

UNIT 116 – UPSC - Slave Dynasty

India's History : Medieval India : Qutbuddin establishes the Slave/Mamluk Dynasty

Slave Kings

The success of slaves such as these has made many scholars praise the medieval Muslim slave system as being marvellous, asserting that it provided unlimited scope for rise so much so that a slave could even become a king. This is not a correct assessment. Slaves were not captured to be made kings; they were not purchased to be made kings. They were abducted, captured, or purchased to serve as domestics, guards, troopers etc. They were sold to make money. ❖Slave❖ and ❖king❖ are contradictory terms. If a few slaves could become kings, it was not because the system provided them with such opportunities but mainly because of their ability to indulge in unscrupulous manipulations, muster armed band of followers, and strike for the throne at an appropriate moment. The Delhi Sultanate ruled by the kings after Muhammad of Gaur upto 1296 has been called the "Slave Dynasty" as many rulers were former slaves. But having freed themselves to rule independently, this term is historically incorrect.

The reign of Qutbuddin

Qutbuddin Aibak, who rose to be the first slave-sultan of Hindustan, was purchased, early in life, by Fakhruddin, the chief Qazi of Nishapur who appears to have been a great slave trader. Through his favours and along with his sons, Aibak received training in reciting the Quran and practising archery and horsemanship. Expenditure on such instructions used to be regarded as an investment by slave merchants: a trained slave fetched a better price in the market. After the Qazi's death his sons sold Aibak to a merchant who took him to Ghazni and sold him to Sultan Muizzuddin. Though ugly in external appearance, Aibak's training had endowed him with ❖laudable qualities and admirable impressions❖. He cultivated his compatriots by being most liberal with the ❖Turkish guards, the slaves of the household.❖ Thereby he won their affection and support. Merit raised him to the position of Amir Akhur (Master of the Horse Stables). He was deputed to campaign in India extensively, a task he accomplished with determination and success. In course of time, loyalty and signal services to Sultan Muizzuddin secured him the post of vice-regent in Hindustan. In accordance with Muizzuddin's desire, Tajuddin Yaloz, another slave of the Sultan, married his daughter to Aibak. Aibak extended Muslim dominions in India by undertaking expeditions on behalf of his master. The Sultan seems to have desired that Aibak should succeed him in Hindustan, and after the death of the Sultan, he ascended the throne of Hindustan at Lahore in 1206 and ruled up to 1210.

Qutbuddin, had however, commenced his architectural career even before he chose to become the sultan. The mosque was essential to the Islamic emphasis on cong

regational prayer, while the burial of the dead, as opposed to cremation, introduced the tomb to India.

The earliest of these Islamic structures are to be seen in the Qutub complex and the incorporation of many Hindu elements is due to the ready availability of building material and the use of local craftsmen. Qutbuddin raised the Quwwat-ul-Islam (might of Islam) mosque, which is the earliest extant mosque in India. Within its spacious courtyard he retained the 4th century Iron Pillar, probably the standard of an ancient Vishnu temple. The pillar has puzzled scientists, as its iron has not rusted in all these centuries.

AD 1206 - 1290	
1206 - 1210	Qutbuddin Aibak
1210 - 1211	◊ram Shah
1211 - 1236	Iltutmish Shams ad Din
1236	F◊ruz Shah I
1236 - 1240	Radiyya Begum
1240 - 1242	Bahram Shah
1242 - 1246	Masud Shah
1246 - 1266	Mahmud Shah I
1266 - 1287	Balban Ulugh Khan
1287 - 1290	Kay Qubadh
1290	Kayumarth

Foundation of the Qutab Minar



The great monument of Qutab Minar got completed by the Sultan in 1231-1232 AD. However the work on Minar was started by Qutabuddin in 1199, celebrating the advent of Muslim dominance in Delhi. To Qutabuddin, the tower marked the eastern extremity of the Islamic faith, casting the shadow of God over east and west.