



Medieval Indian History

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Introduction : After the death of Harsha the Rajputs came into prominence on the political horizons of North India. The Rajputs were known for their bravery and chivalry but family feuds and strong notions of personal pride often resulted into conflicts. The Rajputs weakened each other by constant wrangling. The disunity among Rajputs allowed the foreigners (Turks) to enter India. The defeat of Prithvi Raj Chauhan (the greatest Rajput warrior of the time) at the hands of Mohammad Ghori, in the battle of Tarain 1192, marked a new chapter in the history of India.

Key Words : India, history

After the death of Mohammad Ghori, Qutub-Uddin Aibak (Ghori's lieutenant in India) founded the Slave Dynasty. With this the Delhi Sultanate came into being. Aibak was followed by his slave, Iltutmish, who was succeeded by his daughter, Razia (1236 - 1239). Razia sat on the throne of Delhi for a short while. The Slave dynasty was followed by the Khalji, Tughlaq, Sayyids and Lodi dynasty. Some of the notable among the Sultanate rulers were Balban, Alauddin Khalji and Mohammad Bin Tughlaq.

Alauddin Khalji (1296 - 1316 AD) was not only a distinguished commander but also an able administrator. He is remembered for his military campaigns in the south as well as market reforms and price control measures. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq (1324 - 1351 AD) was a visionary who but unfortunately all his projects failed. His most controversial project was the transfer of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. With the death of Ibrahim Lodi in the battle of Panipat, (at the hands of Babur, the founder of Mughal Empire) the Delhi Sultanate came to an end. The Sultanate introduced, in the sub continent, the Islamic concepts of society and governance, and thus prepared the ground for a dazzling interaction between two world civilizations. Babar (1526-30 AD) founded the Mughal Empire in India. He was a descendant of Timur as well as Changez Khan. He was ousted by his own cousins from his small principality in Central Asia and sought fortune in India. Babar came to India and defeated Ibrahim, the last Lodi Sultan in 1526. Babar was succeeded by his son Humayun but he was ousted from Delhi by Sher Shah, an Afghan chieftain.



Though Sher Shah (1540-55 AD) ruled only for a brief period of almost five years yet he showed great administrative skills. He is remembered as the builder of the Grand Trunk road and also for reforms in the revenue system. Though Humayun was successful in regaining Delhi but he was not destined to rule Delhi for long and died the same year. With this began the reign of one of the most glorious rulers of India, Akbar the great. Akbar (1556-1605 AD) consolidated political power and extended his empire over practically the whole of north India and parts of the south. Akbar was a great ruler and very well realized that if the empire was to attain stability, enough attention should be paid to all the subjects. Keeping this thing in mind he sought cooperation from the Rajputs.

Jehangir (1605-27), the son of Akbar was a pleasure loving man of refined taste. Contemporary historians have recorded that during his reign the Persian nobility related to his wife Nur Jahan had become very powerful at the royal court. Jehangir was followed by his son Shah Jahan (1628-58 AD). Shah Jahan was a great lover of buildings of whom the Taj Mahal is the most famous. Other notable buildings built by Shah Jahan are the Red Fort and the Jama Masjid at Delhi.

Aurangzeb (1658-1707 AD) was a brave general and an able administrator but these virtues were overshadowed by his religious dogmatism and fanaticism. The Mughal Empire reached its zenith during the reign of Aurangzeb. But at the same time he wasted his energy and resources in his long drawn out conflicts with the Marathas and other local rulers and principalities. After the death of Aurangzeb the mighty Mughal Empire started to totter. His successors were weak and incapable of holding the far-flung empire together. The imperial authority was challenged from all corners and the provincial governors began to assert their independence.

In western India, Shivaji (1637-80 AD) united the Marathas into an efficient military unit gave them a sense of national identity. They adopted guerrilla tactics to batter the Mughals and put a severe drain on their economic and psychological resources. The main contenders for political supremacy of India in the 17th and 18th Centuries were the Marathas, the Sikhs in Punjab and Hyder Ali (1721 - 1782 AD) in Mysore.



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