

## CONSOLIDATION OF THE SULTANATE

### The Sultan's Slave Officials

Muhammad Ghuri had already established his rule over the whole of northern India. He had defeated rulers of many dynasties such as the Chauhanas, Gahdwalas, Senas, Chandelas, etc. Ghuri himself lived in Ghur and left his officials behind to administer the various provinces of his Indian empire. These officials were his slaves because he had purchased them.

It may be surprising for you to know that slaves were high officials of the kingdom. Actually, in those days this was a common practice. Young men of Turkistan were bought, trained in warfare and administration and sold off to the sultans. This is why they were called slaves. The more promising and able slaves, once employed by a sultan, were given responsible and important posts, and were paid handsomely too. There were many slaves in the service of Sultan Muhammad Ghuri and they were the ones who were administering his empire in India.

In 1206 AD when Sultan Muhammad Ghuri died, one of his important slaves, Qutubud-Din-Aybak was the chief of his Indian empire. He severed ties with the kingdom of Ghur and strengthened the Turkish empire in India. He declared himself Sultan and his empire came to be known as the Dehli Sultanate, named after its capital, Dehli (modern Delhi).

- *What would be the advantage of having slaves as officials? Discuss this in your class.*

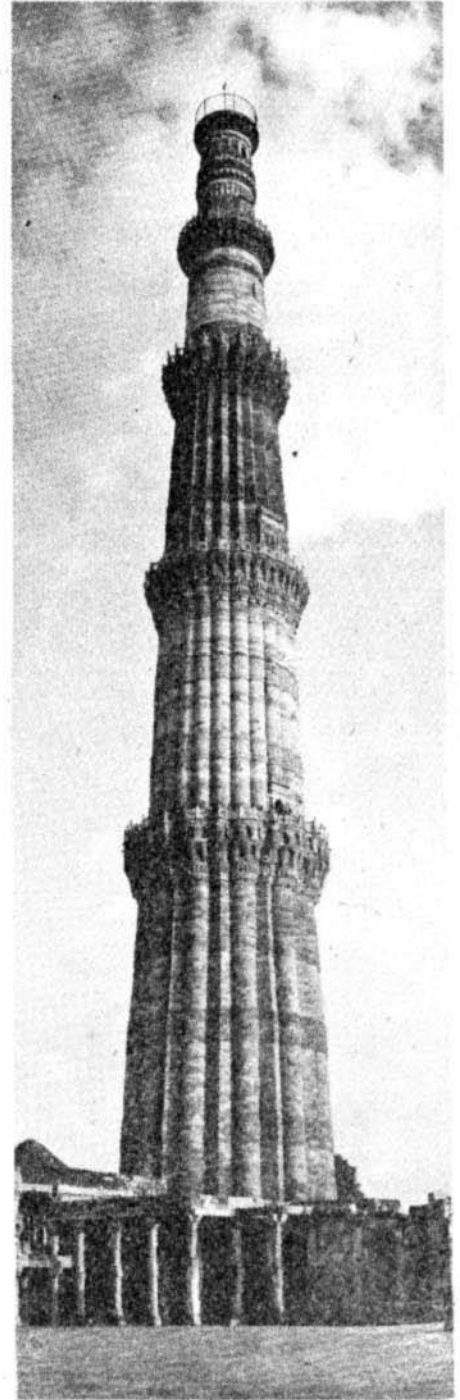


Fig. 1 Qutubud-Din-Aybak built this tower in Delhi

## The Expansion of the Delhi Sultanate

The sultans who succeeded Aybak further extended the boundaries of the Sultanate. Chief among these were - Iltutmish, Razia Begum, Balban, Alauddin Khalji, Muhammad Tughluq and Feruz Shah. Alauddin Khalji, in particular, annexed several kingdoms to expand the Sultanate. His armies conquered and plundered the kingdoms of Devagiri, Dwarasamudra and Madurai. Alauddin also conquered and annexed several parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

In this way, with the efforts of these sultans, the area of the Delhi Sultanate expanded manifold. You can see this in the map of 1334 AD. You have already seen its extent in 1207 AD, in the previous chapter.

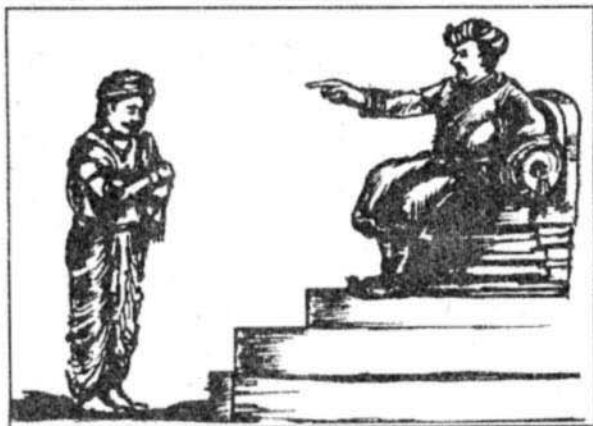
- *Colour the areas brought under the Sultanate by the successors of Muhammad Ghuri in map no. 1.*

Compare this map of India with the one of 1000 AD (page no. 187). India had a large number of small kingdoms at that time. Most of them were conquered by the Turks and brought under the Delhi Sultanate.

## SULTAN AND THE DEFEATED KINGS

What happened to the defeated rulers? You have read about powerful people in the chapters called 'The Formation of Dynasties' and 'Bhogpatis and the Villages of North India'.

Fig. 2 A sultan giving orders to a defeated rana



You know how they ruled over the cities and villages, imposed several kinds of taxes on the people, extracted unpaid labour (*begar*), built forts, palaces and temples and raised armies. They had an immense hold over the people of their territories. However, now they were all under the rule of the sultans of Delhi.

How these defeated kings were to be treated posed a problem for the sultans. The sultans wanted to do away with these kings and administer the territories themselves. However, there were many problems with such a course of action. It was difficult to administer these far-off regions, to appoint their own officials and commanders and collect taxes from the people directly. The Turks hailed from Iran and Afghanistan. They were familiar with neither the languages and customs of this land nor the local administration. Thus, in the beginning they faced many problems in administering their new empire.

So they thought of a way out. They decided to impose tributes on every defeated king. Once the amount was decided, they said to the defeated *rai* or *rana*, "You have to collect taxes from your area and pay us this much money. You can continue to manage the rest as before".

(You would recall that *rai*, *rana*, *thakur*, *rawat*, etc. were the titles of the *bhogpatis* of the rajput families)

- *Did the rajas of olden times say the same to their samantas?*

## Iqtadar

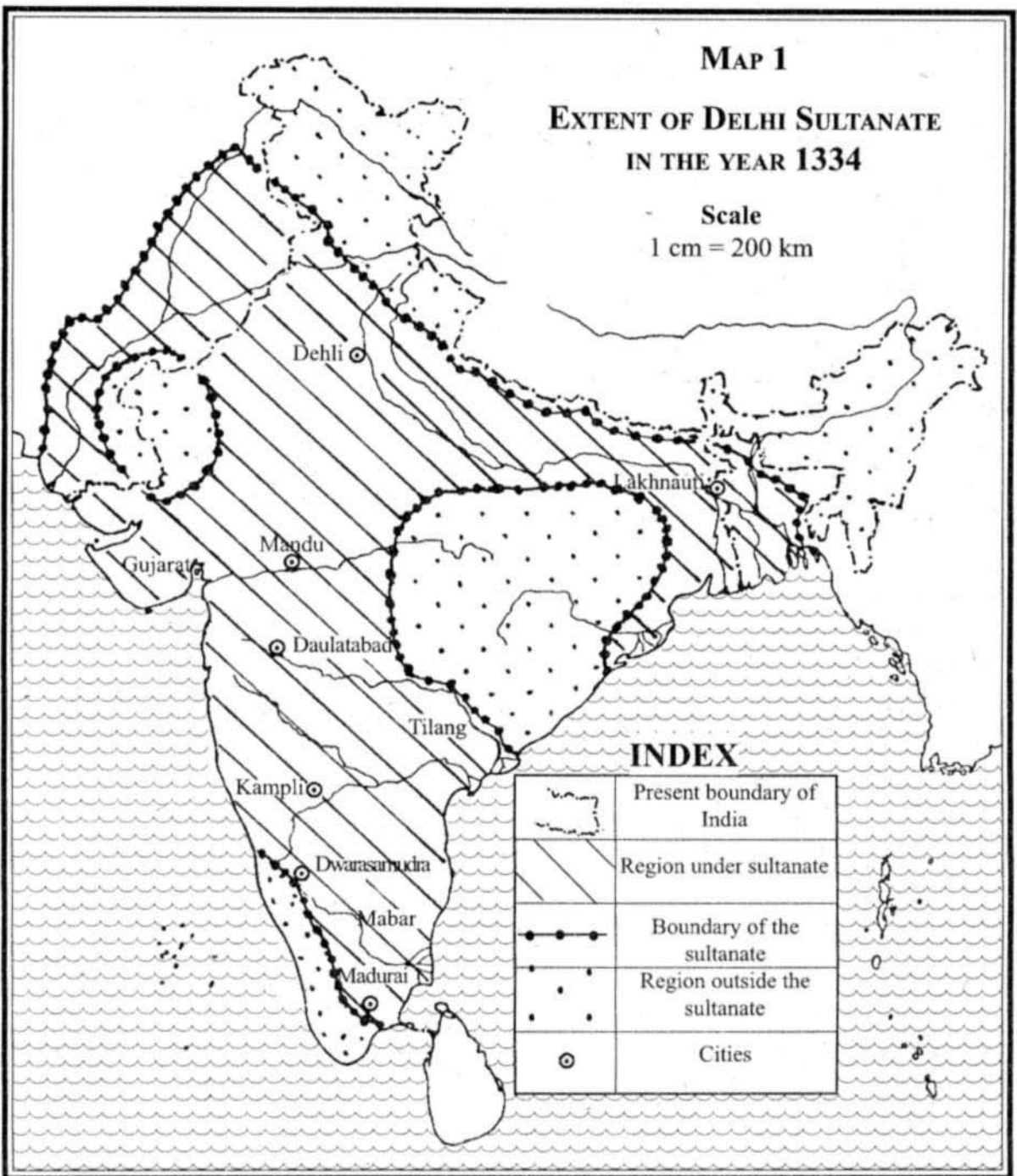
The tax problem was tackled in this the manner. However, something more had to be done by for its to own security and to keep an eye over the *rais* and *ranas*. For this, the Sultanate was divided into provinces called '*iqtas*'. A responsible army commander was posted in every '*iqta*'. He was called '*Iqtadar*'. He used to live in the principal city of that province.

The *iqtadar* had an army of his own and

## MAP 1

### EXTENT OF DELHI SULTANATE IN THE YEAR 1334

Scale  
1 cm = 200 km



Based upon Survey of India Outline map printed in 1979. The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of 12 nautical miles measured from the appropriate baseline.  
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and also had officers to run the administration. He used to look after the region's security and extracted taxes from the *rais* or *ranas*. He met his expenses and those of his officials and the army from these taxes. Whatever was left after meeting these expenses was handed over to the sultan.

The defeated *rai* or *rana* very often

thought, 'Why should I give so much money to the Turks? Why should I not keep it with me as I did before? When they come and demand it we will see what we can do.'

So they would stop paying up whenever they found the opportunity. Then the sultan and his *iqtdars* would attack the rebellious *ranas* and extort tributes from them.

- Name some of the duties of the *iqtadars*. Did the Sultanate have only one *iqtadar* or more than one?

A hundred years passed in this manner. By now, the Turks had become familiar with the local languages, habits and customs, methods of agriculture, etc. Now the Turkish sultans felt that instead of relying on the *ranas*, they could collect taxes from every village themselves.

### Changes in Taxation Under Alauddin Khalji

Alauddin Khalji became the sultan in 1296 AD. He devised a new mode of taxation. You will recall that the *bhogpatis* used to impose many kinds of taxes on several occasions.

- Read the list of these taxes once again from the chapter "Bhogpatis and The Villages Of North India".

Alauddin abolished all these taxes and retained only three of them - land tax, house tax and cattle tax. These were to be collected from the farmers. The most important of these taxes was the land tax. With the help of *Patwaris* (village accountants), the sultan had the land measured and an assessment made of the total output of crops in every village. He decided that every village would give half of its crops to the sultan as revenue. Thus, half of what every farmer grew was to be given to the sultan. Now, unlike the days of the *rajas* and *ranas*, taxes would not be imposed every now and then but there would be a clear assessment at the harvest time, and farmers would hand over half of their crop to the sultan's officers.

### Amils

Thus Alauddin merged several small taxes into a big one - the land tax. For collecting this tax he appointed special officers called 'Amils'. The sultan stopped collecting taxes through the *rais* and *ranas*. His *amils* started

collecting them directly from the farmers. The *rais* and *ranas* were no longer free to impose new taxes on the people.

- Underline the two main points of Alauddin's policy.
- Why would it have been more convenient for the sultan's officials to collect one big tax instead of several small ones?
- Do you think this would have been in the interest of the farmers?
- What would have been the effect of Alauddin's policy on the *rais* and *ranas*?

### Changes in the Headman's Functions

Before Alauddin became the sultan, the village headmen collected several kinds of taxes from the village folk and gave it to the *ranas*. Besides this, they also collected some money for themselves. However, they themselves paid no taxes.

Alauddin did not accept this situation. He ordered that every piece of land be taxed whether it belonged to a common farmer or the headman. Nor did he agree to the headmen's right to impose taxes for themselves. They were strictly forbidden to levy any extra taxes. They could no longer claim any payment since the task of collecting taxes was done by the *amils*. They could only assist *amils*.

- Do you think that the village headmen became less powerful and less important due to these policies of Alauddin Khalji?

Fig. 3 The *amil* started collecting taxes



- What are the various things that the *rais/ranas* and the village headmen were forbidden from doing during the reign of Alauddin Khalji ?

### Emergence of Chaudhris and Zamindars

Alauddin and his successors took great pains over the collection of land revenue, as this was their major source of income. All their efforts of strengthening their empire depended on this. So, they tried to ensure that there was no let up in the collection of this tax. Those who did not pay their taxes or those *amils* who pilfered state money were severely punished.

However, they still needed the co-operation of the local people. Alauddin's successors, therefore, took the help of the prominent families of the villages in order to reach the people and assess the prevalent situation.

Which were these families? Many of these were *rais/ranas* or the headmen. The sultan's *amils* used to take their help in the collection of taxes. In return they were paid a fixed percentage of the taxes. These people came to be called as *chaudhris* or *zamindars*.

Thus the *rais, ranas, thakurs* and village headmen of the earlier times now became

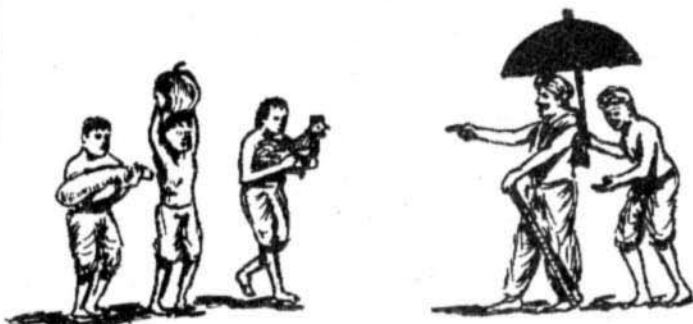


Fig. 4 *Zamindars* and the villagers

*chaudhris* or *zamindars*. Since they were the sultan's subordinates they no longer possessed the old glamour and power. Still, they remained important for the sultan who continued to seek their co-operation and help.

### The Breakup of the Delhi Sultanate

Several sultans ruled from Delhi, grappling with all these problems. In 1388 AD, after the death of Sultan Feruz Shah Tughluq, the Delhi Sultanate broke up into several small states, with various sultans ruling them.

The state of Mandu was one of these, situated near present-day Indore. It has beautiful palaces, mosques and forts, built by the sultans of Mandu. One of the famous Sultans of Mandu was Hoshangshah. The city of Hoshangabad is named after him.

### Exercise

- 1 In which area did Alauddin extend the Sultanate - north India/south India/east India/west India ?
- 2 In the early days of the Sultanate, who used to collect taxes from the villages - *Iqtadars/rais-ranas*? After Alauddin's change of policy, who started collecting taxes from the villages - *amils/rais-ranas* ?
- 3 In the days of the *bhogpatis*, how did the people pay taxes? After Alauddin's new policy how did the people pay taxes ?
- 4 At the time of the feudal lords, what were the duties and status of the village headmen ? How did these change after the new policy of Alauddin ?
- 5 In Alauddin's time, who was paid a small fixed part of the revenue - the headmen or the *chaudharies/zamindars*? Who paid this portion to them? Why ?