UNIT 4: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN MEDIEVAL INDIA-I

UNIT STRUCTURE

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- explain the political developments of the Slave , Khaljis,
- discuss Tughlaqs, Sayyids, Lodi Dynasties of the Delhi Sultanate.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

The year 1206 A.D. constitutes an important landmark in the history of India. In that year Qutub-ud-din Aibak laid the foundations of the Delhi Sultanate which ruled over three centuries and was shared by five dynasties in succession. These five dynasties were: the **Slave rulers**(1206-1290), the **Khaljis**(1290-1320), the **Tughlaqs**(1320-1413), the **Sayyids** and **Lodis**(1413-1526). In this unit we will discuss all the political development of medieval Indian history under the Delhi Sultanates.

4.3 THE DELHI SULTANATE

4.3.1 The Slave rulers (1206-1290): The rulers who ruled Delhi between the period 1206-1290 A.D. are popularly known as slave dynasty. Do you know why this dynasty is known as Slave dynasty? It is interesting that many of the important rulers of this dynasty had originally been slaves and hence the dynasty is known as that of slave dynasty. But neither of them belonged to one dynasty. Qutub-ud-Din-Aibak was the founder of Slave dynasty.

Qutub-ud-Din-Aibak, a native of Turkestan, began his career as the slave of Muhammad Ghori. It was his generalship that largely contributed to the success of his master's Indian campaign. After the second battle of Tarain (1193) Muhammad Ghori returned to Ghazni, leaving the fate of the Indian campaigns in the hands of Qutub-ud-Din. In 1206 Muhammad Ghori died without leaving a male issue. In the same year Qutub-ud-Din received the title of Sultan of Delhi from Sultan Giyasuddin Muhammad of Ghur. From this time he may be reckoned as the first Sultan of Delhi. He earned the title of Lakh Basksh(giver of lakhs). He was a pious Muslim. He built two great Masques, one at Delhi known as Quwat-ul-Islam and another at Ajmer called Adhai din ka jhopra. He also began the construction of the celebrated Qutub Minar in Delhi in 1199 A.D. But he could not complete it as he died in 1210 A.D. at Lahore.

Iltutmish was the son-in-law of Qutub-ud-din. His accession was opposed by the Turkish nobles. Iltutmish was a capable ruler. He was able to subdue the rebellion in Bengal. He won back Gwalior, Ajmer, Bayana and Nagore. He also sent an expedition against Ranthambhor and Jalore. He attacked and occupied Mandor in 1226A.D. The first significant Turkish penetration into Malwa took place in the reign of Iltutmish. In 1234 he plundered the cities of Bhilsa and Ujjain. In 1229 he received the Caliph's confirmation of the royal title. It was the recognition of the independent status of the Sultanate of Delhi.

Iltutmish introduced the Silver *Tanka* and the copper *Jittal*-two basic coins of the Sultanate period. He issued coins and read *Khutba* in his name. He introduced the *Iqta* system. Iltutmish completed the Qutub Minar of Delhi. He died in 1236 A.D. Iltutmish consolidated the conquest

of Muhammad of Ghur.

LET US KNOW



The *Iqtadars* retained a part of the revenue from the *Iqta* rendering military service to the Sultan. Most of the *Iqtadars* were put in charge of the law and order in their *Iqta*. They had to send troops to the Sultan in times of need.

Before his death Iltutmish nominated his daughter as his successor. Once Razia ascended the throne, she cast off the seclusion of the *harem*. She administered justice in open court and personally led the army against rebellious chiefs. She showed undue preference to an Abyssinian official named Jalal-ud-din Yakut. This was not liked by the Chahalganis. Razia's primary aim was to make the Turkish nobles subservient to the throne. A strong party of nobles in the provinces banded against her. Although Razia fought valiantly, she was defeated and was killed by the robbers in a jungle. She ruled for a period of three and a half years.



Chahalgani

The powerful Turkish nobles were known as Chahalganis of forty.

Balaban was the de-facto ruler. With his accession the era of strong centralized government began. He wanted to strengthen the authority of Sultan and to curtail the power of the Chahalgani. He realized the need to increase the power and prestige of the Sultan. He declared that he was a descendent of the legendary Iranian king Afrasiyab. He modeled his court after that of Persian manners and introduced Persian etiquettes like *Paibos* (prostration) and *Sijda* (kissing of the monarch's feet). He introduced the Persian *Nauroz* (new year festively) ceremony in his court.

The credit of organizing a separate department of army (Diwan-i-Arz) goes to Balban. Balban also appointed *Barids* or spies in every department. Balban administered justice with extreme impartiality.

Balban did not undertake any fresh conquest mainly because of the Mongol menace. In Bengal, Balban's own slave Tughril Khan revolted in 1279. However Tughril was ultimately captured by Balban's army.

During the reign of Balban, Delhi became unsafe with the operation

of robbers and dacoits. The Mewatis plundered the outskirt of Delhi. Balban adopted the policy of blood and iron and mercilessly subdued them.

Balban had to face a Mongol attack on 1285A.D. Prince Muhammad, the eldest son of Balban was sent to repulse the attack. But he was killed in the battlefield. Balban could not recover from the tragedy and died in 1286 A.D.

4.3.2 THE KHALJIS (1290-1320)

After the death of Balban in 1286 there was confusion in Delhi for some time. A group of Khalji nobles led by Jalaluddin Khalji overthrew the incompetent successors of Balban. The Khaljis were probably of Turkish origin. But the contemporary author Barani describes the Khaljis as different from the Turks.

Jalaluddin ascended the throne in 1290, at the ripe age of seventy years. He ruled only for a brief period of six years. Jalaluddin tried to mitigate some of the harsh aspects of Balban's rule. The most important event of Jalaluddin's reign was a daring raid into Deccan, undertaken by his nephew and son-in-law Alauddin. Alauddin proceeded southward and marched through Berar and Khandesh. He defeated Raja Ramachandra of Devagiri and compelled him to surrender and returned with immense booty. It is believed that Jalaluddin was murdered by a planed action by Alauddin in 1296 A.D.

Alauddin came to power by treacherously murdering his uncle Jalaluddin Khalji. His rule witnessed the expansion of the Muslim rule in terms of large territorial conquests. Alauddin undertook the first expedition to Gujarat in 1297A.D which gave him immense booty. Alauddin personally invaded Mewar, besieged Chittore and captured the fort in 1303. After occupation of the two strong forts in Rajasthan-Ranthambhor and Chittore, Alauddin turned his attention towards Malwa. Central India became a part of the Sultanate. Alauddin sent an expedition against Rai Ramachandra, the ruler of Devagiri who had stopped paying tribute. The command of the Army was entrusted to Alauddin's slave Malik Kafur.

Ramachandra was defeated but was restored his territory. Between 1309 and 1311 Malik Kafur led two campaigns in South India –one against Warangal and the other against Dwar Samudra. Kafur was able to force the rulers of Warangal and Dwar Samudra to sue for peace.

Alauddin was an ambitious ruler. He established a strict system of administration. Alauddin wanted to strengthen the position of Sultan by some tough measures. He took four important measures like forbidding the nobles to visit each other, prohibition of drinking parties, strict vigilance through an efficient espionage system, confiscation of all lands given to the chiefs and the religious endowments.

He was a patron of literature. Both Amir Khusrau and Mir Hasan Dalvi- two well known poets enjoyed his patronage. He was the builder of a new city called Siri. He also built Alai Darwaza, Hazar Satun(the palace of thousand pillars) etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q 1: Who founded the Slave dynasty?

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Q 2: Who built the city of Siri?

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Q 3: In which year Alauddin Khalji ascended the throne?

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4.3.3 THE TUGHLAQS (1320-1412)

The last Khalji ruler Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah Khalji was murdered by Ghazi Malik who ascended the throne as Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq in 1320A.D. It is stated by some writers that the Tughlaqs belonged to the race of Qarauna Turks and were a people of mixed breed.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq laid the foundation of the Tughlaq dynasty. Ghiyasuddin was a careful administrator. Agriculture was encouraged during his reign. Canals were excavated for irrigation. His twin object was to increase land under cultivation and to improve economic condition

of the cultivators.

He also pursued a policy of annexation. In 1321 A.D. he sent his son Jauna khan to suppress Prataparudra Deva, the ruler of Warangal. Ultimately Prataparudra Deva surrendered and agreed to pay an annual tribute. Telengana was annexed to the Delhi Sultanate. Jauna khan next attacked Orissa (Jajnagar). In 1323 Ghiyasuddin marched to Bengal. The ruler of Bengal was defeated. On his way back from Bengal Ghiyasuddin defeated the Raja of Tirhut. East and south Bengal was annexed to the Sultanate.

Jauna Khan succeeded his father in 1325A.D. under the name of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. He was a bold experimenter but was also hasty and impatient.

His first administrative measure was to enhance land tax in the doab. It led to wide spread discontent as it was introduced at a time when entire region was in the grip of a severe famine due to failure of rain. The tax collectors collected taxes by oppression. It resulted in extensive revolts.

His most controversial step was the transfer of capital from Delhi to Deogiri, apparently to control south India better. However, the transfer failed. The journey was too long and led to discontent. Daulatabad was abandoned after a couple of years as it was found difficult to control north India from there.

Another of his novel experiment was introduction of the token currency of bronze coins in 1329. The coin was to have the same value as the silver Tanka. The traders as well as the common people found it difficult to accept it. The government could not prevent the people from forging new coins. Finally Muhammad Tughlaq withdrew the token currency. Muhammad Tughlaq carried out many measures for the improvement of the revenue administration. All provincial governors were asked to submit the reports of income and expenditure to the centre. He established a separate department of agriculture called Diwan-i-kohi. A special scheme was extended to improve cultivation in Doab.

After the death of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq his cousin Firuz Shah

Tughlaq ascended the throne of Delhi. He overtook the administration in a chaotic condition. Firuz primarily paid his attention to domestic affairs. He tried to please the nobles. He also worked towards winning over the confidence of the Ulemas. He took a number of humanitarian measures. He banned inhuman punishments. He set up hospitals for free treatment of the poor. Agriculture was well served by the excavation of the four important canals. The Karkhanas(factories) were developed rapidly by Firuz through the newly created *Diwan-i-bandagani-* (department of slaves).

Firuz Shah Tughlaq was a great builder. He was the founder of towns like Jaunpur,Firozabad, Fatehpur and Hissar-Firuza.

LET US KNOW



During the Tughlaq period Timur invaded India. He was a terrible military leader of Samarkand. Timur's invasion was a death blow to the Delhi Sultanate.

4.3.4 THE SAIYYDS AND THE LODIS

- **The Saiyyd dynaty(1414-1450) :** After the Timurid invasion, the Saiyyd dynasty arose in Delhi. There were only four kings of this dynasty. The rule of the dynasty was only confined to Delhi and some neighboring districts.
- **The Lodi dynasty :** The Lodis dominated the upper Ganga valley and the Panjab from the middle of the fifteenth century. The earlier rulers of Delhi were Turks. But the Lodis were Afghan. With the end of Saiyyd dynasty, Bahalul Lodi founded the Lodi dynasty in 1451.

  Sikandar Lodi was the most important ruler of the Lodi dynasty. He was also an able administrator. He laid great emphasis on justice. He also took keen interest in the development agriculture. He regularly examined the price schedules of the markets. He established a new measurement of a yard called *gazz-i-Sikandari*. He reimposed Jizia on the Hindus. He extended his dominions by conquering Dholpur and Gwalior.



Jiziya : Jiziya is a tax levied on Hindu subjects. This was really a tax in lieu of military service. Women and children were exempted from it. At first Jizya was collected along with land revenue. But Firuz Shah made Jizyah a separate tax.

In 1517 Sikandar Lodi was succeeded by his son Ibrahim Lodi. He wanted to make the monarchy the supreme factor in the state. The result was a bitter struggle between Ibrahim Lodi and his nobles. However, he was a tactless ruler. The breakdown of administration and widespread corruption accelerated the Lodi Rule. The discontent of the nobles gradually reached its climax. Daulat Khan Lodi, the governor of Panjab, invited Babur to invade India. Ibrahim Lodi was defeated and killed in the first battle of Panipath(1526) and the foundation of Mughal Empire was laid.



Activity 4.1

Prepare a note on the first battle of Panipath

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer the following questions:

Q 4: Who transferred the capital from Delhi to Devagiri?

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Q 5: Who laid the foundation of Tughlaq dynasty?

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Q 6: Who was the most important ruler of the Lodis??

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4.4 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, we have learnt about–

- the establishment of Delhi Sultanate at the throne of Delhi.

- a political vacuum was created with the disintegration of the Delhi Sultanate.



4.5 FURTHER READING

1) Majumdar, R.C., Raychaudhuri, H.C., Datta, K. (1986). *An Advanced History of India.* New Delhi, Macmillan India Ltd.
2) Maiti, P.(2001): *Studies in Ancient India,* Kolkata, Shreedhar Prakashani
3) Raychaudhuri, H.C. (1972). *Political History of India.* Calcutta, University of Kolkata.
4) Sharma, L.P. (1981). *Ancient History of India (pre-historic Age to 1200 A.D.).* New Delhi, Vikas Publication House Pvt. Ltd.
5) Tripathi, Ramashankar (1999). *History of Ancient India.* Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd.



4.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to the question no1. Qutub-ud-Din-Aibak

Answer to the question no 2. Allaudin

Answer to the question no 3. 1296 A.D.

Answer to the question no 4. Muhammad bin Tughlaq.

Answer to the question no 5. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq

Answer to the question no 6. Sikandar Lodi



4.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question within 50 words)

Q.1: Who earned the title of Lakh Basksh?

Q.2: In which year the battle of Ghagra was fought?

Q.3: Who completed the Qutub Minar?.

Q.4: Which was the last ruling dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate?

Q.5: Name the dynasties constituted the Delhi Sultanate?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q.1: Write a short note on the Tughlaqs

Q.2: Mention the measures introduced by Alauddin Khalji to increase the power of the central authority of the Sultan.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in between 150-300 words)

Q.1: Which two experimental measures of Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq made him unpopular? Why did these experiments fail?

Q.2: Discuss the importance of Khaljis in the history of medieval India.

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