

Iltutmish: 1210-1236

Early Life of Iltutmish: Like Aibak, Iltutmish was also an Ilbari Turk. His early situation was much more unfortunate than Aibak's. In childhood, a man named Kushak loved him more than all his other sons. Because of this, his other brothers were jealous of him. One day, his brothers took him to Bukhara and sold him as a slave. From Bukhara, he was taken to Ghazni and then to Baghdad. In Baghdad, he came into contact with Sufis and was greatly influenced by their ideas. In the slave market of Ghazni, Sultan Mu'izzuddin Shah Muhammad-bin-Ghori noticed him. He was impressed by Iltutmish. Ghori bought him from the trader and ordered him to be brought to India, giving the trader extra profit besides the market price. Later, when Qutb al-Din Aibak expressed his desire to buy Iltutmish, the Sultan ordered the slave trader to take Iltutmish to Delhi. It was in Delhi that Qutb al-Din bought him as his slave.

In Delhi, Iltutmish quickly became a trusted confidant of Qutb al-Din Aibak. He was appointed Sar-i-Jandar (chief of the royal bodyguards). Impressed by Iltutmish's administrative abilities, Qutb al-Din also gave him other administrative positions. He was given the position of Amir-i-Shikar (master of the hunt). In 1200 AD, he was made the governor of Hansi. Due to his competence, dedication, and bravery, he soon rose above other Turkish slaves. He campaigned against the Khokhars. Iltutmish impressed Muhammad Ghori so much that during the campaign against the Khokhars, Ghori ordered Iltutmish to be freed from slavery. Muhammad Ghori was impressed by his extraordinary bravery and ordered his release from servitude. As a result, in 1205 AD, Iltutmish was freed from Aibak's slavery. After this, he was appointed the administrator of Badaun. Aibak also married one of his daughters to him.

Iltutmish's Accession to the Throne: After the death of Qutb al-Din Aibak, the Turkish nobles placed Aram Shah on the throne. Since Aram Shah was not a hereditary successor of Aibak, he did not gain the loyalty of the Turkish nobles. He was also a lazy and incompetent ruler. This led to the influence of anarchic elements, and disorder spread throughout the state. Sensing the danger in this situation, the Turkish nobles... (the text seems to have a slight break here, but the meaning is clear: they were concerned about the instability). Jahanze Rani and Qubacha moved towards Sindh and Multan and captured Bhakkar and Sivistan. The Khalji Malikis also revolted in Bengal. The new Turkish state established by Qutb al-Din was on the verge of collapse.

In such a desperate situation, on the advice of the disheartened Amir Ali Ismail and some other nobles and officials, Iltutmish was invited to take the throne of Delhi. They sent him an invitation to reach Delhi quickly from Badaun. Iltutmish took advantage of this opportunity and marched towards Delhi. Aram Shah tried to stop Iltutmish, but he was defeated in battle and killed. Iltutmish reached Delhi unopposed and seized the throne. In this way, the rule of Aibak's lineage began in Delhi.

Iltutmish's Problems: Although Iltutmish became Sultan without much difficulty, his problems were not yet over. His position was like a crown of thorns. Iltutmish had three main rivals: Yildoz in Ghazni, Qubacha in Sindh, and Ali Mardan in Bengal (Lakhnauti). The Rajput rulers were again

challenging the Delhi Sultanate. Kalinjar and Gwalior had already slipped out of Turkish hands. The newly established state also faced the threat of Mongol invasion. Iltutmish's internal situation was also unsatisfactory. A section of the Turkish nobles (Mu'izzi and Qutbi) was also against Iltutmish. The internal situation of the state was also worrying. The administrative system had completely broken down. There was a huge decrease in revenue. Turkish officials and revenue collectors faced great difficulty in collecting taxes from Badaun, Banaras, and Kannauj. Iltutmish completed this task. For this reason, many scholars consider Iltutmish to be the real founder of the Turkish Sultanate in India.

Iltutmish's Political Works: Iltutmish remained on the throne from 1210 to 1236 AD. During this period, he first strengthened his position by eliminating his opponents (1210-20). His second task was to protect the state from Mongol invaders (1221-27). In the third phase (1228-36), he expanded his power and focused on administrative organization.

First Phase:

Suppression of Rivals by Iltutmish—Fall of Yildoz: As soon as he became Sultan, Iltutmish first planned to deal with his rivals. The biggest challenge for Iltutmish was Yildoz. Due to the increasing influence of the Khwarazm Shah in Central Asia, Yildoz was finding it difficult to maintain control over Ghazni. Therefore, his only option was to try and take control of Delhi. In the meantime, the Khwarazm Shah captured Ghazni, forcing Yildoz to flee. From Ghazni, he reached Lahore and established his authority there.

Qubacha left Lahore. After that, Yildoz took control of the region from Punjab to Thanesar and began planning to conquer Delhi. This situation was extremely dangerous for Iltutmish. He could no longer ignore Yildoz. He advanced from Delhi to stop Yildoz. In the Battle of Tarain in 1215-16, Yildoz was defeated. He was taken prisoner and sent to Badaun, where he was killed. With the death of Yildoz, Iltutmish's strongest rival was eliminated. In the words of Professor Nizami, "For Iltutmish, this was a double victory: the destruction of the most formidable enemy and the final break from Ghazni, which ensured the independent existence of Delhi."

End of Qubacha: Iltutmish's second rival was Qubacha. After the death of Aibak, Qubacha had strengthened his power by taking control of Sindh. Later, after defeating Yildoz, he had seized Lahore from him. After defeating and killing Yildoz and leaving Lahore, Qubacha again established control over Lahore. To suppress his power, Iltutmish attacked Lahore in 1217 AD. Qubacha was defeated and fled. Pursuing him, Iltutmish appointed his son Nasiruddin Muhammad as the ruler. Although Qubacha's power was weakened in this struggle, it was not completely destroyed. In fact, Iltutmish could not pay full attention to Qubacha due to the potential threat of Mongol invasion. After the Mongols retreated, he again turned his attention towards Qubacha. In 1226 AD, he captured Bhatinda, Sarsuti, and Lahore and advanced towards upper Sindh. Qubacha fled in fear. He sent his son Bahram to Iltutmish with a peace proposal, which Iltutmish rejected. Disappointed, Qubacha committed suicide by drowning himself in the river. Iltutmish gained control over Sindh and many border areas, extending his sphere of influence far and wide.

Second Phase

The Threat of Mongol Invasion: Conflict with the Mongols: Iltutmish also had to face the potential invasion of the Mongols. In the 13th century, the Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan had established his dominance by trampling all over Central Asia. Many rulers and dynasties of Central Asia had been defeated by the Mongols. The Shah of Khwarazm also suffered the wrath of the Mongols. The Mongols took control of the Khwarazm Empire. The Shah of Khwarazm's son, Jalaluddin, defeated by the Mongols, fled his kingdom. The Shah ran towards the Caspian coast, and the Mongol army ran towards the Indus River. Genghis Khan also followed him and stopped at the Indus River. He possibly also instructed Iltutmish not to help Jalaluddin. This was a kind of warning. So, when the Mongols asked for help from Iltutmish through their envoy, Iltutmish had his envoy killed and waited for the Mongols to return. Some Mongols suddenly entered the borders of his kingdom and tried to establish their terror in Punjab and Sindh. The Mongols were defeated in Sindh via Bamiyan, but hearing the news of Iltutmish's arrival, the Mongols left India (1228 AD). Genghis Khan also turned back, wanting to pursue him. In this way, Iltutmish protected the newly established state from Mongol invaders.

Third Phase

Military Campaigns: Victory over Bihar and Bengal: After eliminating his rivals and being free from the potential invasion of Mongol invaders, Iltutmish turned his attention towards the expansion and strengthening of the state. First, he focused on Bengal. After the death of Aibak, the Khalji Amir Ali Mardan killed Alauddin Khalji, the independent chief of Lakhnauti, and himself became the ruler of Bengal. He assumed the title of Ghiyasuddin and expanded his dominance. He extended his power in Bihar and collected taxes from the states of Jajnagar, Tirhut, Kamrup, and Lakhanur. It became necessary for Iltutmish to suppress him because southern Bihar, a significant part of the Delhi Sultanate, was under his control. Iltutmish had already demonstrated significant military skills during Qutb al-Din's reign, and by showing his military power, he had established a special place for himself among the nobles and rulers of Delhi. Iltutmish had good experience in securing his power. Iltutmish organized his army and ordered an attack on Lakhnauti. In 1226 AD, Iltutmish attacked Lakhnauti and killed Hisamuddin. Mahmud was appointed the Muqta (provincial governor) of Bengal. After Mahmud's death, disorder spread again. Therefore, in 1230 AD, Iltutmish attacked Bengal, established peace and order, and reinstated Alauddin Jani as the governor of Bengal. Bengal now became a province of the Sultanate.

Conflict with Rajput States: Iltutmish now turned his attention towards the Rajputs. The Rajput rulers had revolted as before. They had stopped paying taxes. They were organizing their power and trying to end Turkish rule. It was essential for Iltutmish to assert his authority over these rebellious Rajput states (Chandelas, Pratiharas, Chauhans, etc.). Therefore, a plan was made to defeat the Rajput states. Iltutmish achieved victory over Ranthambore in 1226 AD and Mandor in 1227 AD. After that, he took control of states like Jalore, Ajmer, Bayana, Gwalior, Narwar, Malwa, etc. In 1233 AD, he also attacked Kalinjar and received its submission, although this success was temporary. Between 1235-36 AD, he also attacked and looted Nagda, Ujjain, Bhilsa, and Chanderi. He also attacked Gujarat, but he was not successful in conquering it.

Conquest of the Doab: The situation in the Doab region was also unsatisfactory. Taking advantage of the Sultanate's weak economy, many states had become independent. Iltutmish re-established his authority over Badaun, Kannauj, Banaras, Hardoi, Awadh, Sambhal, and Sirhut. Special military campaigns were conducted to punish the rebellious landlords. The army was reinstated to strengthen the internal situation of the states. Due to these military campaigns, not only was the Sultanate's position strengthened, but its borders were also expanded. Economic and administrative control over the Doab was also strengthened.

Security of the Frontier Region: Iltutmish also arranged for the security of the northwestern frontier province. He sent an army to suppress the rebellion of the Khokhars spread in this region and to establish peace. The army captured Swalik, Jalandhar, and Nandana and established peace there; but during this campaign in 1236 AD, Iltutmish died.

Receiving a Letter of Approval from the Caliphate: A major event of Iltutmish's reign was receiving legal recognition of his Sultanate from the Caliph in Baghdad. Despite being Turkish rulers of Delhi, they respected the Abbasid Caliph. They did not interfere in the Caliph's affairs. Through their envoys in 1229 AD, they got Caliph al-Mustansir Billah to recognize Iltutmish as the legitimate and independent Sultan of Delhi. Iltutmish was given the title of Nasir-Amir-ul-Mominin (helper of the Commander of the Faithful and assistant of the Caliph). Because of this, Iltutmish became legally the Sultan, his prestige increased, and his opponents were silenced.

Administrative System: After expanding his kingdom, Iltutmish also tried to organize it. For this purpose, he made necessary changes in the existing administrative system. Until now, the administrative structure of the Turkish state largely depended on the military system. Military officers were appointed in the conquered territories, who collected revenue and maintained peace in many areas. This system was not strong. Since the ruler did not have a direct relationship with the administration, he often fell victim to the rebellions of the military officers in the provinces. To change this system, Iltutmish took many important steps.

Organizing and Strengthening the Sultanate: Iltutmish tried to establish the Sultan's power as supreme. Therefore, he planned to replace the opposing nobles from important positions with his trusted men. He established several groups of his loyal slaves (a group of forty slaves known as the "Chahalgani" or "The Forty"). He appointed them to high and important positions in the state. The opposing nobles were suppressed, their property was confiscated, and many of them were put to death. This action of Iltutmish established the Sultan's influence and fear among the opposing nobles. Besides administration, the new Turkish state established by Iltutmish became dependent on the Sultan in other areas as well.

Like Aibak, Iltutmish did not differentiate between Indian and foreign Muslims, and Turkish officers and soldiers were appointed in areas where there was a possibility of rebellion or unrest. Iltutmish tried to introduce the principles of the Iranian monarchy in India. He also adopted the principle of hereditary monarchy and nominated his daughter Razia as his successor during his lifetime. According to Habib and Nizami, "Iltutmish established a state that was completely Indian, but whose only high-ranking officials were Turks, Tajiks, and Tajiks." The basis of Iltutmish's power was his slave officers and the noble Turkish class. Religious scholars like Fakhruddin Razi

(Fakhr-i-Mudabbir) were Iltutmish's main companions, intellectuals, and gave him necessary advice on legal matters. Sami'lik Hazrats (respected individuals) like Sayyid Nuruddin Muhammad Bukhari, Qutulmulk Hasan Gangi, Amirul Umra, and 'Wazir Khwaja Khira' ul-Mulk Junaidi came to Iltutmish's court as his administrators, nobles, ministers, and other famous people. Their presence increased the splendor and status of his court so much that it began to resemble that of Mahmud and his courts.

Establishment of the Iqta System: An important contribution of Iltutmish was the establishment of the Iqta system. He divided the entire kingdom into smaller units called Iqtas. Their officers were called Iqta'dars. There were different categories of Iqta'dars. Large Iqta'dars worked as provincial governors. Small Iqta'dars only performed military duties. The Iqta'dars also looked after the revenue collection of their Iqtas. Small Iqta'dars only performed military duties. The Iqta'dars were given the right to collect revenue from their respective areas in return for their service, a part of which they could keep for their expenses. The Iqta system had the potential to end the anarchy that existed before. The control of the Iqta'dars was well-established. Their influence was seen on the feudal system. This system helped in strengthening the central power.

Military and Judicial Reforms: Iltutmish also made reforms in the military system and the justice system. He defined the structure of the royal army. Only योग्य (competent/qualified) individuals were given positions while recruiting into the army. Arrangements were made for the maintenance of the army and the provision of weapons to the soldiers. The practice of giving Jagirs (land grants) instead of cash salaries to army officers began. Although the consequences of this system proved fatal in later times, in the context of that time, this system secured the loyalty of the soldiers.

For the administration of proper justice, Iltutmish appointed officials called Qazis and Amir-Dad in Delhi and other major cities, who settled cases. Appeals against their decisions could be made to the Chief Qazi; however, the Sultan was the final and supreme judge. The Sultan was always ready to establish justice.

Currency Reforms: Another work of Iltutmish was to change the prevailing currency system (minting). He introduced the Arab-style Tanka in place of the existing coins. These were made of gold and silver, weighing 175 grains. The name of the Caliph was also inscribed on the Tanka. These coins could only be minted in the royal mint. Iltutmish also started the practice of inscribing the name of the mint on the Tankas. In addition to the Tanka, copper Jitals were also issued. By issuing these coins, Iltutmish gave evidence of the strengthening of his power.

Review of Iltutmish's Works: Iltutmish holds an important place among the early Turkish Sultans. He completed the unfinished tasks of Qutb al-Din Aibak. Professor Ishwari Prasad considers Iltutmish to be the 'real founder' of the Slave Dynasty. Dr. R. P. Tripathi also believes that "it was through his hands that the real organization of Muslim sovereignty in India took place, providing the country with a capital, an independent state, a monarchical system, and a ruling class." Many historians have praised Iltutmish's military, administrative, and personal qualities. In the words of Professor Habibullah, "Aibak outlined the boundaries and sovereignty of the Delhi Sultanate.

Iltutmish was, undoubtedly, its first Sultan." Professor Nizami has praised Iltutmish's works, saying that "Aibak only gave a glimpse of the outline of the Delhi Sultanate. Iltutmish gave it a personality, a position, an administration, a country, a system of governance, and a ruling class." Struggling with various circumstances, he provided stability to the Turkish state. He was a skilled general, a brave conqueror, a farsighted and just ruler, and a patron of art and literature. In the field of art, his greatest contribution was completing Aibak's unfinished Qutub Minar. During his time, Delhi experienced cultural development. It became a cultural center where scholars and artists coming from Central Asia found patronage. In reality, Iltutmish was the real founder of Turkish rule in India. The 'real organization of Muslim sovereignty' in India begins with Iltutmish. Completing the tasks started by Iltutmish and protecting the newly established Turkish Sultanate from disintegration was his greatest achievement. While many states in Central Asia were destroyed by Mongol invaders, Iltutmish, through his diplomacy and courage, protected the Turkish state in India from the threat of Mongol invasion. He freed the Delhi Sultanate from the influence of Ghazni and established it as an independent state.

Firoz Shah: 1236

Before his death, Iltutmish had expressed his wish to hand over his kingdom to his daughter Razia. The reason for this was that his योग्य (capable/worthy) and elder son, Nasiruddin Mahmud, and Mu'izzuddin had already died, and his younger son, Ruknuddin Firoz Shah, was a weak and incompetent person. Unfortunately, Iltutmish's wish could not be fulfilled. The Turkish nobles considered it an insult to be ruled by a woman. Therefore, many Turkish nobles, Firoz Shah's mother (Shah Turkan), and many Afghans conspired and declared Ruknuddin Firoz Shah as Sultan in 1236 AD.

Firoz Shah became Sultan, but he could not maintain control over the state. Real power passed into the hands of Shah Turkan. She was a cunning woman. She began to humiliate and terrorize the Turkish nobles and members of the royal family. Iltutmish's younger son, Qutbuddin, was blinded and murdered on her orders. Control over the administration weakened. The common people also began to be oppressed. As a result, discontent and rebellion spread throughout the state. Firoz Shah was too busy with his pleasures; but when the governors of Lahore, Multan, Hansi, and Badaun began to revolt one after another, Firoz Shah was forced to wake up from his slumber. Meanwhile, all the rebels advanced towards Delhi with their armies. The Wazir Junaidi also joined the rebels with many officials. Desperate, the Sultan left Delhi to confront the rebels.

Taking advantage of the Sultan's absence in Delhi, Razia, wearing red clothes (a symbol of demanding justice), appeared before the public during prayers. She described the atrocities of Shah Turkan and the disorder prevailing in the state and assured them that as ruler, she would establish peace and order. The Turkish nobles and other people were influenced by Razia. The angry public attacked the royal palace, arrested Shah Turkan, and declared Razia as the Sultan. When Firoz Shah, frightened by the rebels, reached Delhi, he was also imprisoned and killed. In November 1236 AD, Razia ascended to the position of Sultan.

