

Ghiyas ud din Balban (1266 – 1287 AD)

Ghiyas-ud-din Balban, the Sultan of Delhi from **1266 to 1287 AD**, was one of the most powerful Sultans of the Middle Ages. He rose to power, like his master Iltutmish, and became the Sultan of Delhi. Balban was a member of **Iltutmish's famed group of 40 Turkic slaves**. After thirty years of near-anarchy since the days of Iltutmish, he restored peace and order to the kingdom, as well as the sultan's power and dignity. In this article, we will discuss the Important Ruler of the Mamluk Dynasty.

Ghiyas-ud-din Balban - Background

Balban, like his master **Iltutmish**, was born into a Turkish family. He was abducted by the Mongols when he was young and sold to Khwaja Jamal-ud-din, a slave dealer. He carried him to Delhi, where Iltutmish bought him. Iltutmish was so pleased by Balban's knowledge and talent that he enrolled him in the legendary army of the **forty slaves** during his stay in Delhi. Balban was raised to the position of **Amir-i-Shikar (Lord of the Hunt)** under the **reign of Raziya Sultana**. In the beginning, he was devoted to Raziya. Later, he teamed up with the nobles and successfully removed Raziya Sultana from the throne of Delhi. The succeeding Sultan, **Bahram Shah**, rewarded him with the Jagir of Rewari and Hansi in exchange for his loyalty. During Bahram Shah's reign, he successfully resisted a Mongol invasion as a famous warrior. He was a **kingmaker** and he played a role in the deposition of Masud and the ascension of Nasir-ud-din Mahmud to the throne of Delhi. Nasir-ud-din rewarded him by appointing him as the Principal adviser of the Sultan and married to his daughter.

Ascension to Throne

Balban was given the title of **Ulugh khan** by Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud, who was impressed with his dedication and devotion. He was also given the title of **Naib-i-mamlikat**, or Deputy Sultan. This was possibly owing to Nasir-ud-din's weakness and incompetence, and his reliance on him for state affairs management. As a result, Balban gradually gained control of the real power and his influence and popularity rose steadily. He also put down a series of internal uprisings as well as external aggressions, particularly from Mongols. **Nasir-ud-din, the Sultan**, considered him indispensable and he appointed Balban as his successor since he lacked an heir to the throne. After Nasir-ud-din Mahmud died in 1266, Balban assumed the title of Ghiyasuddin Balban and came to the throne.

Reign of Ghiyas ud din Balban

Re-organisation of Army

As the fundamental foundation of his autocratic administration, Balban reorganised his army and made it strong and effective. He appointed Imad-ul-Mulk, a capable and vigilant general, to be the army's Diwan-i-Ariz (Minister of War). The minister in charge of the army was freed from

the Wazir's financial oversight, and he had the Sultan's full confidence. Balban enhanced the Army's efficiency and morale and so he successfully repressed internal rebellions and exterior aggressions with the support of a large and powerful army.

Clearance of Mewatis

The Mewatis' authority on the outskirts of Delhi was so terrifying that the city's gates were closed in the evening after the evening Namaz. Balban is said to have crushed the infidel Mewatis and ordered the clearance of the forests. The jungles were cleared, and everybody who got in the way was slain, bringing the total death toll to 100,000. He Iron Handily dealt the dacoits in the Doab region.

Battle with Bengal

The rulers of Bengal were a major headache for the Delhi government. When there was chaos in Delhi, the local rulers declared their independence. Tugril Khan, the Bengal subedar, ignored the elderly Sultan of Delhi and declared his independence in 1279. The enraged Sultan dispatched a large force, but Tugril Khan destroyed them. Balban dispatched a second army, which received no better reception. Then, Balban dispatched a larger force to Bengal. Tugril Khan fled the capital and sought refuge in the forests after learning about Balban's march into Bengal. He was apprehended, tortured, and murdered. At his place, a mass massacre was ordered, and all Tugril Khan loyalists were killed. After defeating the insurrection, the Bengal's affairs were transferred to Balban's second son Bugara Khan, and Sultan returned to Delhi.

Mongol Invasions

On the border, Mongol invasions were common, giving Sultan Balban a continuous headache. Lahore was then under Mongol influence on the western frontier, while Sind and Multan were continually at risk of invasion. As a result, Sultan Balban took a number of precautions to protect the western frontiers. He first built a line of forts along the border and garrisoned them but Mongols resumed their plundering assaults without fear. Balban put experienced Amirs in command of the **frontiers**, but they couldn't keep the Mongols at bay. Finally, he separated the border territory into two sections. His eldest son, Prince Muhammad Khan, was in control of one portion and his second son Bughra Khan was handed the second portion. **Prince Muhammad Khan** died while fighting and this was the biggest surprise for Balban. Although taking back Lahore from the Mongols, he was unable to recover from the shock of his son's death.

Death of Ghiyas ud din Balban

Balban's health deteriorated steadily after his son's death, as **Prince Muhammad** was his favourite son. He was old and had reached the end of his life. Realizing his demise, he named his heir as **Kai Khusrav**. He was the son of his eldest son, Prince Muhammad. Balban died at the age of eighty in 1287.

Legacy of Ghiyas ud din Balban

Balban was the first king to fully comprehend and implement the conditions and obligations of being a Sultan of Delhi. He is regarded as one of India's most brutal kings. He brought the Persian court practices of **Sijda or Zaminbosi** and **Paibosi** to India. To greet Sultan Sijda / Zaminbosi, they would kneel down and touch the ground with their heads, and kiss Sultan Paibosi's feet. He advanced the **Iranian Theory of Divine Rights**, which states that the Sultan is God's representative on Earth. He put an end to the "**Corp of Forty's**" influence. Balban had defeated the formidable slave group known as "**Chihalagani**," who were actual Ilutmish heirs. He assembled his military to fight the Mongols. He accomplished this by abolishing the office of Naik and establishing the **Diwan-i-arz**, a new military affairs agency. Ariz-i-Mumalik was in command of Diwan-i-arz. Balban was a strong supporter of education and learning. He had given a large number of educated men from Central Asia scope and facilities. During his reign, the great Persian poets Amir Khusru and Amir Hosan flourished.

Conclusion

Ghiyas ud din Balban's reign is remembered as one of the most illustrious in the history of the Delhi Sultanate. With an iron fist, he defeated the rebellion forces, leapt on the troublesome location like a lion, and exterminated the rebels mercilessly. He did not forgive anyone for even minor offences. He was ruthless with the officers, killing them without mercy. It was Balban who protect the country from the frequent Mongol raids. He was one of the most powerful Sultans in the Delhi Sultanate.

Suggested Readings:

- 1. Mukherjee, L., A Study of India (Medieval Period), M. L. Mukherjee Publishers, Kolkata**
- 2. Sharma, L. P. (2010), History of Medieval India 1000-1740 AD, Konark Publishers, New Delhi**