
UNIT 3 EVOLUTION OF INSTITUTIONS: SULTAN, NOBILITY AND *ULAMA**

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Caliphate and the Delhi Sultanate
- 3.3 The Sultan
- 3.4 *Turkan-i Chihilgani*
- 3.5 Composition of the Sultanate Ruling Class/Nobility
 - 3.5.1 The Ilbarites
 - 3.5.2 The Khaljis
 - 3.5.3 The Tughlaqs
- 3.6 Conflict Between the Nobility and the Sultans
- 3.7 The *Ulama*
- 3.8 Summary
- 3.9 Keywords
- 3.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 3.11 Suggested Readings
- 3.12 Instructional Video Recommendations

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we will analyse the evolution of various institutions, particularly the Sultan, the nobility and the class of the *ulama* during the Sultanate period taking into consideration the following:

- relationship of the Delhi Sultans with the Caliphate,
- the institution of the Sultan,
- nature of kingship,
- role of the *turkan-i chihilgani* in the consolidation of the Sultanate,
- the composition of the ruling class,
- conflict between the nobility and the Sultan, and
- the role played by the *ulama* in the Sultanate polity.

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1206 Qutbuddin Aibak laid the foundation of an independent Sultanate at Delhi and a beginning was made in severing links with Central Asia. The most important problem of the Sultanate in its early stages, and even later, was to consolidate the conquered territories. In this Unit, our focus would be on the consolidation of the Sultanate. To this end, the ruling class served as an important pivot who shared the resources of the country. The Turks brought with them the institution of the *iqtas* (see **Unit 4**), which helped in the centralization of authority to a great extent. As greater centralization was sought to be effected, changes could be seen in the institution of the '*iqta*' as well as in the composition of the ruling class. The rulers had to cope with internal strife and external dangers, especially the running struggle between the nobility and the Sultans which contributed towards the gradual decline of the Delhi Sultanate.

3.2 THE CALIPHATE AND THE DELHI SULTANATE

The institution of the Caliphate came into existence after the death of Prophet Muhammad when Abu Bakr became the new head (*Khalifa*) of the Muslim community (*Umma* or *Ummat*). Originally, there existed some elements of elective principle in the matter of succession, a practice not much different from the previous tribal traditions.

In the Islamic world, the Caliph was regarded as the guardian of religion and the upholder of political order. He was the leader of the entire community. After the period of the first four 'pious Caliphs' (Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali) dynastic rule became the norm when the Umayyads took over the Caliphate in 661 CE from their base at Damascus in Syria. After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate the Abbasids came to power in the mid-8th century as Caliphs at Baghdad. However, with the decline of central authority, the centralized institution of Caliphate (*Khilafat*) broke into three centres of power based in Spain (under the rule of a branch of the Umayyad Caliphs), Egypt (under the Fatimids) and the older one at Baghdad – each claiming the exclusive loyalty of the Muslims. Nearer home, towards the northwest, many minor dynasties carved out small states, one of which was based at Ghazna. The significant point to remember is that, theoretically; no Muslim could have set up an 'independent' state, big or small, without procuring the permission from the Caliph, else its legitimacy could become suspect amongst the Muslims. And, yet, all this was nothing more than a formality which could be dispensed with impunity.

The recognition of a Caliph by the Delhi Sultans seen in the granting of robes of honour, letter of investiture, bestowing of titles, having the name of the Caliph inscribed on coins and reading of *khutba* in his name in the Friday prayer symbolized an acceptance and a link with the Islamic world, though in reality it only meant an acceptance of a situation whereby a ruler, had already placed himself in power. The Sultans of Delhi maintained the fiction of the acceptance of the position of the Caliph. Under the Saiyyids (1414-1451) and the Lodis (1451-1526), the legends on the coins continued in the sense of a tradition being maintained but it was purely a nominal allegiance.

Caliph at Baghdad at the time of the Sultanate was in a 'decadent' state. *Khalifa's* authority just reduced to a nominal allegiance. However, still the orthodox opinion

prevailed that *Khalifa* wielded the final authority. Khalil bin Shahin al-Zahiri conveys that ‘no king of the east or the west could hold the title of Sultan unless there was a covenant between him and the *Khalifah*’ (Nizami 2002:130). It was precisely for this reason that the Delhi Sultans looked towards *manshurs* (approval/mandate) of the *khalifa* with such a reverence. When in 1229, Baghdad Caliph Al-Mustansir’s *manshur*, with a deed of investiture, reached Iltutmish he received it with great honour and pomp. It enhanced the prestige of Iltutmish’s sovereignty and a legal approval to it. Iltutmish added Caliph’s name on his coins. After Al-Mustansir’s death Masud Shah in 1243 replaced his name with the new Caliph Al-Mustasim. In 1258 Mongol Khan Hulagu brutally murdered the Caliph. This created a vacuum and extraordinary situation. Its fallback was that even after the death of Caliph Al-Mustasim his name continued to have been inscribed on the coins as late as 1296. Alauddin merely styled himself as *nasir-i amir-ul muminin yamin-ul khilafat* (the right hand of the caliphate, the helper of the Commander of the Faithful), though Amir Khusrau and Ziauddin Barani called him *naib* or *khalifa* of God. However, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq reverted to the old title *nasir-i amir-ul muminin*. Muhammad Tughlaq who was of an independent mind, initially in his coins discarded the name of the Caliph. But, around 1344 Muhammad bin Tughlaq received Caliph’s emissary Haji Said Sarsari with letter of investiture, a standard and robe of honour. Sultan in recognition issued coins with Caliph Al-Mustakfi-Billah’s name inscribed on it. Caliph’s name was also recited in the *khutba* during Friday and ‘Id prayers. Muhammad bin Tughlaq after Al-Mustakfi-Billah’s death received another letter of investiture and robe of honour from Caliph Al-Hakim II which was also received by the Sultan with all humility. Firuz Shah also received the letter of investiture of the Caliph Al-Mutasid-Billah in 754AH/1353 CE. The same tradition continued by the Saiyyids and the Lodis. Khizr Khan, the founder of the Saiyyid dynasty received the letter from Shah Rukh and read his name in the *khutba*. However, in 1517 Usmani Turks ended the Abbasid Caliphate and thus again the vacuum was created.

In the Delhi Sultanate, thus, in actual effect, the Caliphate, weakened and far removed as it was, had little direct role to play.

3.3 THE SULTAN

In the early Islamic world, there was no sanction for the position of the Sultan. With the disintegration of the Caliphate, the Sultan began to appear in the sense of a powerful ruler “an independent sovereign of a certain territory”.

The Delhi Sultans could make civil and political regulations for public welfare. *Khutba* and *sikka* were recognised as important attributes of sovereignty. The *khutba* was the formal sermon following the congregational prayer on Fridays wherein the name of the Sultan was mentioned as the head of the community. Coinage was the ruler’s prerogative: his name was inscribed on the coins (*sikka*).

Though in the Muslim world legally *khalifa* was the sovereign, in practice Sultan wielded the supreme power, and ruled almost independent of the Caliph’s authority.

Nonetheless there were number of restrictions on Sultan’s unrestricted power in the form of group pressures: *ulama* wanted him to uphold the course of religion; nobility expected him to be the protector of political interests; *raiyat*/commoners expected peace, security and justice. Though he was the supreme interpreter of

Law (*shariat*) he could not ignore *ijma* (opinion of the Muslim community/jurists). Alauddin Khalji is often accused of transgressing *shara'*. In the context of the use of booty acquired by the Sultan during his Deccan campaigns as a Prince the famous conversation between Qazi Mughisuddin and Alauddin recorded by Barani alleges Alauddin not following the *shariat*. Alauddin was the Sultan of strong will he distinctly asserted his authority over the differences with the *ulama*. For him 'government and administration were affairs quite independent of the rules and orders of the *shariat*' (Nizami 1982: 362). Ultimately, it was the 'political expediency alone which determined the attitude of the ruler' (Nizami 1982: 118). Similarly, ruling over a vast majority of non-Muslims it was extremely difficult for any Sultan to ignore the sentiments and interests of non-Muslims. Alauddin gave rebuttal to Mughisuddin's objections in no uncertain terms:

You may say my acts are against the *shariat*. Now this is how I act...I demand back public money from corrupt revenue officers by kicks and blows, and till the last *jital* has been realized, I keep them in bonds and chains. Political offenders I imprison for life. Will you say all this against the *shariat*?...I issue command which I consider to be beneficial to the state and appear prudent under the circumstances. I do not know whether they are permitted by the *shariat* or not' (Nizami 1982: 363-364).

Similarly, Muhammad Tughlaq possessed extremely original mind and was above influences and pressures and never put religion above politics. In spite of all opposition of the *ulama* and the elite Turkish nobility Muhammad bin Tughlaq opened the highest offices to talent, irrespective of the birth: he appointed Aziz Khummar (the distiller), Firuz Hajjam (the barber), Laddha Baghaban (the gardener) to the highest offices. Aziz Khummar held the office of the governor of Malwa; while Pira Mali was appointed in the *diwan-i wizarat*.

While discussing the powers of the Delhi Sultans Qureshi (1971) rightly puts that, 'the sovereignty of a single man is a legal myth'. No ruler could ignore public opinion, popular protests. Raziya could secure her position as Sultan in Delhi on account of the popular support she received in Delhi. Hasan Nizami and Fakhri-i Mudabbir have also emphasized upon the importance of *shura* (consultation) in the Muslim polity. Even for the efficient working Sultan required the constant support of the nobles. Often influential *ulama* and nobles collectively chose the candidate and proclaimed him the Sultan: Iltutmish was invited by the Turkish nobles headed by Amir Ali Ismail, the *sipah salar* to occupy the throne, similarly, Alauddin Masud Shah, Nasiruddin Mahmud, Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1320-1325) all were the choice of the nobles. 'The wise Buhlul could at need humble before the nobles by putting his turban at their feet, the inexperienced Ibrahim lost his throne by alienating them' (Qureshi 1971: 52-53).

Thus, though Sultan was autocrat and all powerful, in practice, he could not ignore the *ulama*, nobility and the public opinion for his position and the efficient working of his administration

Nature of Kingship

The early Muslim Turkish State established itself in north India by virtue of conquests. Since the Turks were far fewer in number than the indigenous population over whom they sought to govern and since they also lacked resources, they, of necessity, had to control the resources of the country. This had an important bearing on the nature of the Turkish State.

In a theoretical and formal sense, the Delhi Sultans recognized the supremacy of the Islamic law (*shariah*) and tried to prevent its open violation. But they had to supplement it by framing secular regulations (*zawabit*), too. A point of view is that the Turkish State was a theocracy; in practice, however, it was the product of expediency and necessity wherein the needs of the young state assumed paramount importance. The contemporary historian Ziauddin Barani distinguished between *jahandari* (“secular”) and *dindari* (“religious”) and accepted the inevitability of some secular features, because of the contingent situations coming up. Thus, the needs of the emergent State shaped many policies and practices not always consistent with Islamic fundamentalism. For example, during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish (1211-1236), a sectarian group (*shafai*) of Muslim divines approached the Sultan and asked him to enforce the Islamic law strictly, that is, giving the Hindus the option of Islam or Death. On behalf of the Sultan, the *wazir*, Junaidi, replied that this could not be done for the moment as the Muslims were like salt in a dish of food. Barani records a conversation that Sultan Alauddin Khalji had with one of his leading theologians, Qazi Mughisuddin, over the question of appropriation of booty. While the Qazi pointed out the legalistic position which prevented the Sultan from taking the major share of the booty, the Sultan is said to have emphasized that he acted according to the needs of the State which were paramount. These instances show that, in practice, the Turkish State was not theocratic but evolved according to its special needs and circumstances despite the fact that the main ruling class professed Islam.

Thus, ‘Law, tradition and expediency...shaped the political outlook of the Sultans and conditioned their theories of kingship. Insofar as they considered themselves the “lieutenants of the Caliph” and looked for investiture from Baghdad, their attitude was determined by the legal requirements of the age’ (Nizami 2002: 101). Sultan’s ideas are best reflected in their *wasayas* (precepts) and among the *wasayas* of Delhi Sultans only Balban’s *wasayas* survive; those contain his instructions to his sons Mahmud and Muhammad and later to Bughra Khan. ‘Balban was in fact an ideal ruler...firm, fair and awe-inspiring. Endowed with rare political vision and energy, he set the confused and disorganized state of affairs of government in order and enhanced the dignity and the prestige of the crown’ (Nizami 2002:104). Lanepool has rightly put it that, ‘No one understood better than Balban the conditions of kingship in India’. Balban’s *wasayas* ‘not only epitomize the political ideology of the Middle Ages but also bring out the inner conflicts of his own political personality...’ (Nizami 2002: 104). Balban advises (Nizami 2002: 105-109):

Wasayas to Mahmud and Muhammad:

- a) The heart of the king reflects the glory of God.
- b) If the king allows the low-born, base, irreligious, and faithless people to interfere in government affairs, he is not only guilty of being ungrateful to God but also occupies the territory of God against the orders of the Day of Creation.
- c) He must behave in such a way that his words, deeds, orders, and personal qualities and virtues may enable people to live according to the laws of *Shariat*.
- d) Pious, religious minded, just and God-fearing men alone should be appointed as *qazis*, officials, *amirdads*, and *muhtasibs* so that the laws of *Shariat* might be enforced through them.
- e) Royal dignity should be maintained both in public and private.

- f) You should understand that kingship is the vicegerent of God.
- g) Only noble, virtuous, wise, and skilled people be allowed to come near you.
- h) Under no circumstances you should allow the mean, the vulgar, and the faithless people, and infidels to gather around you.
- i) If a king lives in the same way as other people live and grants to people what others also can bestow, the glory of sovereign vanishes. A king should live and behave in a way different from other people.
- j) Kingship is not possible without these things “justice, beneficence, pomp, army, treasury, confidence of the people, and a number of selected and distinguished men to assist and serve the Sultan. If there is no justice, there can be no stability in government.
- k) Be on good terms with your people, governors, army, and the pious men.
- l) Use moderation in handling the affairs of your people.
- m) Protect your person from wicked people.

Wasaya to Bughra Khan:

- a) It is not advisable for any ruler of Lakhnauti to rebel against the Sultan of Delhi.
- b) *Wilayat dari* (governorship) and *Iqlim dari* (kingship) are two different things. If a *muqtai* commits mistakes and does not perform his duty properly, he is dismissed by the king and the matter ends there; if, on the other hand, a suzerain commits mistakes, it leads to chaos and dissensions in every direction. The people become unruly, the government loses its stability, and the army gets restive.

Delhi Sultan's, particularly that of Balban's ideas of kingship were a direct importation from Sassanid Persia. The chief features of Balban's theory of kingship were:

- a) His ideal of kingship was divine. He declared king as the vicegerent of God (*niyyat-i khudai*). He claimed king as the shadow of God on earth (*zil al-Allah fil arz*). Implied thereby that he did not derive his power and strength from the nobility or people but from the God, thus he placed himself, his acts above 'scrutiny'.
- b) He believed in external pomp of the sovereignty. Since he was above common men and nobles, he kept himself distant from the masses, he even refused to directly talk to commoners. Iltutmish's nobles Malik Izzuddin Salari and Malik Qutbuddin Hasan also advised Iltutmish 'to maintain royal dignity'. Barani records, they tried to convince Iltutmish that, 'it was necessary for the Sultan to strike awe and terror into the hearts of the people', and because 'one could not discharge the obligations of kingship unless he behaved with dignity' (Nizami 2002: 103).
- c) In the court he maintained strict decorum. He used to appear in the court with full 'regalia' and royal paraphernalia.
- d) A distinct distinction was made between high-born and low-born. It was considered below dignity to interact with a low-born. Barani mentions, Balban used to tell, 'When I happen to look at a low-born person, every artery and vein in my body begins to agitate with fury'.
- e) Balban traced his genealogy from mythical Persian hero Afrasiab mentioned by Firdausi in his *Shahnama*. Balban is even reported to have got enquired the genealogies of his *amirs* and nobles through expert genealogists.

Political Formations

- f) To emphasise upon high ideals of kingship he emulated Persian customs and life-style. His first two sons born before his becoming the Sultan were named Mahmud and Muhammad; but his sons born after becoming Sultan he named them after Persian kings: Kaiqubad, Kaikhusrau, Kaikaus.
- g) Persian court etiquettes and ceremonies were introduced. He insisted on *sijda* (prostate) and *paibos* (feet-kissing). No one dare to have loose talks or cut jokes in the court. During royal ceremonies court was lavishly decorated to the extent that Barani records that it was a matter of talk of the common people. While the Sultan was in a procession Sistani soldiers accompany him with naked swords.
- h) The only redemeeing feature of Balban's kingship was his emphasis on justice. He appointed *barids* (intelligence officers) to keep him informed the activities of his officers. He severely punished Malik Baq Baq, father of Qara Beg, *iqtadar* of Badaun and Haibat Khan, father of Malik Qira, *iqtadar* of Awadh for killing menial servants.

Commenting on Balban's attempt to lay emphasis on high ideals of kingship K.A. Nizami argues that it was more of an expression of his 'inferiority complex and guilty conscience behind these frequent exhortations'. 'By dinning into the ears of his *maliks* and *amirs*, most of whom were his quondam colleagues, again and again that kingship was something divinely ordained, he wanted to wash off the stigma of being a regicide and impress their minds that it was Divine Will that had brought him to the throne and not the poisoned cup and the assassin's dagger' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 281). He was also perhaps never manumitted. 'This basic legal disqualification to rule over the people, he tried to cover under a shrewdly designed mask of "divine commitment" of regal authority' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 281). Nonetheless, 'this display of power, authority and dignity, which was inseparably associated in his mind with his theory of kingship, made the most recalcitrant elements in the country submissive and struck awe and terror into the hearts of the people' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 285).

Succession Issue

No clear and well-defined law of succession developed in the Sultanate. Hereditary principle was accepted but not adhered to invariably. There was no rule that only the eldest son would succeed (law of primogeniture). In one case, even a daughter was nominated (for example, Raziya Sultan). At any rate, a slave, unless he was manumitted, that is, freed, could not claim sovereignty. In fact, as it operated in the Sultanate, 'the longest the sword, the greater the claim'.

Thus, in the absence of any succession rule in the very beginning intrigues surfaced to usurp power. After Aibak's death, it was not his son Aram Shah but his slave and son-in-law Iltutmish who captured the throne. Iltutmish's death (1236) was followed by a long period of struggle and strife when finally Balban, Iltutmish's slave of the 'Forty' fame, assumed power in 1266. You have already seen how Balban attempted to give a new shape to the concept of kingship to salvage the prestige of the office of the Sultan, but the struggle for power that started soon after Balban's death confirms again that the 'sword' remained the main deciding factor. Kaiqubad was installed at the throne against the claims of Balban's nominee, Kaikhusrau. Later, even he was slain by the Khalji Maliks (1290) who laid the foundation of the Khalji rule. In 1296 Alauddin Khalji, killed his uncle, Jalaluddin Khalji and occupied the throne. Alauddin Khalji's death signalled civil war and scramble for power. Muhammad Tughlaq's reign weakened due to the rebellions

of *amirs*. Rivalries that followed after Firuz Tughlaq ultimately led to the rise of the Saiyyids (1414-51).

With the accession of the Lodis (1451-1526) a new element – the Afghans was added. The Afghans had a certain peculiar concept of sovereignty. They were prepared to accept the position of a Sultan over them, but they sought to partition the empire among their clans (*Farmulis, Sarwanis, Niyazis, etc.*). After the death of Sultan Sikandar Lodi (1517), the empire was divided between Ibrahim and Jalal. Even the royal privileges and prerogatives were equally shared by the clan members. For example, keeping of elephants was the royal privilege but Azam Humayun Sarwani is reported to have possessed seven hundred elephants. Besides, the Afghans entertained the concept of maintaining tribal militia which in the long run greatly hampered the military efficiency of the Central Government. It is true that Sikandar Lodi tried to keep the ambitious Afghan nobles in check, but it seems that the concept of Afghan polity was more tilted towards decentralization that created fissures in the end.

Check Your Progress-1

1) What were the symbols of allegiance maintained by the Delhi Sultans with respect to the Caliphate?

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2) Discuss the power and position of the Delhi Sultans.

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3) What were the chief features of Balban's theory of sovereignty?

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4) How far did the absence of law of primogeniture contribute to the decline of the Sultanate?

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3.4 TURKAN-I CHIHILGANI

Turkan-i Chihilgani (Barani calls them *bandagan Turk Chihilgan*; group of 'forty' Turkish slave officers) was the creation of Iltutmish who used their expertise, unflinching courage, commitment, unconditional fidelity and adroitness for the consolidation of his nascent Sultanate. These Turkish slaves were nurtured with extreme care. They were purchased by Iltutmish at an high cost (each for an average

of 50000 *jitals* or more). They excelled in valour and courage and possessed excellent qualities to administer the territories. Minhaj lists twenty-five from the 'group of forty'. Some of them are referred to by Minhaj as Muizzi suggests probably Iltutmish inherited them from his master Muizzuddin bin Sam. These slave officers were well trained in the art of warfare, provided educational training of Persian, Arabic and *Shariat*.

The most prominent among them were: Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan Ayaz. Iltutmish purchased him from the heirs of Malik Nasiruddin Husain. Ruknuddin Firuz made him *iqtdar* of Sunam. Raziya appointed him at Lahore and also gave *iqta* of Multan; Malik Izzuddin Salari was appointed by Raziya *iqtdar* of Badaun; Malik Saifuddin Kuchi was appointed *iqtdar* of Hansi; Malik Alauddin Jani held the *iqtdari* of Lahore; Ikhtiyaruddin Qaraqash Khan Aitigin was a Qara-Khita Turk. Iltutmish assigned him *iqta* of Multan. He purchased him from Amir Aibek Sunami. Raziya appointed him *iqtdar* of Badaun, and later made him *amir-i hajib*; Ikhtiyaruddin Altunia was *sar chatrdar* at the time of Iltutmish's death. Raziya appointed him *iqtdar* of Baran and later of Tabarhinda (Bhatinda).

However, Iltutmish would have never thought of that those Turkish slaves whom he nurtured with so much affection and trust and raised them to the highest offices would, one day be responsible for series of murders of his descendents and one day would completely exterminate his male line. After Iltutmish's death they practically emerged as king-makers and finally with Balban's accession (who was one of the member of the 'group of forty') they assumed the royal power. They all wielded almost equal power and claimed equality among all being slaves of one of one master (Shamsi) and formed one group (Turkish-slaves). Barani mentions that they claimed: 'I and none other'... What are you that I am not and what have you been that I have not been.' Barani laments: 'Owing to the incompetence of the successors of Shamsuddin and the predominance of the Shamsi slaves, no dignity was left with the supreme command...; and the court of Shamsuddin, which had grown in stability and power till it exceeded the courts of all kings of the inhabited world, was now a thing of no value' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 233).

Very early, Raziya realized the increasing power of the Turkish slaves, attempted to offset them by creating a parallel counter-nobility. It was this that brought her in direct conflict with the Tajik (non-Turkish free-born foreigners of high lineage; largely Persians) Turks and Turkish slave officers. Nizamul Mulk Junaidi, a Tajik, *wazir* of Iltutmish opposed Raziya's accession supported by the 'group of forty' (Malik Alauddin Jani, Malik Saifuddin Kuchi, Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan Ayaz, and Malik Izzuddin Muhammad Salari). Raziya's appointment of an Abyssinian Malik Jamaluddin Yaqut to the post of *amir-i akhur* was equally resented by the Turkish slave officers; the office was never before given to a non-Turk. Aitigin and Altunia raised the banner of revolt, rejecting Raziya they placed Muizzuddin Bahram Shah to the throne. Raziya in her attempt to gain power married Altunia. However, Raziya and Altunia got defeated and were later killed (1240).

Under Bahram this 'group of forty' succeeded in creating an office of *naib-i mamalakat* which was directly aimed at creating a parallel power centre and undermining the power of the monarchy. Malik Ikhtiyaruddin Aitigin was appointed to the post; while Muhazzabuddin Muhammad Iwaz held the office of *wazir*. Aitigin not only married the divorced sister of the Sultan but also started keeping elephants

and *naubat* (kettle-drum) at the gate of his house which were exclusive privileges of the Sultan in direct violation. Bahram tried to get rid of Aitigin and I was and got Aitigin killed but Iwaz escaped. Again Sadrul Mulk Saiyyid Tajuddin Ali Musawi hatched the conspiracy against Bahram. Though Bahram also got him killed but could not sustain long the conspiracies of the Turkish slaves and was assassinated by them in 1242. Thus Turkish slaves emerged king-makers; already killed two of Iltutmish's successors. However, they were content with acquiring administrative power and never aspired to replace the Shamsi dynasty. Besides, they enjoyed trust within the 'group of forty' and never attempted to kill each other, a policy which later Balban resorted to.

Turkish slaves now put Alauddin Masud Shah, son of Ruknuddin Firuz to the throne. Tajiks and Turkish slaves distributed the choicest offices among themselves: Malik Qutbuddin Hasan Ghuri was appointed *naib-i mamalakat*; Ikhtiyaruddin Qaraqash was made *amir-i hajib*; and Malik Izuddin Balban Kishlu Khan was granted *iqta* of Mandor and Ajmer; while Malik Tajuddin Sanjar Qutlaq received Badaun. Balban Kishlu Khan was the most ambitious of the group of 'forty'. Balban was brought from Turkistan to Baghdad and purchased by Khwaja Jamaluddin Basir who brought him to India and was sold to Iltutmish along with his half brother Saifuddin Aibek (Kishli Khan) and father's brother's son Nusratuddin Sher Khan. Under Iltutmish Balban served as *khasadar*. Bahram Shah made him *amir-i akhur* and received *iqta* of Rewari and later received governorship of Hansi. After Muhazabuddin's murder he got the office of *amir-i hajib*. Balban gradually attempted to remove all powerful Maliks of the group of forty. In 1246, Masud Shah was also imprisoned by the Turkish slaves where he died. Turkish slaves then put Nasiruddin Mahmud, grandson of Iltutmish, to the throne.

Nasiruddin Mahmud who owed his power to Shamsi maliks had no choice but to obey them. Commenting on Nasiruddin Mahmud's meek surrender Isami mentions that he 'was from his heart the well-wisher of every one of them...He expressed no opinion without their prior permission; he did not move his hands or feet except their order. He would neither drink water nor go to sleep except with their knowledge' (Habib & Nizami 1982: 257). But so long as the 'group of forty' remained united Nasiruddin Mahmud had no problem adjusting to their whims. Balban was the most ambitious and powerful of them who was stationed at Delhi. Nasiruddin Mahmud did what Balban asked him to do. Nasiruddin Mahmud married Balban's daughter in 1249 which was followed by the appointment of Balban as *naib-i mamalakat* and received the title Ulugh Khan (the premier Khan). Balban's younger brother Saifuddin Aibek was made *amir-i hajib* and also received the title Kishli Khan. By 1250 a substantial part of the empire came into the hands of one family, that of Balban: at the centre were Ulugh Khan and Kishli Khan; whole Sind was under the control of his cousin Sher Khan; at Lakhnauti (Bengal) Yazbek Tughril Khan was incharge who was Iltutmish's slave and was an appointee of Balban. Ulugh Khan also held the territories of Hansi and Siwalik; while Nagaur was with Saifuddin Kishli Khan.

This raised alarm and suspicion among other Turkish slave officers. Circumstances changed fast with the rise of Imaduddin Raihan, an Indian Muslim to power in 1252-53 who was appointed *wakildar* (deputy to the king in judicial matters). This raised alarm not only among the Turkish slaves but also among the Tajiks (free born non-Turks) also opposed his appointment and rise to power. Balban

succeeded in defeating and later killing him in 1255. Immediately after that shockingly Ulugh Khan ordered the public assassination of Malik Qutbuddin Hasan Ghuri. Never before the dissensions within the Tajiks and the ‘group of forty’ cropped up to such an extent. By 1257 another senior member of the group Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbek Tughril Khan died in Lakhnauti; while in 1258 Balban poisoned Qutlagh Khan and Arsalan Khan. Thus began Balban’s policy of wiping out major contenders from within the ‘group of forty’. Ulugh Khan’s half brother Kishli Khan also died in 1259 to Balban’s advantage and he also got his uncle’s son Sher Khan poisoned. Finally, Ulugh Khan poisoned Nasiruddin Mahmud in 1266 and usurped the crown with the title Ghiyasuddin Balban. Firishta informs that ‘he killed many of the descendants of Shamsuddin Iltutmish whom he considered to be rivals for the throne’. On Balban’s accession Isami also remarks, ‘When Ulugh Khan ascended the throne the teeth of the officers were broken; they all came under his control without any argument or reasoning’ (Habib & Nizami 1982: 276). Thus with a number of the ‘group of forty’ gone or eliminated Balban was left with hardly any resistance from the ‘group of forty’ to reckon with. The only strong Shamsi Malik left was Tughril Beg at Lakhnauti whom Balban finally got brutally murdered through his officers, not even sparing those who supported him.

Thus the ‘group of forty’ whom Iltutmish created and utilized effectively for the consolidation of his nascent empire not only completely extinguished the Shamsi line of descendents by brutally murdering all of them but also broke the back of the entire Turkish nobility. His policy of ‘poison and dagger’ proved fatal and wiped away ‘talented and gifted Turkish nobles’. ‘Anxious to secure his personal and family interests, he [Balban] completely ignored the interests of the Turkish governing class. He destroyed the talent amongst the Turkish nobles so ruthlessly that when the Khaljis entered the field as competitors for the throne against them, they were completely outmaneuvered and defeated. Balban’s responsibility for the fall of the Turkish power in India cannot be denied. His consolidation programme, no doubt, ensured the continuance of the Delhi sultanate and paved the way for the further expansion of the sultanat under the Khaljis, but his attitude towards the Turkish nobility crippled it and reduced its life-span’ (Habib & Nizami 1982: 286).

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) Discuss the role played by *Turkan-i Chihilgani* as kingmakers after the death of Iltutmish.

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- 2) What was the impact of the policy of Balban to eradicate the ‘group of forty’?

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3.5 COMPOSITION OF THE SULTANATE RULING CLASS/NOBILITY

At the time of the Ghorian invasions, North India was divided into a number of principalities ruled by *rais* and *ranas* (local chiefs). At the village level, *khots* and *muqaddams* (village headman) stood on the borderline of the rural aristocracy. In between, the *chaudhuri* can be spotted as the head of hundred villages.

At any rate, we can accept a broad definition of the position of the pre-Ghorian ruling class as one which appropriated the surplus produce of the peasants, by exercising superior rights over land. In analyzing the formation of the ruling class in the Sultanate, some pertinent questions arise: How did the new ruling class supplant this older ruling class? What measures did it adopt for appropriating the surplus revenue? How was it different from the class that it supplanted?

Throughout the thirteenth century, the Turkish armies furthered the political and military control over North India. By the mid-fourteenth century, it spread to the Deccan. A large alien territory had to be pacified and governed and the ruling class had to be maintained and sustained. The early Turkish ruling class was very much in the nature of a co-sharer of political and financial powers with the Sultans. In the beginning, the nobles (*amiran*) were practically independent in distant areas of the conquered territories where they were sent by the Centre as governors. The latter were designated *muqti* or *wali* and their territories were known as *iqtas*. Gradually, the practice began of transferring *muqtis* from one *iqta* to another (a detailed discussion on *iqta* system is given in **Unit 4**). The pre-Ghorian political structure seems to have continued, with tribute being realised from the *rais* and *ranas*, who were expected to collect taxes as they had done before.

From our contemporary historians, like Minhaj Siraj and Barani, we learn that the most important nobles, and even the Sultans, in the early stages of the foundation of the Sultanate, were from the families of the Turkish slave-officers. Many of the early Turkish nobles and Sultans had started their early career as slaves but they received letters of manumission (*khat-i azadi*) before becoming Sultans. One such was Qutbuddin Aibak. On his death in 1210, Iltutmish, one of his favoured slaves, seized Delhi and set himself up as Sultan. He created his own corps of Turkish slaves – the Shamsi *maliks*, called by Barani *turkan-i chihilgani* ('The Forty'). Iltutmish's nobility also included a number of *Tajik* or free-born officers. That this element of free-born immigrants continued to form a part of the ruling class is noted by Minhaj at the time of Nasiruddin Mahmud's accession (1246). The problem of succession after the death of Iltutmish brought into light the division within the nobles.

In spite of the internal quarrels within the ruling class, there was a basic solidarity which manifested itself in its hostility to outsiders. For example, Raziya's (1236-1240) elevation of an Abyssinian, Jamaluddin Yaqut, to the post of *amir-i akhur* ('master of the royal horses') caused great resentment. Similar was the case of Raihan, a Hindu covert to Islam. Thus, the nobility was seen as the preserver of the certain groups, sometimes under the principle of 'high birth', as reflected in the policies ascribed to Balban by Barani.

Now you can understand how an identity of interests bound the dominant groups. Race and perhaps religion, too, played important role in the formation of ruling

groups. Actually, the ruling class was not a monolithic organization. There were numerous factions and cliques, each trying to guard their exclusive positions jealously. The Turkish military leaders who accompanied and participated in the Ghorian invasion formed the core of the early Turkish ruling class: they acquired most of the key-posts at the centre and provinces.

3.5.1 The Ilbarites

Qutbuddin Aibak who succeeded to the Indian territories of Muhammad Ghori, had no greater right than the other nobles like Yalduz and Qubacha who asserted their independence and autonomy at Ghazna and Sind respectively. This was to be a feature of the early history of the Sultanate. The Sultans needed the support of the nobility to establish and maintain themselves in power. For instance, Iltutmish came to the throne with the support of the nobles of Delhi. The Turkish nobles played an important part in elevating Sultans to the throne and supporting contenders to the throne. According to Barani, the older Turkish nobility used to tell each other: 'what are thou that I am not and what will thou be, that I shall not.

The early Turkish nobility sought to emphasize their exclusiveness and their monopoly to rule. Efforts by other social groups to challenge their monopoly were resented and resisted.

Iltutmish's governing class largely constituted the Turkish slaves. The Turkish slaves nobles of Iltutmish called *turkan-i chihilgani* ('The Forty') wielded considerable power after his death. They were an important group, and efforts by the Sultans to incorporate other groups were met with much resistance. As already mentioned, Raziya Sultan had to face stiff opposition from the Turkish *amirs*, when she elevated an Abyssinian, Jamaluddin Yaqut, to the office of *amir-i akhur*. Efforts of Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246-1266) to break the vested power of this group by dismissing Balban (who was one of the 'Forty') from the court and replacing him by an Indian convert, Imaduddin Raihan, did not meet with much success. Minhaj voiced the anger of the 'Turks of pure lineage' who 'could not tolerate Imaduddin Raihan of the tribes of Hind to rule over them'. The opposition of the Turkish ruling class forced the Sultan to remove Raihan and reinstate Balban.

Besides the Turkish slaves, there was another prominent and powerful section of free-born non-Turkish group of that of the Tajiks (free Turks) in the nobility. Among them the most prominent was Nizamul Mulk Junaidi who served as *wazir* of Iltutmish. Other important and powerful Tajik nobles of Iltutmish were Malik Qutbuddin Hasan Ghuri and Fakhrul Mulk Isami (grandfather of Isami). Turks and Tajiks together constituted the backbone and helped in the consolidation of Iltutmish's empire.

On his accession to the throne, Balban (1266-1286) took measures to break the power of the *turkan-i chihilgani* by various measures. He himself was the creation of a group of nobles loyal to him. Barani states that Balban had several of the older Turkish nobles killed. This was an effort to intimidate the nobility, who could and did pose a challenge to the Crown. Balban himself, according to Barani, kept Sultan Nasiruddin as a 'puppet' (*namuna*); therefore, he was viceroy of the leading old nobles (for details on *turkan-i chihilgani* see **Section 3.4**).

3.5.2 The Khaljis

In 1290, the Ilbari dynasty was overthrown by the Khaljis. The coming to power of

the Khaljis is seen as something new by contemporary historians. Barani mentions that the Khaljis were a different 'race' from the Turks. Modern scholars like C.E. Bosworth speak of them as Turks, but in the thirteenth century no one considered them as Turks, and thus it seems that the accession to power was regarded as something novel because earlier they did not form a significant part of the ruling class. Alauddin Khalji further eroded the power of the older Turkish nobility by bringing in new groups such as the Mongols (the 'New Muslims'), Indians and Abyssinians (for the latter, the example of Malik Kafur is well-known). This trend towards a broadening of the composition of the ruling class continued during the rule of the Tughlaqs.

It may be incidentally mentioned here that there was a very small group called *kotwalian* (plural of *kotwal*) at Delhi during the reign of Balban and Alauddin Khalji. In fact, this was a family group, headed by Fakhruddin who was the *kotwal* of Delhi. This group appears to have played some political role during and after Balban's death.

3.5.3 The Tughluqs

Under Muhammad Tughlaq, apart from the Indians and the Afghans, the ruling class, became unprecedentedly more heterogeneous with the entry of larger numbers of foreign elements, especially the *Khurasani*, whom the Sultan called *aizza* (dear ones). Many of them were appointed as *amir sadah* ('commander of hundred'). Concerning the non-Muslim as well as the converted Indians, Barani laments that the Sultan raised the 'low-born' (*jawahir-i lutrah*) to high status. He mentions musicians, barbers, cooks, etc. who got high positions. He gives the example of Peera Mali (gardener) who was given the *diwan-i wizarat*. Converts like Aziz-ud Din *khammar* (distiller) and Qawamul Mulk Maqbul, Afghans like Malik Makh and Malik Shahu Lodi Afghan, Hindus like Sai Raj Dhara and Bhiran Rai were given *iqtas* and positions.

The reign of Firuz Tughlaq does not give us any clear pattern about the social origins of the nobles. The situation was fluid with a false veneer of peace between the Sultan and the *amirs*. Certain designations were used with reference to the nobles – *khan*, *malik* and *amir*. *Khan* was often used with reference to Afghan nobles, *amir* came to mean a commander, *malik* – a chief, ruler, or king. Along with their titles of honour, the nobles were given some symbols of dignity designated as *maratib* which signified privileges – *khilat* (robe of honour), sword and dagger presented by the Sultan, horses and elephants that they were entitled to use in their processions, canopy of State and the grant of parasol (*chhatri*) and insignia and kettle-drums.

It is significant to note that every Sultan sought to form and organize a group of nobles which would be personally loyal to him. This obviated the necessity of depending upon previous groups whose loyalty was suspect. That is why we find the contemporary historians employing terms like Qutbi (ref. Qutbuddin Aibak), Shamsi (ref. Shamsuddin Iltutmish), Balbani (ref. Balban) and Alai (ref. Alauddin Khalji) *amirs*. But one thing was quite certain: every group tried to capture the attention of the Sultan – whether weak or strong – because all privileges and power issued forth from the sovereign. This, in turn, went to a great extent in strengthening gradually the position of the Sultan himself if he was a man of strong will.

The Afghans were frequently recruited into the feudal bureaucracy of the Delhi

Sultanate. With the coming of the Lodis (1451-1526), the Afghan predominance got enlarged.

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) Examine the composition of the ruling class under the Ilbarites.
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- 2) What changes were brought about in the composition of the nobility under the Khaljis and the Tughluqs?
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- 3) Mark right (✓) or wrong (×) against the following statements:
 - a) In the thirteenth century the Turkish nobles were paid in cash.
 - b) Muhammad Tughlaq incorporated different social groups into his nobility.
 - c) Barani regards the Khaljis as Turks.

3.6 CONFLICT BETWEEN THE NOBILITY AND THE SULTANS

The political history of the Sultanate period testifies that consolidation and decline of the Sultanate were largely the result of constructive and destructive activities of the nobles (*umara*). The nobles always tried to maximise their demands in terms of the economic and political gains.

Under the Ilbarite rule (1206-90), the conflicts usually revolved around three issues: succession, organization of the nobility and division of economic and political power between them and the Sultans. When Qutbuddin Aibak became the Sultan, his authority was not accepted by the influential nobles such as Qubacha (governor of Multan and Uchh), Yilduz (governor of Ghazni), and Ali Mardan (governor of Bengal). This particular problem was inherited by Iltutmish who finally overcame it through diplomacy as well as by force. Later, Iltutmish organised the nobles in a corporate body, known as *turkan-i chihilgani* ('The Forty') which was personally loyal to him. Naturally, other groups of nobles (see **Section 3.5**) envied the status and privileges of the members of the 'Forty', but this does not mean that the latter were free from their internal bickerings. At the most they united in one principle: to plug the entry of non-Turkish persons in the charmed circle as far as possible. On the other hand, the 'Forty' tried to retain its political influence over the Sultan who would not like to alienate this group, but at the same time would not surrender his royal privilege of appointing persons of other groups as officers. Thus, a delicate balance was achieved by Iltutmish which broke down after his death. For example, Iltutmish had declared his daughter, Raziya, as his successor during his life, but some nobles did not approve her succession after his death, because she tried to organize non-Turkish groups (Abyssinians and Indians) as counterweight to the

'Forty'. That was one main reason why a number of nobles of this group supported her brother, Ruknuddin whom they thought to be incompetent and weak, thereby giving them an opportunity to maintain their position. This spectacle continued during the reign of Nasiruddin Mahmud (1246-66) also, as exemplified by the rise and fall of Imaduddin Raihan, an Indian convert. This episode coincided with the banishment of Balban who was the *naib* (deputy) of Sultan Mahmud (and also belonged to the 'Forty') and his subsequent recall.

During Balban's reign (1266-87), the influence of the *turkan-i chihilgani* was minimised. Since he himself was a member of the 'Forty' before his accession, he was fully aware of the nobles' rebellious activities. Therefore, he eased out the 'tallest poppies' amongst them through assassin's dagger or poisoning, even including his cousin. On the other hand, he formed a group of loyal and trusted nobles called 'Balbani'. The removal of many members of the 'Forty' deprived the state of the services of veterans and the void could not be fulfilled by the new and not so experienced 'Balbani' nobles. This situation inevitably led to the fall of the Ilbarite rule, paving the way for the Khaljis.

The reign of Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) saw a broadening in the composition of nobles. He did not admit of monopolisation of the state by any one single group of nobles. State offices were open to talent and loyalty, to the exclusion of race and creed. Besides, he controlled them through various measures (see **Section 3.5**). Moreover, the enhancement of land revenue up to 50 per cent of the surplus produce (see **Unit 9**) must have pacified the nobles because an increase in the revenue of their respective *iqta* would have raised their salary, too. Territorial expansion also provided enough resources towards recruiting persons with *talent*. The case of Malik Kafur, an Abyssinian slave, is well-known. But this situation was shortlived: the death of Alauddin Khalji brought out once again the dissensions and conspiracies of the nobles, leading to the elimination of the Khaljis as rulers.

As for the Tughlaqs, you know (see **Section 3.5**) how Muhammad Tughlaq made attempts to organize nobles again and again, with turns and twists. But all his efforts failed to put them under check. Even the Khurasanis, whom he used to call '*Azzah*' (the dear ones), betrayed him. The problems created by the nobles can be gauged from the fact that twenty-two rebellions took place during his reign with the loss of at least one territory, later known as Bahmani kingdom.

The crisis set in motion after Muhammad Tughlaq's death seems to have gone out of hands. Under these circumstances, Firuz Tughlaq could not be expected to be stern with the nobles. They were given many concessions. They succeeded in making their *iqtas* hereditary. The appeasement policy of Sultan pleased the nobles, but in the long run, it proved disastrous. The army became inefficient because the practice of branding (*dagh*) of the horses introduced by Alauddin Khalji was almost given up. It was not possible, henceforth, for his descendants or later rulers to roll back the tide of decline of the Delhi Sultanate.

Under the Sayyids (1414-51) and the Lodis (1451-1526), the situation did not appear to be comfortable: the former were not at all fit for the role of saviours. Sikandar Lodi made the last attempt to prevent the looming catastrophe. But dissensions among the Afghans and their unlimited individual ambitions hastened the final demise, actually its murder, with Babur as the executioner.

3.7 THE ULAMA

The *ulama*, the theological class, had an important position in the Sultanate. It was from them that important legal and judicial appointments were made – the *sadr-us sudur*, *shaikh-ul Islam*, *qazi*, *mufti muhtasib*, *imam* and *khatib*. The *ulama* can be seen as an adjunct of the ruling class, maintained by revenue grants from the Sultan, and often by members of the ruling class. The ideological significance of the *ulama* was great as they provided legitimacy to the ruling class. They exercised an influence which was not only religious but sometimes political, too.

Ulama were the most scholarly and esteemed section of the Muslim society. They largely devoted themselves in teaching and scholarly pursuits. They were men of piety and high morals. It was considered that they were ‘heirs of the Prophets’ *ilm-Faraz* (Muslim law). However, they were not ordained priests. Any person of piety, scholarship and of high morals could have been accepted by the society and could become an *alim* (plural *ulama*). On the basis of their attitude towards worldly affairs *ulama* were divided into two categories: *ulama-i akharat* those who led life of piety and learning and kept themselves aloof from the materialistic and political pursuits. Among them Alauddin Usuli of Badaun, teacher of Nizamuddin Auliya held high esteem during the Sultanate period. Maulana Shihabuddin of Meerut, Maulana Ahmad and Maulana Kathali are praised by Nizamuddin Auliya as the three *danishmands* (scholars) of his time. Baba Farid Ganj-i Shakar was also full of praise of Maulana Nur Turk.

The second category was of *ulama-i duniya* who mixed freely with kings and nobles and possessed mundane outlook. *Ulama-i duniya* aspired materialistic gains and often appointed at number of state offices of religious nature. The highest religious office of the state was *qazi-i mamalik/sadr-i jahan/sadr-us sudur*. *Shaikh-ul Islam* was the highest ecclesiastical office which was responsible for the religious grants and the maintenance of the pious and the destitutes. Iltutmish appointed Saiyyid Nuruddin Mubarak Ghaznavi to the office of *Shaikh-ul Islam*. Shaikh Jalaluddin Bistami also served as *Shaikh-ul Islam* under Iltutmish.

Qazis were appointed in almost every town who were responsible to look after exclusively the civil disputes as per *Shariat*. Balban aptly remarked about the *qazis* of his reign: ‘I have three *qazis*, one of them does not fear me but fears God; the other one does not fear God but fears me; the third one neither fears me nor God...Fakhr Naqila fears me but does not fear God; the *Qazi-i Lashkar* fears God but does not fear me; Minhaj neither fears me nor God.’

Khatibs and *imams* were often appointed in the mosques and lead prosperous lifestyle who used to organize *tazkir* (sermon) meetings. Minhaj-us Siraj held the offices of *qaza*, *khitaat*, *imamat*, and *ihtisab*. He was so good that Nizamuddin Auliya in his younger days used to go every Monday to listen to his sermons. They, at times, were also asked to recite sermons in the moment of crisis, to inspire and encourage forces and masses. When Mongols attacked, Bahram Shah asked to deliver sermons (*tazkir*) at his *Qasr-i Sufaid*. Though none of these offices were hereditary, often certain families emerged as family of the *qazis*.

A number of *ulama* were appointed at *madrasas* as teachers; esteemed ones often held the principalship of *madrasas*. Minhaj held the position of the principalship of Muizi and Nasiriyah *madrasas* in Delhi. Maulana Zainuddin was appointed as teacher in Muizi *madrasa*.

Ulama enjoyed great respect in the court of Delhi Sultans. Hasan Nizami mentions great respect shown by Aibak towards *ulama*. During Iltutmish's reign Iltutmish faced first attack of *ulama* at the time of his accession when *ulama* led by Qazi Wajhuddin Kashani asked whether he was properly manumitted? However, Iltutmish handled the situation so tactfully that they became his supporters all through to the extent that when Raziya was appointed heir there was no protest from the *ulama* to her accession. During Bahram Shah's reign *ulama* became quite powerful; even some of the *qazis* entered into matrimonial alliances with the royal household. Qazi Nasiruddin married a sister of Muizzuddin Bahram. They frequently involved into dirty politics and lost their moral and religious dignity.

Check Your Progress-4

- 1) What measures were undertaken by Alauddin Khalji to control his nobility?

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- 2) Critically analyse the conflict between the nobility and the Delhi Sultans. Do you agree that over ambitions of the nobility contributed to the decline of the Sultanate? Comment.

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- 3) What role did the *ulama* play in the Sultanate polity?

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3.8 SUMMARY

The Delhi Sultanate formed very much part of the Eastern Caliphate. Legally, the political head of the Sultanate was the Caliph. However, for all practical purposes Sultan was independent and all powerful. Delhi Sultans acknowledged Caliphal authority and welcomed Caliph's envoy, his *manshur* and robes of honour with pomp and dignity.

With the establishment of the Sultanate a new ruling class emerged which was entirely different in its nature and composition to its predecessors. In the beginning, primarily, it maintained its alien (Turkish) character, but, later, as the process of amalgamation deepened, the Sultans started recruiting nobles from other social groups as well. Thus, the nature and the character of the nobility widened greatly and not only the Turks, but Indian Muslims, non-Muslims and even foreigners (Abyssinians, etc.) were incorporated into its fold.

One political reason for the decline of the Sultanate was the absence of any well-established and universally accepted law of succession. This was in line with the entire history of the Islamic polity. As long as a Sultan was strong and was able to

gain the support of some groups of nobles, he could continue with some superficial semblance of dynastic stability. Dissensions and conflicts amongst the ruling groups might remain apparently dormant in such circumstances; but at the slightest opportunity their internal struggle would come to the force often in a violent fashion.

The *ulema* can also be seen as an adjunct of the ruling class who were primarily maintained by revenue-free land grants or *wazifa* (cash). Sultan though recognized *ulama's* power and attempted to abide by *sharia*, the Sultanate state was not a theocracy, instead Delhi Sultans, particularly Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughluq, acted as per political expediency and often transgressed *shariat*.

3.9 KEY WORDS

<i>Aizzah</i>	“Dear Ones” (Khurasani nobles under Muhammad Tughluq)
<i>Amir-i akhur</i>	Master of royal stable/ horses
<i>Amir-i sadah</i>	“Centurians”, “Commander of hundred”
<i>Khat-i azadi</i>	Letter of manumission
<i>Tajik</i>	a race/“free-born nobles”
<i>Turkan-i chihilgani</i>	“The Forty” (corporate body of Turkish nobles of Ilutmish)
<i>Ulama</i>	Theologians
<i>Umara</i>	Nobles (plural of <i>amir</i>)
<i>Wajhdar</i>	Salaried persons <i>iqta</i> -holders

3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See Section 3.2
- 2) See Section 3.3
- 3) See Section 3.3
- 4) See Section 3.3

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Section 3.4
- 2) See Section 3.4

Check Your Progress-3

- 1) See Sub-section 3.5.1
- 2) See Sub-sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3
- 3) a) × b) ✓ c) ×

Check Your Progress-4

1. See Section 3.6
2. See Section 3.7
3. See Section 3.8

3.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

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3.12 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECCOMENDATIONS

Political Structure of the Delhi Sultanate: 13th and 14th Centuries

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hscPJx6_KQ

Political Structure of the Delhi Sultanate: 13th and 14th Centuries

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pc-36H7PFA>