

Government of the Delhi Sultanate

DEFINE THE TERMS: -

- **Zawabit:** - Those regulations which Ala-ud-Din Khilji and strong Muslim rules like him had framed to supplement the Muslim Law, according to the need of the state, were called Zawabet.
- **Zimmi:** - 'Zimmi' was the term used for the Hindu subjects (of the Muslim rules) who accepted the Muslim rule and agreed to pay the 'Jazia' to get the status of the protected people.
- **Jahandary:** - 'Jahandary' state is a state that is not based on Islamic principles but on worldly or secular considerations. Historians like Barani called the Sultanate rule as 'Jahandary' rather than an Islamic state.
- **Karkhana:** - 'Karkhana' was the department that catered to the needs of the royal household. Precious articles were made here of silk, silver and gold etc. Rare and precious goods were also stored here.
- **Sharia:** - Sharia means muslim law. The Qazis decided the cases of the Muslim with reference to Sharia laws. Firoze Tughlak and Sikander Lodhi used to punish those Muslims who failed to live in accordance with the Sharia laws.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI SULTANATE:-

The Sultan was the head of the Central Government. He was the centre of authority and his will was the source of law. He himself appointed a Council of Ministers to help him in the administration of the Sultanate. The chief members of his council were:-

- **The Naib:** - He was the Lieutenant of the Sultanate. In the absence of the Sultan from the capital, he carried the work of administration in his name. That is why, he was sometimes called as 'Naib Sultan' as well. Among the notable 'Naib' were Malik Kafur and Khan-i-Jahan Maqbool who held this high office during the reign of Ala-ud-Din Khilji and firoze Shah Tughlak respectively.
- **The Wazir:** - He was the chief of the Diwan-I-Vizarat, or the Department of Revenue and Expenditure. He maintained full accounts of the state revenue and expenditure which was strictly under his control. He also kept watch over the working of other department and officials.
- **Ariz-i-Mumalik:** - He was the chief of the Diwan-i-Arz'(or the Military Department), a department responsible for the organization and recruitment. This department was also entrusted with keeping identification rolls of the soldiers and branding of the horses.
- **Sadar-i-Sadur:** - He looked after the 'Diwan-i-Risalat' and looked after the religious affairs. He also kept control over religious endowments and scholarship etc.
- **Qazi-ul-Qazat:** - He was the chief of the Justice Department. He was assisted in this task by several Qazis (Petty magistrates) and Kotwals who helped him in keeping law and order in the country and in the administration of justice.
- **Barid-i-Mumalik:** - He was the chief of Information and the Intelligence Department. It was his duty to keep the Sultan informed about every incident in the country.

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LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI SULTANATE:-

Provincial Administration:-

The Sultan had divided his country into several Provinces for the purpose of administration. The provinces were kept in charge of persons closely related to the royal family. Sometimes, the Sultan appointed their trusted colleagues to administer these provinces. The governors or 'Subadars' of the provinces, as they were called, possessed numerous powers. They were entrusted with the task of suppressing internal revolts, maintaining order and collecting revenue. They had also full control over the provincial army. In times of trouble, these Subedars sometimes become independent. To curb this tendency, the Sultan kept close watch on them through a large number of spies posted in the provinces. However, it was also a big task to keep the provinces under subordination and control.

NATURE OF STATE:-

A study of state during the Sultanate period will reveal certain specific features which are described below:-

1. **An Islamic State:** - Under the Sultanate period no other religion except Islam was recognized by the state. Though most of the people professed the Hindu faith yet the state patronage was accorded only to Islam. The Sultan based his own conduct on the tenets of the Islamic faith or Shariyat. He made the Caliph's name read in the Friday prayers and his coins also bore his name, professing himself to be a lieutenant of the Caliph. The Jazia was imposed on the majority of the Hindus. Their temples and idols were demolished and broken to build mosques at their places. The construction of new temples was prohibited and all the high offices of the state usually went to Muslim. The Ulaemas and Muslim Maulvis enjoyed several privileges and were allowed numerous exemption.
2. **A military State:** - Army was the chief instrument for the maintenance of internal peace as well as for protection against external enemies. Army was also used to protect traders and merchants against external enemies. Army was also used to protect traders and merchants against robbers and dacoits. The sultan himself was the supreme commander of his armies and it was on the force of it that a Sultan could survive. Balban and Ala-ud-Din Khilji were the chief examples of this phenomenon.
3. **A Feudal State:** - In the beginning high offices were offered only to the Turkish nobles while the Indian and Afgan nobles were denied those offices. They only qualification for such an offices was to be born in a family of nobles. Firoze Tughlak even created a class of hereditary Jagirdars or fief holders. This system was called the 'Iqta.' The feudatory chiefs maintained their own large armies which the Sultan could summon in his hour of need. Both the Hindus and Muslim of an ordinary class were kept away from the offices of important. Only a few of the urban Muslims of the class were recruited to the lower ranks of the army and civil administration. Hence the Muslim State during this period was based on privileges which meant negation of equality.

IQTADARS: -

When the Turks conquered certain areas in India, they used to divide it out into a number of tracks, known as 'Iqtas'. These new tracks of conquered territory

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were often handed over to their loyal Turkish nobles, who being holders of 'Iqtas' began to be called as 'Iqtadars'. These tracks of land or 'Iqtas' later on began to be called 'Subhas' or provinces.

In the beginning, Iqtadars were quite independent in their own areas. They maintained law and order and collected land revenue due to the government. Out of this income, they used to pay salaries to the soldiers and other government functionaries and kept the rest for themselves. But with the passage of time, when the central Government became well established and the Sultan grew in power, they tried to control the Iqtadars and ask their own share. The Iqtadars were asked to submit their accounts. The salaries of the soldiers, other officials and even that of the Iqtadars were fixed and balance of income began to be received by the Sultan. The accounts were checked periodically and harshly. The guilty were severely dealt with and some were even imprisoned and put to other tortures. However, towards the end of the Sultanate, especially in the reign of Firuz Tughlak, these rules were somewhat relaxed.

JAZIA TAX: -

'Jazia' was a religious tax which non-Muslim especially the Hindus, living in a Muslim state had to pay. Some writers say that this tax was a tax in lieu of military service and was levied in a graded scale according to the means. As such women, children and the indigent people, who had insufficient means, were exempted from it. Some say that even the Brahmanas were also exempted from this tax though there was no such provision in the Islam law.

Initially it was charged along with land revenue but later on, Firuz Shah, while abolishing many illegal cesses made Jazia a separate tax. He levied it on the Brahmanas also. There is no doubt that certain theologians, who were in charge of tax collections, used the practice of Jazia only to harass and humiliate the Hindus. In fact, the medieval states were not based on the idea of equality but on the notion of privileges, so in order to show the Muslims as a privileged class and the Hindus as the unprivileged class, Jazia was imposed on the local population. Anyhow, this tax proved a great hurdle in the development of cordial relations between the Hindus and the Muslim for long time, when it was ultimately done away with by Sher Shah Suri and Akbar the Great.
