

TURKISH RULE IN INDIA : RAZIA SULTAN

(भारत में तुर्की शासन)

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Dr. MD. NEYAZ HUSSAIN
PROFESSOR & HOD
PG DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
M.B.R.R.V.PRASAD SINGH COLLEGE, VKSU,
ARA (BIHAR)

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Razia Sultan (1236-1240)

- After the death of Iltutmish, conflict arose between the Sultan and his slave nobles (the Forty) for power, which culminated in the murder of four sultans and the fifth, reduced to the position of a puppet of Balban. The nobles were divided into two groups - the Turkish nobles and the *Taziqs*. The former called themselves as *Sultani* and formed a group of Forty called *Turkan-i-chihalgani*. They first eliminated the rivals, the *Taziqs* and tried to capture power from the weak successors of Iltutmish.

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The latter's son Rukn-ud-din Firuz was imprisoned and killed and in his place Raziya, his sister was enthroned. But she soon came into conflict with her Turkish nobles because she wanted to assert her power. The governors of Badaun, Multan, Lahore marched towards Delhi and besieged it. But she acted diplomatically. She sowed the seeds of dissension among the rivals and broke the confederacy. She concentrated power in her own hands, made fresh appointments, raised her loyal nobles to higher posts and even donned the male attire.

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She left the purdah and went for hunting. But the *Chalisa* could not put up with her overbearing attitude and independence and so conspired against her. Kabir Khan, the Governor of Lahore, revolted in 1241 . Soon Malik Altunia, the governor of Bhatinda, revolted. When Raziya was in the thick of her fight with Bhatinda, the nobles conspired against her and imprisoned her and raised her brother, Bahram, to the throne. Now Malik Altunia of Bhatinda came to her rescue, got her released and married her. They together marched to Delhi but were defeated and forced to flee. Later, they were killed in 1240.

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Some scholars think that Raziya's greatest enemy was her sex. Iltutmish, who nominated her as his successor overlooking the claims of his grown-up sons, soon changed his idea of making her the Sultan. It is quite probable that he came to understand that the people were not in favour of saddling a woman with administrative responsibilities. This is further strengthened by the fact that there was no rebellion in her favour when her brother, Rukn-ud-din, succeeded Iltutmish as Sultan. Raziya herself understood the limitations imposed on her by her sex while discharging her governmental duties.

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After becoming the Sultan, Raziya found that the purdah system prevented her from transacting governmental functions freely. The curtain hung between her and the members of the court, stood in the way of her direct participation in administrative work. So she started dressing herself as a man and publicly appeared in the court. Seated on elephant back, she rode along the streets of Delhi. She was lifted to the back of the horse by an Abyssinian slave named Jamaluddin Yaqut who was appointed by Raziya as *amir-i-akhur*. All these had irritated the feelings of the people. So they rose in revolt against her and overthrew her.

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However, this theory is not acceptable. There was no rule in those times that a woman should not rule the country. Women exercised governmental function in some of the Islamic countries of those times. The Islamic law did not oppose the rule of a woman. The real reason for her fall was the disappointment caused to the nobles by Raziya's intention to be the ruler not only in name but also in fact. The nobles placed her on throne thinking that she, being a woman, would assign all powers to them. But when she tried to assert her power, they revolted against her.

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The struggle between Raziya and the Turkish slave nobles was not so much a struggle between man and woman but a struggle for power.

After removing Raziya, the nobles placed Muizuddin Bahram Shah on the throne and later Alauddin Masud. Both were worthless and incompetent. During the six years of their rule, the country passed through a series of disorders and confusion. The Mongol invasions added to the miseries of Hindustan. The Mongols now entered into the heart of the Punjab and captured Lahore. They even marched upto Uchh.

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In 1246 , the crown passed into the hands of Nasiruddin Mahmud. Pious as he was, he spent his leisure hours in copying the Quran. A great patron of learning, he gave a high post to Minhaj-us-Siraj, the author of the historical work, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* which was dedicated to Nasiruddin Mahmud. But lacking in interest for administration he entrusted all powers to Ghiyasuddin Balban, his minister and father-in-law. When Nasiruddin died in 1266 without leaving a male heir, Balban ascended the throne with the help of the nobles. Thus came to an end the dynasty of Iltutmish.