

TURKISH RULE IN INDIA :SHAMSHUDDIN ILTUTMISH (PART-3)

भारत में तुर्की शासन

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SHAMSHUDDIN ILTUTMISH

- **Estimate of Iltutmish**

Iltutmish was not a very good administrator; he created no civil institutions. His was a military dictatorship like that of Aibak but with the difference that all the power was concentrated in his own hands. Iltutmish laid the foundation of an absolute monarchy of the Turks in Northern India.

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He himself appointed central ministers and regional military governors; the *wazir* (prime minister), *sadr-i-jahan* (head of the ecclesiastical affairs) and the *chief qazi* held office during his pleasure, and were responsible to him directly. He did not allow the Turkish nobility to interfere in the state affairs beyond certain limits. The dissatisfied and disobedient *Muizzi* (nobles of Muhammad Ghor) or *Qutbi* (nobles of Qutubuddin Aibak) officers were gradually downgraded or eliminated.

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Iltutmish created an entirely new class of the ruling elite which comprised his own Turkish slave officers, headed by their forty powerful military leaders-nicknamed the *Chalisa (chihalgani or chehalgan)*. They held charge of the iqta, and wielded great influence at the court. Iltutmish secured a deed of investiture from the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mustansir Billah of Baghdad in February 1229, who bestowed the titles of the 'Sultan of Hindustan' and the 'deputy of the leader of the faithful' (*nasir amir ul momnin*). This gave Iltutmish legal claim over Delhi Sultanate as a distinct entity, independent of Ghazni.

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It also strengthened his position and ensured the succession of his descendants to the throne. All those who had previously labelled him as the usurper to the throne and cast accusations on his rule were silenced. Iltutmish was thus the first legal sovereign of the Indian Turks and real founder of the sultanate of Delhi. The investiture ceremony was celebrated in Delhi with great rejoicings.

Iltutmish reinforced the forces of law and order in the state, allowed the local administrative bodies to function as before and administered even-handed justice according to the Islamic standards of those days.

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He introduced a purely Arabic currency of gold and silver. Though orthodox Sunni Muslim and religious minded person, Iltutmish was not a fanatic.

He persecuted the Ismaili Shias of Delhi and his treatment towards the Hindus was harsh but not cruel. He had destroyed the Hindu temples at Bhilsa and Ujjain but he did not resort to idol breaking. He adopted a policy of moderation towards the Hindus as a measure of political expediency and tried to win their cooperation in running the administration.

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Iltutmish was a patron of art and learning. All scholars, members of the ruling families and capable persons who fled from Central Asia and other Islamic states because of Mongol invasions were provided shelter at the court of Iltutmish. Amir Khusrau's father was one of them. The contemporary scholars such as Minhaj-us-Siraj and Taj-ud-din adorned his court. Iltutmish extended liberal patronage to them and enriched the cultural life of the ruling elite. He completed the construction of Qutub Minar and enjoyed his association with the Sufi saints of the day. Iltutmish was a courageous soldier and an experienced military commander.

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He was a foresighted man. He unified the Turkish leadership under one central authority and saved the infant Turkish kingdom from disintegration. He protected it from the fury of the Mongols and gave a legal and independent status to it in the comity of the Islamic states. He was an empire-builder who endeavored to accomplish the unfinished task of Qutubuddin Aibak in laying the foundations of the Delhi Sultanate.

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