

Qutb al-Din Aibak: 1206-1210

He was taken from Nishapur to Ghazni and sold as a slave. Muhammad Ghori bought him. After coming into Muhammad Ghori's service, Aibak's life changed greatly.

Through his talent, hard work, honesty, and loyalty, Aibak gained Ghori's trust. Ghori promoted him to the position of Amir-i-Akhur (officer in charge of the royal stables). While in this position, Aibak served the Sultan in the wars of Ghori, Bakhtiyar, and other slaves. Later, he played an important role in the Battle of Tarain. Pleased with his courage, Ghori appointed him the administrator of Samana, Kuhram, and Hansi. From 1192 to 1206 AD, he successfully administered the conquered parts of northern India as Ghori's representative. Aibak also expanded Turkish power in northern India. He fought with Rajput kings, defeated the Gahadavalas, played an important role in the forts of Gujarat, Badaun, and Gwalior, and in 1205 AD, he supported Muhammad Ghori against the Khokhars. In fact, Aibak gave shape to Ghori's military plans. That's why historians consider him the real founder of the Turkish empire in northern India. Aibak emerged as an independent ruler only after Ghori's death.

Some historians believe that Muhammad Ghori appointed Aibak as his representative ruler in India. They think that after suppressing the Khokhars and while returning to Ghazni, Muhammad Ghori formally appointed Aibak as Malik (chief) and Naib (deputy governor) of the Indian provinces. There is no evidence from that time to support this idea. However, like other nobles, Aibak did not formally act like he was subordinate. After strengthening himself, he couldn't do so. Also, perhaps his ability was to have independent rights over the provinces under him. Later events support this idea. Although Ghori trusted his slaves a lot, he neither named an heir nor freed Qutb al-Din from slavery. Therefore, Aibak had to struggle hard to gain power.

Aibak's Accession to the Throne: When Muhammad Ghori died in 1206 AD, he had no direct heir. The administration of the Indian territories was in the hands of Qutb al-Din Aibak. After Ghori's death, the question of who would rule his empire was not settled. Ghori's nephew, Ghiyasuddin Mahmud, became the ruler of the Ghurid dynasty. His position was very weak. Three people were eager to gain control over the nobles of the Ghurid empire: Tajuddin Yildoz, Nasiruddin Qabacha, and Qutb al-Din Aibak. Aibak still controlled the Indian territories. Therefore, in these circumstances, Aibak's importance was greater than the other claimants. That is why Ghiyasuddin had no choice but to accept Aibak as the ruler of India. He accepted Aibak as the ruler of India. After getting

permission from the Sultan, Aibak was crowned on June 25, 1206, in Lahore, although he made Delhi his capital. Initially, Aibak's position was only that of Malik and Sipahsalar (commander). That's why he could not issue coins in his own name, but after becoming Sultan in 1208 AD, he got the legitimate right to become the independent Sultan of Delhi. Not only that, but the Sultan also honored him with the title of Sultan by sending him a throne, parasol, durbaja (a type of banner), naubat (ceremonial drums), and nakara (kettledrums). In this way, the independent rule of the Delhi Sultanate was established in India.

Aibak's Problems and How He Solved Them: When Aibak became Sultan, he controlled many areas of India. His rule extended from the northwest border to the Sindh province in the upper Indus River region. Besides this, he controlled the areas of Multan, Hansi, Lahore, Tabarhinda, Ajmer, Delhi, Banaras, Kannauj, Kuntit, Kol, Badaun, Awadh, Bahraich, Bihar, Bengal, and Malwa. Bihar and Bengal in eastern India were also part of the Turkish Sultanates. Bengal was under Turkish control, but the Turkish power was weakening. Aibak's rivals, Yildoz, Qubacha, and the Khaljis of Bengal-Bihar, were trying to increase their power and influence. Aibak faced other problems as well. The Mu'izzi and Qutbi nobles were also unhappy with him for taking control of Ghori's territories. The Rajput states were trying to gain independence. Kalinjar and Gwalior had become independent. The Khaljis and the Sena dynasty rulers were increasing their influence in Bengal-Bihar. The administrative system had broken down. In such a situation, Aibak focused all his attention on strengthening his position. Instead of expanding the empire, he made the security and administrative organization of the conquered territories his goal.

Real Founder: Among the slaves of Mu'izzuddin Muhammad Ghori, Aibak held a very important position. He considered himself the successor of the slave Sultan. He had obtained proof of his freedom from slavery from Ghiyasuddin Mahmud, Muhammad Ghori's successor. He had also obtained the important position of Amir-i-Akhur. While in this position, Aibak served the Sultan in the wars of Ghori, Bakhtiyar, and other slaves. Later, he played an important role in the Battle of Tarain. Pleased with his courage, Ghori appointed him the administrator of Samana, Kuhram, and Hansi. That is why Qutb al-Din is considered the founder of Turkish power in northern India. Therefore, Aibak decided to bravely face Yildoz.

Contemporary Muslim historians say that after being defeated in India, Yildoz left Ghazni to take control of Aibak. He attacked Lahore. Qutb al-Din defeated Yildoz in battle and drove him out of India. Not only that, but he also advanced and captured Ghazni (1208 AD). Qutb al-Din could not maintain control over Ghazni for long. When the local chiefs

opposed him, Aibak had to leave Ghazni and return to Lahore. Yildoz recaptured Ghazni. But now Aibak did not dare to attack Yildoz again. Even with these wars, he was secure from one strong rival. His position had now become stronger than before.

Relations with Qubacha: Qutb al-Din's second rival was Nasiruddin Qubacha. He was the administrator of Multan and upper Sindh. After the death of Muhammad Ghori, he also began to rule as an independent ruler. He also took control of Sindh. Qutb al-Din was also in danger from him. That is why Aibak also settled his relations with him. Unlike with Yildoz, Aibak used a friendly and matrimonial strategy with Qubacha. He married his daughter to Qubacha. This ended the bitterness between them. Qubacha accepted Aibak's authority. In this way, Aibak strengthened his position by bringing another influential rival to his side.

Aibak and Ali Mardan: At the time when Turkish power was expanding in other parts of India during Muhammad Ghori's time, an ambitious Khalji chief named Ali Mardan established Turkish power east of Ikhtiyaruddin Khalji. Between 1197 and 1202 AD, he took Bihar under his control. Advancing from Bihar, he captured Nadiya (Bengal) and established a Turkish state in Lakhnauti. Ali Mardan later killed Ikhtiyaruddin Khalji and began to rule in Bengal like an independent Sultan, but his position was not strong. The Khalji chiefs constantly opposed him. Therefore, Prince Mahmud asked Aibak for help.

Aibak wanted to establish his control over Bengal. He got a golden opportunity. He indirectly sent his army to Lakhnauti to fight against Ali Mardan. Ali Mardan and other Khalji chiefs accepted Aibak's authority. In this way, Aibak's influence was established over Bengal as well.

Policy Towards Rajput States: After strengthening his initial position, Aibak paid attention to those rebellious Rajput states that had taken advantage of the situation created by Ghori's assassination to establish independent rule and were constantly challenging the Turkish state. Kalinjar and Gwalior had been lost. Turkish officials had been driven out of Badaun and Farrukhabad. The Rajputs of Aligarh had declared themselves independent. It became necessary for Aibak to bring these states under his control. Aibak recaptured Badaun. Iltutmish was appointed the administrator there. Then, after punishing the rulers, he returned to Delhi and established Turkish power. Aibak could not recapture Kalinjar and Gwalior due to his untimely death. He died in 1210 AD after falling from his horse while playing chaugan (polo).

Evaluation of Aibak: Aibak was the founder of the Delhi Sultanate. Although he faced many difficulties due to being a former slave, after becoming Sultan, he laid the foundation of Turkish rule with his ability. He had many rivals in other parts of Ghori's

empire—Yildoz, Qubacha, and Ali Mardan. Despite facing many difficulties due to slavery, he overcame his opponents with his ability and foresight. Aibak was known as 'Lakh Bakhsh' (giver of lakhs). He had great political foresight. He was a patron of literature and art. He had famous scholars like Nizami and Fakhruddin in his court. He also built two famous mosques—the Quwwat-ul-Islam in Delhi and the 'Adhai Din Ka Jhopra' in Ajmer. He gave importance to capable slaves like Iltutmish, but he could not complete his work. Aibak had no experience in administration and organization. Yet, in a short time, he laid the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate. Even in this period, most of his time was spent fighting against opponents like Yildoz and Qubacha. This is his greatest achievement. On the foundation laid by him, Iltutmish and Balban later built the magnificent structure of the Sultanate. Aibak was full of courage, bravery, and loyalty. Dr. Habibullah, praising Aibak, says that "Aibak had the fearlessness of the Turks and a disregard for defeats against unfamiliar or conquered enemies." Later historians Farishta and Abul Fazl also praise Aibak.