

## **ELEMENT OF MERIT IN RECRUITMENT OF THE HIGH OFFICIALS UNDER KHALJI DYNASTY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Khaljis who themselves had been denied high posts on the coarseness of their habits, opened the doors of higher government posts, unlike the predecessors, to all without distinction of race, birth and even creed in some cases. Every person could rise in status and position according to his abilities. With this novelty in state affairs, the rulers not only subdued the accursed Mongols, but also earned unwavering loyalty of the officials. This paper mainly draws upon Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi and Tabaqat-i-Nasiri.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Khaljis were known for their bravery and physical strength, but they were not given high posts by the Turks during the early years of their rule in India. They were looked down upon by the Turkish lords for the coarseness of their habits. On the conquest of Bihar and Bengal by Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji, the Khaljis gathered in those parts in large numbers and carved out a semi-independent kingdom for themselves. The Khalji rulers of Bengal and Bihar remained under the suzerainty of the Sultan of Delhi until the death of Sultan Qutb-ud-Din Aibek. After that Ali Mardan Khalji withdrew his allegiance and cut off all relations with the Delhi Sultanate. His example was followed by Ghiyath-ud-Din Khalji, an exceptionally able and generous ruler who conferred numberless blessings upon the people. But the Turks were too jealous of their power to leave them uncrushed. Once secure on his throne, Sultan Iltutmish marched towards Lakhnauti against Ghiyasud-Din Khalji in 622 AH. The latter was compelled to conclude a peace treaty and to pay a large tribute. But as soon as the Delhi army returned, Ghiyasud-Din again assumed independence, and also turned out the Turkish governor from Bihar. During the post-Iltutmish period, the forty Turkish families became so powerful that they reduced the Sultan to the position of a mere figure-head on the throne and divided the whole kingdom among themselves. Each of them considered himself very important and did

not like to respect the others. However, with the accession of Balban to the throne, the Khalji nobles began to rise in prominence.

During the times of Qutb-ud-Din Aibek and Iltutmish the only criterion of testing the abilities of the candidates for the important military as well as administrative posts was the pure Turkish origin. The Turks enjoyed this monopoly till the accession of Sultan Balban. Balban himself was a great faddist by birth, but he favoured the non-Turkish nobles also. Even Kotwal Biranjtan and Hatiya Payak, the famous wrestlers of his court, seem to have belonged to noble Hindu houses. They were granted quite a good amount of money for their maintenance.

During Khalji rule, the higher government posts were opened to all, irrespective of race, birth and also creed to some extent. Now the recruitment of the official class was not based on the principle of noble birth but on the 'survival of the fittest'. The regard for noble birth entirely disappeared. Every person could rise in status and position according to his abilities.

#### **THE COMPOSITION OF THE KHALJI NOBILITY**

It was during this period that persons who could influence the Sultan by their abilities could be taken in the official hierarchy. It is also noteworthy that the office of Naib-i-Malik was conferred on Malik Qutb-ud-Din Alvi, who did not belong to the tribe of the reigning dynasty. Likewise, Maulana Sifaj-ud-Din Savi, the poet of Samana, was appointed the Nadim-i-Khas (associate). A person of the Mandahar tribe (Hindu) was appointed the Wakil-i-Dar on a handsome salary of one lac jitals for the bravery which he had shown on the battlefield against the Sultan while the latter was the Muqta of Samma. Malik Sad-ud-Din Mantaqi was made a high noble, though he was only a qalandar. The hated Mongols, who were regarded not only as thoroughly un-refined but also the great enemies of Islam, were induced after their defeat to accept Islam and enter the royal service. Barani writes: "The advanced guard of the Sultan emerged successful and many of the Mughals were put to the sword. One or two Amir-i-Hazara and a few Amir-i-Sadah were made prisoners and brought before the throne" (Barani 2006).

After that the Sultan called 'Abdullah', the grandson of Halaku, his son, and the latter called the Sultan his father and thus peace was established. Though Abdullah returned, Alghu, the grandson of Changez Khan, stayed in the Sultan's service with his followers. The

Sultan gave him his daughter in marriage and also honoured the other Mongols with *iqtas* and ranks. They were called neo-Muslims and their settlements near Kailughari and Ghiyaspur were named Mughalpur.

#### **SULTAN JALAL-UD-DIN KHALJI'S POLICY TOWARDS THE NOBILITY**

Sultan Jalal-ud-Din was very kind and generous towards his nobles. Barani says: "Neither during the tenure of his *malikship* nor under his kingship he punished took away *Iqta* or dismissed anyone of those whom he had patronized and exalted".

His mildness always governed his anger. On his accession the Sultan was an old man of seventy and had already developed aversion to bloodshed, war and cruelty. He used to hold convivial meetings to which all the leading nobles, Malik Taj-ud-Din Kuchi, Malik Izz-ud-Din Ghori, Malik Firoz, Malik Nusrat Sabah, Malik Ahmad Chap, Malik Kamal-ud-Din Abul Maali, Malik Nasir-ud-Din Kuhrami, Malik Sad-ud-Din Mantaqi, Taj-ud-Din Iraqi, Amir Khusrau, Mu'd Jarjami, and Hamid Raja, who were known for their culture and good manners, were invited. The result was that the nobles ceased to fear the Sultan. Barani says that the authority of Sultan Ala-ud-Din was in a way forced on people because they did not consider the old peace-loving Sultan worthy of sovereignty. The Sultan became so kindhearted that he did not punish his nobles even when they spoke ill of him. If he became angry with his nobles for their remarks or behaviour against him, he said to them: "You do not fear me and so go on talking nonsense. Why do you not fear Arkali Khan, my second son, who is so hot-tempered? I do not know what he will do to you".

In short, the Sultan never lost temper to shed human blood for petty matters. Though he was an experienced military general and had grown old in fighting the battles against the 'accursed Mongols', he raised the siege of the fort of Ranthambore (in 1290 AD) because of the fear that Muslims would be killed in the conflict. Whenever asked by Ahmad Chap, the Naib-i-Hajib, to be strict in handling the state affairs, the Sultan said: "If kingship means killing, suppression and destruction, I am not capable of this and I do not like it".

It is also to be noted that the Sultan could pardon his nobles who spoke ill of him while drunk but not those who actually hatched a conspiracy against his life. Sidi Maula and his companions were destroyed for conspiring against the life of the Sultan.

But the crafty suggestions of the Kara rebels (who supported Malik Chhaju) succeeded in instigating Alaud-Din Khalji to make a bid for the throne of Delhi. Therefore, after the conquest of Deogir, the first thing that Alaud-Din did was to murder his affectionate uncle and father-in-law, Sultan Jalal-ud-Din Khalji.

#### **SULTAN ALAUD-DIN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS NOBILITY**

With the accession of Sultan Alaud-Din Khalji, the law of the 'survival of the fittest' triumphed. It was during this reign that even the nominal regard for the 'Shariat' (Islamic law) was cast aside. The Sultan is reported to have remarked: "Sovereignty and government are a different thing from religion and 'shariat'. The affairs of government concern the king and those of religion and 'shariat' concern the Qazis and Muftis".

It was also Sultan Alaud-Din Khalji who ventured to throw overboard the fiction of the suzerainty of the Abbaside Caliphate. He styled himself as the caliph of God on the earth. The secular view of the Sultan about sovereignty also influenced his policy with regard to the composition and organization of the high officials.

Sultan Alaud-Din's nobility was broad-based nobility. It included common people as well as men of noble birth. Even the fathers and grandfathers of the officers of Alaud-Din Khalji who belonged to the nobility had not held high offices during the period of the early Turkish Sultans, although they might have worked in the lower government posts, which were meant for non-nobles of good origin. But the Khalji Sultan had realized the fact that the services of all the competent persons, whether Hindus or Muslims, would be fruitful for the empire. Alaud-Din had already benefited from his composite nobility in his campaigns against the Rajas of Bhilsa and Deogiri during the reign of Sultan Jalal-ud-Din. Mahmud Salim, a 'low-born wicked person of Samana', and Ikhtiyar-ud-Din Hud, the murderers of Sultan Jalal-ud-Din, had been Alaud-Din's reliable officers during his governorship of Kara and Oudh. Similarly, most of the other nobles who had served the Sultan before his accession were of obscure reign. They were honoured with high titles and ranks after his succession. His four premier nobles, Ulugh Khan, Nusrat Khan, Zafar Khan and Alap Khan, were only warriors, known for their bravery, ruthlessness and highhandedness. They rose in social status by merit. Ulugh Khan was the younger brother of the Sultan, while Alap Khan's sister was the Sultan's favourite wife. Nusrat Khan and

Zafar Khan were warriors of non-descript origin. Their rise to high dignity and position may be attributed to the 'Khalji Revolution'.

During the Ala-ud-Din's reign, the experiment of raising the low-born persons to important posts proved successful. Believing that they owed their advancement to the liberal policy of the Sultan, they gave him their unwavering loyalty. It was due to their efforts that Malik Naik, a Hindu general and the Muqta of Samana and Sunam, won a victory over the large army of the Mongols led by Ali Beg and Tarraq. Malik Ghazi, the famous warrior and the warden of the marches of Depalpur, also fought under the command of Malik Naik. Sultan Ala-ud-Din sent Malik Naik and Akbar Beg with the Muslim army against them. Ali Beg and Tarraq were both captured alive. Moreover, this well-disciplined and strong army not only guaranteed security against Mongol invasions and held the refractory Rajas in check but also proved superior to the Mongol army in military tactics and arms.

The Khalji nobles also displayed remarkable administrative talent in dealing with the complex and exacting problems of the empire. They established a uniform and sound administrative system in the whole empire.

It is also wrong to assume that only the Indians or the common people were taken in the state service. Foreigners and even descendants of the members of the old Turkish aristocracy were given good posts. The fact which should be highlighted is the Khalji Sultan's deviation from the tradition of the Turkish Sultans. The nobility under the early Turkish Sultans was a charmed circle which no non-Turk was allowed to enter. With the dynastic change, the political conditions also changed.

Qazi Hamid-ud-Din Multani was entrusted with the important socio-religious department of Qaza. Barani says that this post was so important that only noble and pious persons could be entrusted with it. Malik-ul-Tujjar Hamid-ud-Din Multani, who was a man of obscure origin, did not deserve this office. But it is revealed from a study of contemporary hagiological literature that this man was regarded as pious and honest by the leading mystics who were known for the catholicity of their views. The mystics never attached any importance to birth or family. Malik-ul-Tujjar Hamid-ud-Din was on friendly terms with Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din, the famous disciple of Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Auliya. It is also known from the same source that he

was a favourite noble of Sultan Alaud-Din, and that he had free access to the latter.

According to the inscription of Ladmao (Jodhpur), dated 1316 AD, Sultan Alaud-Din appointed a Hindu Sadharna as *Dhanadh Karan* (treasurer).

#### **BARANI'S ASSESSMENT OF THE ALAI REIGN**

Barani was a conservative man who thought that only noble families had been chosen by God to rule mankind. He always considered the low-born persons unworthy of important government posts and destined to do the menial services. Consequently, he attributes the fall of the Alai dynasty to the third generation of Ala-ud-Din's officers who were of mean origin. He divides the Alai reign into three parts. "During the first part, the Sultan was served by capable persons like Ulug Khan, Nusrat Khan, Zafar Khan, Alap Khan, Malik Ala-ul-Mulk, Malik Fakhr-ud-Din Juna Dad bek, Malik Asghar Sardawatdar and Malik Taj-ud-Din Kafuri. Every one of them was matchless for his talents and capacities. They were involved in the murder of Sultan Jalal-ud-Din Khalji, and they died in the third or fourth regal year".

During the second part of the Alai reign, the empire extended from "the frontiers of Sindh and Kabul to the border of Bengal and also the forts of Gujrat and the Deccan; the hereditary dominions of the Rajas had come under him; and there were not ten bighas of land in the inhabited parts of Hindustan where his Khutba was not read". The leading nobles of this time were Malik Hamid-ud-Din Naib-i-Valkil-i-dar, Malik Aiz-ud-Din Dabir-i-Mumalik, Malik Sharf-ud-Din Qanini Naib-i-Wazir and Khawaja Haji, Naib-i-Arz. These four nobles were entrusted with the four key departments of the sultanate. They were known for their talents and competence. The last part of the Alai region, says Barani, lasted for four or five years. In these years the Sultan remained sick and the whole administration was conducted by Malik Naib (Kafur). Baha-ud-Din Dabir was honoured with the title of Umdatul-Mulk. Malik Hamid-ud-Din and Malik Aiz-ud-Din, the son of Khawaja Mulaa Dabir and the murder of Sharif Qanini, played havoc with the departments of Risalat, Wizarat and Insha. Only the Diwan-i-Arz was supervised by the old capable person, Khawaja Haji. With the ascendancy of low-born Shiqdars and officers, the whole administration was upset and people suffered. As a matter of fact, the reason for this decline was not the appointment of

low born people but the Sultan's sickness and also the favouritism he showed towards Malik Kafur.

Barani seems to contradict himself, because in the first generation of the Alai nobles, people were either of obscure origin or the sons of non-nobles.

#### **THE RISE OF THE LOW-BORN PERSONS UNDER SUSLTAN QUTB-UD-DIN MUBARAK SHAH**

With the advent of Sultan Qutb-ud-Din Mubarak Shah, the policy of Alaud-Din's reign towards the nobility changed considerably. The new Sultan abolished the market control and the repressive legislation. Therefore, people brought out their hoarded gold and silver to the market. Barani says: "People were no longer in fear of receiving orders such as: Do this, but don't do that; say this but don't say that; put on this dress but don't put on that dress; eat that but don't eat this; sell this way but don't sell that way. Behave this way but do not behave that way".

Similarly, the nobles were allowed to indulge in luxuries and pleasures. They began to hold convivial meetings. They drank wine publicly and the fear of the Sultan disappeared from their mind. The only thing which the new Sultan retained was Ala-ud-Din's liberal policy in regard to the recruitment of the nobles. He also knew how to balance the old nobility by creating counter nobility. In this connection he relied on the low-born persons more than on the descendants of the old nobility. For example, he left his slave Shahim as his deputy in Delhi with the title of Vafa-ul-Mulk when he started for Deogir to quell the rebellion of Harpal Deo. Likewise, Khusrau Khan, a Parwari slave, was so much favoured that he got the rank of Naib-ul-Mulk. The low-born nobles increased in such a large number that Barani says: "Low-born persons got ascendancy over persons of the noble houses. The Mussalmans as well as the Hindus ceased to be obedient".

What seems to be important here is that the low-born persons overshadowed the old nobles in the capital. The Parwaris had become a pressure-group, because Khusrau Khan invited them from Gujrat in large numbers and also gave them important posts, with the result that the Parwaris killed the Sultan and overthrew the Khalji dynasty.



## CONCLUSION

The Khaljis were realists and they seized the throne with the support of the Indian as well as other non-Turkish nobles. Therefore, they did not have any pretensions to their lineage. It may be mentioned that when a person of obscure origin was raised to a high position, he became an eyesore to the conservative persons of the noble houses. But, the moment he gave up his low habits and adopted the ways of noble life by patronizing the scholars and the ulama, he became popular.

In fact the element of merit in appointment consolidated the reign of the House Khaljis, though it crumbled at the hands of conspirators when the writ of later Khaljis weakened in the wake convivial parties arranged at the court meetings permitted by Mubarak Shah emboldening the self-seekers and self-promoters. Also the termination of Khaljis rule meant much to the favouritism accorded to Khasaru Khan than to the promotion of persons of obscure origin to the high posts.

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