain (travelogue), Tutsi's Siyasatnama (administration & polity), Fakhr-i Mudabbir's Adabu'l-Harb wa'as- Shuja'at (warfare), are a few important ones. A few Arabic works are also available for the period. Ibn Battuta (Rihla) and Shihab-al Din al-Umari (Masalik al-absar Mamalik al-Ansar) have provided excellent travel accounts. Here we will study the historiography for the whole Sultanate period in separate subsections

3. Objectives

Following are the main objectives of this study.

1. To understand the History of Indian Sultanate.
2. To understand the reform done by different sultans in India.
3. To understand the administrative patterns adopted by sultans.

4. Research methodology

The methodology followed in this examination isn't uni-dimensional. It is fairly a mix of the verifiable, hypothetical and viable parts of human rights. A chronicled approach has been followed for the investigation of the birthplace and development of human rights in Ancient India. In breaking down the legal procedure and rights followed by the lords is logical. This investigation tries to understand and assess the jobs, powers, and the functioning of Human Rights in antiquated India.

5. Data Collection

The data will be collected through various sources which are as follow:

- Vedas
- Buddhist literature
- Jain canonical works,
- the Astadhyayi of Panini,
- Mahabhasya of Patanjali



- Kalidasa.
- Ramayana and Mahabharata
- Puraṇas
- Books
- Journals
- Government Publications

6. Dynasties and rulers

Some of the major dynasties and rulers this period witnessed are listed below

Slave (Ghulam) or Mamluk Dynasty (1206-1290)

Qutb Ud din Aibak was the first sultan from the Mamluk Dynasty. The Slave dynasty ruled from c. 1206 – 1290 CE. It was also named the 'Mamluk' dynasty; the word Mamluk is an Arabic word that means "slave/owned". In fact, three dynasties were established during this period. They were –

1. Qutbi dynasty (c. 1206 – 1211 CE) – Its founder was Qutub-ud-din Aibak.
2. First Ilbari dynasty (c. 1211- 1266 CE) – Its founder was Iltumish.
3. Second Ilbari dynasty (c. 1266 – 1290 CE) – Its founder was Balban.

Qutub-ud-din Aibak (c. 1206 – 1210 CE)

Qutub-ud-din Aibak founded the Slave dynasty. He was a Turkish slave of Muhammad Ghori who played an important part in the expansion of the Turkish Sultanate in India after the Battle of Tarain. Muhammad Ghori made him the governor of his Indian possessions. He raised a standing army and established his hold over north India even during the lifetime of Ghori.

After the death of Muhammad Ghori (c. 1206 CE), Tajuddin Yalduz, the ruler of Ghazni claimed his rule over Delhi and the governor of Multan and Uchch, Nasiruddin Qabacha wanted independence. He also had to face many revolts from Rajputs and other Indian rulers. However, Aibak, by displaying his mighty power as well as other conciliatory measures, was

able to win over his enemies. He defeated Yalduz and severed all connections with Ghazni and thus founded the Slave dynasty as well as the Delhi Sultanate.

He was titled "Sultan" and he made Lahore his capital. He also started the construction of the Qutub Minar (first storey only) after the name of the famous Sufi saint Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar. It was later completed by Iltutmish. Aibak died suddenly while playing Chaugan (horse polo) in c. 1210 CE.

Aram Shah (c. 1210 CE)

Qutub-ud-din was succeeded by his son Aram Shah who was incapable as a ruler. He was opposed by the Turkish armies and his rule lasted for only eight months.

Iltutmish (c. 1210 – 1236 CE)

Iltutmish belonged to the Ilbari tribe and therefore, his dynasty was named the Ilbari dynasty. His half-brothers sold him as a slave to Aibak who made him his son-in-law by giving his daughter to him. Later Aibak appointed him as Iqtadar of Gwalior. In c.1211 CE, Iltutmish dethroned Aram Shah and became the Sultan with the name of Shamsuddin. He is regarded as the real consolidator of Turkish rule in India. During the first ten years of his reign, he mostly concentrated on securing his throne from his rivals. The commanders of Muhammad Ghori like Yalduz, Qabacha of Multan and Ali Mardan of Bengal and Bihar rose against him. Iltutmish defeated Yalduz in the battle of Tarain (c. 1215 CE) and also drove away Qabacha from Punjab.

In c. 1220 CE, the leader of the Mongols, Temujin, popularly known as Chengiz Khan, started his march towards Central Asia. He defeated Jalal-ud-din Mangabarni, the ruler of Khwarizm. Mangabarni escaped from the Mongols and sought asylum from Iltutmish. Iltutmish refused to provide him shelter in order to save his empire from the onslaught of the Mongols. This diplomatic policy of Iltutmish helped him to save his empire from the wrath of Chengiz Khan. Iltutmish brought Bengal and Bihar back into the Delhi Sultanate. He also suppressed the Rajput revolts and recovered Ranthambore in c. 1226 CE and by c. 1231 CE, Iltutmish established his control over Bayana, Mandor, Jalore and Gwalior. He led an expedition against the Chalukyas of Gujarat but that remained unsuccessful.

Ruknuddin Feruz Shah (c. 1236 CE)

He was the eldest son of Iltutmish who ascended the throne with the help of nobles. When the governor of Multan revolted, Ruknuddin Feroz Shah marched to suppress the revolt. Using this opportunity, Iltutmish's daughter Raziya with the help of the Amirs of Delhi seized the throne of the Delhi Sultanate.

Raziya Sultan (c. 1236 – 1239 CE)

Raziya Sultan was the first and only female ruler of medieval India's Sultanate period. He appointed an Abyssinian slave, Malik Jamal-ud-din Yaqut as master of the Royal horses (Amir-i-akhur). The recruitment of a few other non-Turks to important positions aroused resentment among the Turkish nobles. Raziya Sultan discarded the female apparel and held the court with her face uncovered which further created resentment. She even went hunting and led the army.

In c. 1240 CE, Altunia, the governor of Bhatinda (Sirhind) revolted against her. Raziya alongside Yaqut marched against Altunia, but on the way, Turkish followers of Altunia murdered Yaqut and took Raziya prisoner. In the meantime, the Turkish nobles put Bahram, another son of Iltutmish on the throne. However, Raziya won over her captor, Altunia and after marrying him, proceeded to Delhi. But she was defeated and killed on the way by Bahram Shah.

Bahram Shah (c. 1240 – 1242 CE)

The fall of Raziya Sultan paved the way for the ascendancy of 'the Forty'. During the reign of Bahram Shah, there continued the struggle for supremacy between Sultan and the nobles. The Turkish nobles supported Bahram Shah in the beginning but later became disordered and during this unrest, Bahram Shah was killed by his own army.

Alauddin Masud Shah (c. 1242 – 1246 CE)

He was the son of Ruknuddin Feroz Shah and nephew of Raziya Sultan. After the death of Bahram Shah, he was chosen as the next ruler. However, he was incompetent and incapable of handling the affairs in the government and was replaced by Nasiruddin Mahmud.

Nasiruddin Mahmud (c. 1246 – 1265 CE)

He was the grandson of Iltutmish who was young and inexperienced. He had ascended the throne with the help of Balban/Ulugh Khan, a member of Chahalgani (the Forty) who himself assumed the position of regent. He married his daughter to Nasiruddin and therefore, the real power lay in the hands of Balban. Balban was powerful in the administration but he had to face the intrigues of his rivals in the royal court. He overcame all the difficulties. In c. 1265 CE, Nasiruddin Mahmud died and according to some historians like Ibn Batuta and Isami, Balban poisoned him and ascended the throne.

Balban (c. 1266 – 1286 CE)



Balban's experience as a regent made him understand the problems of the Delhi Sultanate. He knew that the real threat to the monarchy was from the nobles called "The Forty". He, therefore, was sure that by enhancing the power and authority of the monarchy, he could solve the problem. According to Balban, the Sultan was God's shadow on earth, Zil-e-Ilahi and the recipient of divine grace, Nibyat-e-Khudai. Balban enhanced the power of the monarchy. He introduced rigorous court discipline and new customs like prostration (sajda) and kissing the Sultan's feet (paibos) to prove his superiority over the nobles. He introduced the Persian festival of Nauroz to impress the nobles and people with his wealth and power.

Balban was determined to break the power of 'The Forty'. He spared only the loyal nobles and eliminated all others by fair or foul means. Malik Baqbaq, the governor of Badaun, was publicly flogged for his cruelty towards his servants. Haybat Khan, the governor of Oudh was punished for killing a man who was drunk. The governor of Bhatinda, Sher Khan was poisoned. He established a separate military department, Diwan-e-arz and reorganised the army. He deployed the army in different parts of his country to suppress the rebellious elements. Balban paid more attention to restore law and order instead of expanding his kingdom. Balban took stern action against the Mewatis and prevented such robberies. Robbers were mercilessly pursued and sentenced to death, as a result of which the roads became safe for travel.

In c. 1279 CE, Tughril Khan, the governor of Bengal revolted against Balban. Balban sent his forces to Bengal and Tughril Khan was beheaded. Balban appointed his son Bughra Khan as the governor of Bengal. In the northwest, the Mongols reappeared and Balban sent his son Prince Mahmud against them. But the prince was killed in the battle and it was a moral blow to Balban. Balban died in c. 1287 CE. He was one of the main architects of the Delhi Sultanate. However, he could not fully safeguard India from the Mongol invasion.

Kaiqubad (c. 1287 – 1290 CE)

Kaiqubad was the grandson of Balban and was made the Sultan of Delhi by the nobles. He was soon replaced by his son, Kaimur. In c. 1290 CE, Feroz, the Ariz-e-Mumalik (the minister of war) murdered Kaimur and captured the throne. He took the title of Jalal-ud-din Khalji and established the Khalji dynasty.

Tughluq Dynasty (c. 1320 – 1414 CE)

This dynasty is also called Qaraunah Turks, as the father of Ghazi Malik was a Qaraunah Turk in origin.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq/Ghazi Malik (c. 1320 – 1325 CE)

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Founder of the Tughlaq dynasty. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq laid the foundation for Tughlaqabad (a strong fort) near Delhi. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq sent his son Jauna Khan/Muhammad bin Tughlaq against Warangal (Kakatiyas) and Madurai (Pandyas).

His relationship with the Sufi saint Sheikh Nizam ud din Aulia was not cordial.. It is believed that Jauna Khan treacherously killed his father and ascended the throne with the title Muhammad bin Tughlaq in c. 1325 CE.

Muhammad Bin Tughlaq/Jauna Khan (c. 1325 – 1351 CE)

He was a very attractive character in the history of medieval times because of his ambitious schemes and novel experiments. However, his novel experiments and enterprises failed miserably as they were far ahead of their time. He introduced many reforms:

1.Transfer of Capital – Muhammad bin Tughlaq wanted to shift his capital from Delhi to Devagiri so that he might be able to control south India better. He forcibly moved the entire population to the new capital, Devagiri which was renamed as Daulatabad. After two years, the Sultan abandoned Daulatabad and shifted back to Delhi due to the scarcity of water supply in Daulatabad. The distance between the two places was more than 1500 kilometres and many people died during the rigorous journey in summer.

2.Token Currency – In c. 1329 CE, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq introduced a token currency, made of copper to replace gold and silver coins. It was modelled based on the Chinese example (Kublai Khan issued paper money in China). Very few people exchanged gold/silver for copper and the tokens were easy to forge which led to heavy losses. Later on, Muhammad bin Tughlaq repealed his verdict and all coins were redeemed in gold/silver, making the treasury empty.

3.Taxation in Doab – The failure of the above two experiments resulted in a huge loss of money. In order to improve the financial condition, Muhammad bin Tughlaq increased the land revenue on the farmers of the doab land between the Ganga and Yamuna rivers. It was an excessive and arbitrary step on the farmers. A severe famine struck the region at that time which made the farmers revolt. However, the harsh steps taken by Muhammad bin Tughlaq crushed the revolt.

4.Agricultural Reforms – He launched a scheme by which takkavi loans (loans for cultivation) were given to the farmers to buy seeds and to extend cultivation. He set up a separate department for agriculture, Diwan-i-amir-Kohi. A model farm under the state was created in an area of 64 square miles for which the government spent around seventy lakh tankas. This experiment was further continued by Firoz Tughlaq.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq died in c.1351 CE due to the worsening of his health condition. According to Baduani, the Sultan was freed from his people and the people from the Sultan. According to Barani, Muhammad bin Tughlaq was a mixture of opposites. His reign marked the beginning of the process of its decline.

Firoz Shah Tughlaq (c. 1351 – 1388 CE): After the death of Muhammad bin Tughlaq in c.1351 CE, Firoz Shah Tughlaq was chosen as the Sultan by the nobles. He appointed Khan-i-Jahan Maqbal, a Telugu Brahmin convert as wazir (Prime Minister). He helped the Sultan in his administration and maintained the prestige of the Sultanate during this period.

Military Campaigns : After ascending the throne, he focussed on strengthening his position over north India instead of claiming his authority over south India and Deccan. He led two expeditions to Bengal which were unsuccessful and as a result, Bengal became free from the control of the Delhi Sultanate.

Firoz Shah Tughlaq also attacked Jainagar (modern Orissa) and collected large booty from the temples (such as the Puri Jagannath temple). He also marched against Nagarkot and made its ruler pay tributes. During this campaign, Firoz Shah collected 1300 Sanskrit manuscripts from the Jwalamukhi temple library and Arizuddin Khan translated these into the Persian language. Firoz Shah then marched against Thatta (Sindh region) and crushed a rebellion there.

Administrative Reforms

1. He ran his administration in accordance with the advice of the ulemas. He pleased the nobles and assured hereditary succession to their properties. Thus, the iqta system was revived and was also made hereditary.
2. He levied taxes as per the teachings of Islam. Jiziya was imposed on non-Muslims. The special tax on 28 items was discarded by him since they were against the laws of Islam. He showed intolerance towards Shia Muslims and Sufis. He regarded Hindus as second-grade citizens and in this respect, he was the precursor of Sikander Lodi and Aurangzeb.
3. He was the first sultan to impose an irrigation tax. But at the same time, he also built a number of irrigation canals and wells. The longest canal was about 200 km in length from Sutlej to Hansi. Another canal was between Yamuna and Hissar.
4. During his reign, there were around 1200 fruit gardens in and around Delhi generating more revenue.

5. He developed royal factories called karkhanas in which thousands of slaves were employed. He also increased the number of slaves by capturing the defeated soldiers and young persons. There were around one lakh eighty thousand slaves during his reign.
6. New towns (around 300) were built during his reign. The famous one being Firozabad near Red Fort (now called Firoz Shah Kotla). Monuments like Qutb Minar and Jama Masjid were repaired and Ashokan pillars from Meerut and Topara were brought to Delhi during his reign.
7. Diwan-i-Khairat, a new department was established to support orphans and widows. Free hospitals like Dar-ul-Shifa and marriage bureaus for poor Muslims were also established.
8. Firoz Shah Tughlaq died in c. 1388 CE and after that, the struggle for power between the Sultan and nobles started again. His successors (like Muhammad Khan, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq Shah II, Abu Bakr Shah, Nasiruddin Muhammad) had to face the rebellions of the slaves created by Firoz.

Sayyid Dynasty (c. 1414 – 1451 CE)

Khizr Khan (c. 1414 – 1421 CE): Before Timur left India, he appointed Khizr Khan as governor of Multan. He captured Delhi and founded the Sayyid dynasty in c. 1414 CE. He did not adopt the title of Sultan and was content with Rayat-i-Ala. He is considered to be an important ruler of the Sayyid dynasty. He tried to consolidate the Delhi Sultanate but in vain. He died in c. 1421 CE.

Mubarak Shah (c. 1421 – 1433 CE): Khizr Khan was succeeded by his son Mubarak Shah.

Muhammad Shah (c. 1434 – 1443 CE): Muhammad Shah who succeeded Mubarak Shah was always busy acting against conspirators and gradually lost control over his nobles. Muhammad Shah died in c. 1445 CE and was succeeded by his son Alam Shah.

Alam Shah (c. 1445 – 1451 CE): He was the weakest amongst all Sayyid princes and proved to be incompetent. His wazir, Hamid Khan invited Bahlul Lodhi to take charge of the army. Alam Shah realised that it would be difficult to continue as a ruler, so he retired to Badaun.

Lodi Dynasty (c. 1451 – 1526 CE)

The Lodhis/Lodis were the last ruling dynasty of the Sultanate period and the first to be headed by the Afghans, who ruled over Sirhind when the Sayyids ruled in India.

Bahlol Lodhi (c. 1451 – 1489 CE): He founded the Lodhi dynasty. In c. 1476 CE, he defeated the sultan of Jaunpur and annexed it to Delhi Sultanate. He also brought the ruler of Kalpi and Dholpur under the suzerainty of Delhi. He annexed the Sharqui dynasty and introduced Bahlol copper coins. He died in c. 1489 CE and was succeeded by his son, Sikander Lodhi.

Sikander Lodhi (c. 1489 – 1517 CE): He was the greatest of the three Lodhi sovereigns. He brought the whole of Bihar under his control and many Rajput chiefs were defeated. He attacked Bengal and forced its ruler to conclude a treaty with him and extended his kingdom from Punjab to Bihar. He was a good administrator, he built roads and many irrigation facilities were provided for the benefit of the peasantry.

Ibrahim Lodhi (c. 1517 – 1526 CE): Sikander Lodhi was succeeded by his eldest son, Ibrahim Lodhi who was an arrogant and repressive ruler. He insulted his nobles in the court and the ones who revolted were put to death. Daulat Khan Lodhi, the governor of Punjab was humiliated and disaffection between king and courtier became very common during his reign. Greatly displeased by the attitude of Ibrahim Lodhi, Daulat Khan Lodhi invited Babur to invade India. Babur marched against Delhi, defeated and killed Ibrahim Lodhi in the 1st Battle of Panipat in c. 1526 CE. The Afghan kingdom thus lasted for only seventy-five years.

7. Conclusion

The period from 1206 A.D. to 1526 A.D. came to be known as the Delhi Sultanate period. This period witnessed many dynasties and various rulers. The paper described the condition of India in the Medieval India-Sultanate period. Delhi can be considered as the centre of India from where all the powerful rulers ruled the country, India. Mamluks were one of the earliest rulers of India who ruled the country by making Delhi the centre which helped him to rule the country peacefully and efficiently. The role of Alauddin khilji in the historical context of the country India is perfectly mentioned throughout the research paper.

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