

TURKS IN KARNATAKA

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-Abstract-

The paper aims to highlight the contribution of the Turks from 14th to 18th Century A.D., in Karnataka State. The Turks came to India after the Arabs. They were very strong in their physique, expert in warfare and dedicated to Islam. In India, the Turkish rule was started by the Slave dynasty King named Qutbuddin-Aibak in the year 1206 A.D., which continued till 1287 A.D., under the reign of Ghiasuddin Balban. Afterwards another Turkish tribe, the Khilji dynasty ruled from 1292 A.D. to 1320 A.D. A third dynasty, the Tughluqs ruled from 1320 A.D. to 1414 A.D. They were a mixed race of Turks and Jats. All the dynasties ruled different parts of North India. Karnataka is a prominent State in South India. The first Turkish invasion into Karnataka was by the Khiljis. Malik Kafur, the General of Allauddin-Khilji carried many expeditions in South India during the period 1305 A.D. to 1311 A.D., because of these expeditions many Muslim soldiers remained in Karnataka. Among them some were Turks. Ulugh Khan (Muhammad-bin-Tughluq) the son of Ghiasuddin Tughluq also conducted military expeditions and captured Bidar and Basava Kalyana in Bidar district of North Karnataka. Hence again many Turks put their feet in Karnataka. Epigraphical and literary sources are found of the Turks living during the period of Vijayanagara Empire (1336 A.D. - 1565 A.D.), the Bahmanis (1347 A.D. - 1538 A.D.), the Adil Shahis (1489 A.D. - 1686 A.D.), the Barid Shahis (1487 - 1619 A.D.), and in the period of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan (1761 A.D. - 1799 A.D.). During the period of these Muslim dynasties many Turks rendered services as kings, nobles, administrators, soldiers, religious teachers, scholars, saints, architects, gun-makers, merchants, etc.

Key Words: Turks, Contribution, Karnataka.

JEL Classification: Z, Z0

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper concentrates to highlight the services rendered by the Turks as administrators, like kings, nobles and officers, soldiers, saints, architects, merchants, gun-makers etc from 14th to 18th century in Karnataka. There were several Turkish invasions in Karnataka. The earliest settlers - soldiers, adventurers and their slaves, camp followers, merchants, etc had originally accompanied the invading armies. Instead of returning North with the armies these groups remained and settled in Karnataka. Epigraphical evidences, literature *Busatine-Salatin* and secondary sources give an insight to the existence of Turks in Karnataka.

1.1 Historical Background of the Turks

The Turks came to India after the Arabs. They were very strong in their physique, expert in war fare and dedicated to Islam. In India the Turkish rule was started by the Slave dynasty King named Qutubuddin-Aibak in the year 1206 A.D. He was born in a high family of Turkistan. His main aim was to establish a separate entitle of the Turkish empire free from the politics of Central Asia. This dynasty continued to rule upto 1287 A.D., by Ghiasuddin Balban. Later another Turkish tribe, the Khilji dynasty ruled India from 1292 A.D. to 1320 A.D. The Khiljis were replaced by the Tughluqs. The Tughluqs ruled from 1320 A.D. to 1414 A.D., from Delhi. They were also a mixed race from Turks and Jats. Ghias-us-din Tughluq was the founder of the Tughluq dynasty in India.

2. TURKS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN DIFFERENT PERIODS OF KARNATAKA

2.1. Hoysala period

The first Turkish invasion in Karnataka took place by the Khiljis which was followed by the Tughluqs. The Turkish King Alauddin Khilji was one of the greatest rulers among the Khiljis. He was the first Muslim ruler to invade South India. His general Naib Malik Kafur, achieved tremendous success in the south expeditions within a period of six years from 1305 to 1311 A.D. When he invaded Dwarasamudra (in Karnataka) in 1311 A.D., King Vira Ballala III was ruling the Hoysala Kingdom. During this invasion many Turkish soldiers remained in Karnataka.

The second Turkish invasion in Karnataka was from the Tughluq dynasty. An epigraph of King Ghias-us-din Tughluq discovered at Basavakalyana (in Bidar district) dated 1311 A.D records that Kalyana was one of the places conquered by Ulugh Khan (the future Muhammad-bin-Tughluq), son of Ghias-ud-din. In 1321-

1322 A.D. King Ghias-ud-din dispatched another military campaign, under the leadership of Ulugh Khan against the Kakatiyas of Warangal. During this campaign, Ulugh Khan seized the Bidar town (in north Karnataka) and the surrounding area. Historian Ferishta has stated that Ulugh Khan captured Bidar and some other places of the area wherein he stationed a military garrison. (KSGBD, 1977:61).

Muhammad-bin-Tughluq ascended the throne in 1325 A.D., and continued to conquer South India. Once again in 1327 A.D his army plundered Dwarasamudra, the capital of the Hoysala King Ballala III. In 1342 A.D. Muhammad-bin Tughluq pursued, captured and killed King Ballala III at Madurai. Muhammad-bin Tughluq happens to be the first Turkish king to enter in person into Karnataka and conquer certain parts of North Karnataka. It was at this critical time the whole of South India was over run by the Muslims. (Desai, 1981:283-288).

2.2. Vijayanagar period

Vijayanagar Empire was a great Hindu kingdom of Karnataka which ruled from 1346 A.D. to 1565 A.D. The kings of this dynasty appointed Turkish soldiers in their army. Devaraya II (1423 A.D. - 1446 A.D.) was the greatest ruler of the Sangam dynasty of the Vijayanagar Empire. He carried the reorganization of the armies and assured the effectiveness of the defence. Hence, he employed many Muslims in his army. His army is said to have consisted of ten thousand Turks horsemen. (Gopal, 1977:616). It shows that Turkish horsemen were very efficient in war field and very much valued by the kings. Even King Ramaraya's (1543-1565 A.D.) army included Muslim soldiers. He allowed them freedom to observe their religion, and built mosque for them, treated them generously and assigned them a special quarter of the city named *Turkavadi*. (Sreenivasa and Ramakrishnan, 1978:177).

2.3. Bahamani Period

The Bahamani kingdom was founded in 1347 A.D. by Hasan Gangu, a Persian with the title of Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah. Nineteen kings ruled Northern Deccan upto 1538 A.D. The kingdom was divided into four provinces, out of which Gulbarga and Bidar belong to Karnataka State. Many generals and nobles who were Turks were found in the Bahamani kingdom. The kings invited and encouraged *afaqis* (Turks and Persians) in their kingdom.

During the Muslim dynasties immigration of Arabs, Persians and Turks had naturally a great effect on the culture and future history of the Deccan. Muhammad I, the son of Alauddin Bahman Shah, (1358 - 1375 A.D.) employed

Turkish soldiers in his army. These soldiers used gun-powder for the first time in the war at Adoni in Karnataka in 1365 A.D. (Sheik Ali, 1997:30). The Persian writer Isami describes the soldiers of Bahmani army as “Their army included many horsemen and are good archers with Turkish bows. They are fair men, tall and attired in fine cotton garments with turbans on their heads.” (Kulkarni, 1977:142-143). During Bahmani period the nobles came from different countries like Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Arabia, Khorassan, Abyssinia and Afghanistan. They wielded considerable influence on all affairs of the state.

The third King Mujahid Shah (1375-1378 A.D.) enlisted Persians and Turks in his organization. He was fond of the company of Persians and Turks whom he choose as his friends. (Devare, 1961:47). There was a Turkish noble named Taghalchin who was the head of the Turkish faction in the period of the sixth King Ghiyathud-din Tahamtan (1397-1397 A.D.) (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973:158).

The eighth King Sultan Tajud-Din Firuz Shah Bahamani alias Roz Afzin Shah was the most distinguished of all the Bahmani rulers (1347-1422A.D.). He established the city Firuzabad between 1399 and 1406 A.D on the north bank of the Bhima River and to the south of Gulbarga. This city served as a royal palace and as second capital. It is found that the king kept Turkish women in his harem at the palace in Firuzabad. (Michell and Eaton, 1992:10).

The ninth King Ahmad I (1422 A.D.-1435 A.D.) carried out the building of the fort at Bidar. According to Ferishta it took nine years to complete the defences of the fort. The fortifications were entirely rebuilt under the supervision of Turkish engineers towards the end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth century A.D. The fortifications having been built by Turkish mercenaries possess a certain resemblance to medieval European forts in the disposition of barbicans, covered passages and bastions. (Yazdani, 1947:23). The moat was apparently the work of Hindu masons, while the massive walls constructed of ‘stone and mortar’ were designed and built by Persian and Turkish architects who had assembled at the court of King Ahmad I. (Yazdani, 1947:29). It is recorded that Ahmad I formed a group of three thousand archers in his army. The archeries came from Khorassan, Turkey and Arabia. (Sheik Ali, 1997:47).

In the period of eleventh King Alaud-din Humayun (1458 -1461 A.D.) there was a general named Khwaja-i-Jahan Malik Shah (also called Khwaja-i-Jahan Turk) who helped Humayun in the war which took place near Golkonda against his cousin Sikandar. (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973:177). Another Turkish general by name Nizam-ul-Mulk was one of the leading nobles in the court of Alaud-din Humayun. He was appointed governor and sent by the king to attack the Velam

chiefs of Warangal in Andhra Pradesh of South India. (Kulkarni, 1977:71). He was a close friend of Yusuf Adil Khan, the future founder of Adil Shahi dynasty. Khwaja-i-Jahan Turk served as one of the members of Council of Regency to look after the affairs of the kingdom in the period of King Nizamud-din Ahmad III (1461-1463 A.D.) and also served as a general under him. (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973:180).

A Turk named Sultan-Quli (Quli Qutubshah) was enlisted in the retinue of the fourteenth King Sultan Mahamud Shah Bahmani II (1482-1518 A.D.). Quli Qutubshah was a lineal descendent of Qara Muhammed, the leader of the Qara Qoyonin tribe of Turks (Black Sheep was their emblem). He left Persia in about 1481 A.D. and came to Deccan at the age of thirty years. He saved the king from the conspirators of Abyssinians and Dakhanis and soon became a trusted attendant of the sovereign. In recognition of this meritorious service, he was conferred the title of *Qutbul-Mulk*. He also got the title of *Amirul Umara* and was given the fief of the regions of Hotgi and Udgir by the king. He was appointed as the *Tarafdar* (governor) of Tellingana in 1495 A.D. He continued to discharge his duties with loyalty till the death of Sultan Muhamud II in 1518 A.D. His regime of twenty-six years was fraught with military activity in Bahmani period. (Devare, 1961:126-127).

The influence of Turkish style of architecture in Karnataka during the Bahmanis can be seen in the tomb of Bahaman Shah, the founder of the Bahmani dynasty. The tomb located near Gulbarga fort is in Tulghluq style i.e. with tapering walls. (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973:152). Another example is seen in the *dargah* of the famous Sufi saint named Khwaja Bande Nawaz at Gulbarga, venerated by both Muslims and Hindus. The paintings on the walls and domes are in the Turkish and Iranian styles. (Satyan, 1966:462).

2.4. Adil Shahi Period

The Adil Shahi Sultanate began to rule Deccan from Bijapur (in Karnataka) with nine kings for about two hundred years from 1489 A.D. to 1686 A.D. The founder of the Adil Shahi dynasty was Yusuf Beg, a Turkman according to Munajjim Bashi, an Ottoman historian. He belonged to the Aq-Qyunlu or the "White Sheep" tribe of Diyarbykir in eastern Anatolia (Asia Minor). (Nayeem, 2008:22). Yusuf Adil Turk, was popularly believed to be a prince of the Ottoman dynasty of Rum. On the death of his father Shah Murad in A.H. 854, Yusuf then an infant, miraculously escaped death at the hands of his elder brother, and was taken out of Constantinople to Ardabil, and then to Sawa by a Persian merchant Imadud-Din Mahmud. He completed his education at Sawa, which place he was again forced

to quit by his identity as a prince of the Ottoman family. During his exile he went to Kashan, Isfahan, and Shiraz and finally arrived to India in about 1459 A.D. Imadud-Din Mahmud brought Yusuf to Bidar and sold him as a Georgian slave to Mahmud-e-Gawan. Probably either through the recommendation of Khwaja-i-Jahan Mahmud-e-Gawan or by his skill in wrestling, Yusuf attracted the royal attention, and was enlisted in the ranks of the State Officials. After temporary charge of the office of *Mir-ei-Akhur*, he was promoted to the rank of a *Mansibdar* with the title of *Adil Khan* and became a great favourite of Nizamul-Mulk Turk, his countryman. After the death of Nizamul-Mulk he was appointed as *Sarlashkar* (head of the army) of Dawlatabad and Junnar. His military and administrative abilities so deeply impressed Mahmud-e-Gawan that he adopted him as his son. He soon became the governor of the province of Bijapur. After the murder of Khwaja Mahmud-e-Gawan, when a serious split in the *Afaqi* and the *Dakhni* ranks of the Bahmani nobility precipitated dismemberment of the Bahmani kingdom, he availed of this opportunity and proclaimed himself an independent sovereign of Bijapur in 1489 A.D. and ruled upto 1510 A.D., at an advanced age of seventy five years. (Devare, 1961:67-68).

The dynasty was known as “**Adil Shah**” from his title of “**Adil Khan**”. Yusuf Adil Shah was a ruler of versatile genius and varied accomplishments. He was an eminent learned and liberal person, and was intimately acquainted with human nature. He invited to his court learned men and skilled and valiant persons, eminent artists, from Iran, Turkistan, Rum, etc. He was a just man of integrity and advised his ministers to act with justice and integrity. He was an excellent calligraphist in the *Nastaliq* style and possessed a good command over Rhetoric and Prosody. He was a musician and played the lute and the guitar with skill. A few lyrics and quatrains reported to have been composed by him under the *non-de-guerre* of Yusuf, are quoted by historians, in their Histories. His odes and quatrains are published in *Kalamul-Mulk*. (Devare, 1961:69). Yusuf Adil Shah was a strong follower of Shiism. As a pioneer of the Shia creed in the Deccan against a powerful orthodox opposition, he proceeded with great creation, and by his considerate and impartial attitude towards the followers of other creed, he maintained an atmosphere of harmony between the followers of various creeds. (Devare, 1961:69). He also had married a Marathi woman and named her Khanum Babji and had the son named Ismail Adil Shah. Yusuf undertook construction of palaces, mosques and forts. He built *Farrak Mahal*, mosque near Anand Mahal, fort of *Ark-qilah*, and other forts outside Bijapur city. (Nayeem, 2008:22-26).

Ismail Adil Khan (1510-1534 A.D.) succeeded his father Yusuf in 1510 A.D. As he was young, Kamal Khan was appointed as regent. But when Kamal Khan became ambitious and violent Ismail's aunt Dilshad Agha appointed a Turk named Yusuf to protect Ismail Adil Khan. Ismail took the reign of the government and ascended the throne and ruled up to 1534 A.D. After becoming the king he collected a gallant body of Turks and Mughals. He honoured a Turk named Khusrau Turk the leader of the *afaqis* with the title of *Asad Khan* and granted him *Jagir* of Belgaum and also made him the Governor of Belgaum. He was physically strong, gallant and a capable administrator. Khusrau Turk also called as Muhammad Lari, had stood by Ismail during the strife. Khusrau Turk was closely associated with Belgaum's history till his death in 1549 A.D. Arabic and Persian inscriptions in the Safa Masjid of Belgaum fort dated 1518 A.D., speak of its foundations laid by Asad Khan and also of the land donated to it by him. (Kamath, 1987:105).

In 1519 A.D. Ismail Adil Khan had the privilege of receiving high honour from Shah Ismail Safavi of Iran, in return for his assistance in relieving an Iranian ambassador from unnecessary detention at Bidar by Amir Barid. Highly pleased the Shah of Iran sent an ambassador named Ibrahim Beg Turkina with a letter and costly presents to Ismail Adil Khan, addressing him as sovereign ruler. Ibrahim Beg Turkina was received at Bijapur with extra ordinary honours. Ismail Adil Khan liked Turkish and Persian manners, music and language. (Nayeem, 2008:27-28). He tried his hand at poetry and composed both in Persian and Turkish under the pen-name *wafai*. Ismail Adil's nurses Atka and Anka spoke Turkish language with him. (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973:395).

During the period of Mallu Adil Khan (the eldest son of Ismail) and Ibrahim Adil Shah I (1535-1537 A.D.) the younger brother of Mallu Adil Khan, three Turkish nobles named Asad Khan-e-Lari, Yusuf Turk and Khush Kaladi Rumi (Devare, 1961:75) were serving. In the period of Ibrahim Adil Shah I, Asad Khan acted as prime minister and continued his service upto 1542 A.D. (Sheik Ali, 1997:80-81).

2.4.1. Nobles during Adil Shahi period

There was struggle between Nizam Shahis of Ahmadnagar and Adil Shahis of Bijapur. Due to this disturbance many Turkey nobles came to Bijapur and the Adil Shahis gave shelter to them. (Sheik Ali, 1997:167).

2.4.2. Economic relations with Turkey

The Adil Shahis imported horses from Turkey which were coming to the ports of Dhabol and Goa in western coast of India. (Sheik Ali, 1997:233).

2.4.3. Gun Makers from Turkey

The Turks were expert in making guns. The best known gun is, the great *Malik-i-Maidan* or the “Monarch of the Field”, the largest gun of the Adil Shahi period at present in Bijapur. It is estimated to weight about 55 tons and was casted at Ahmednagar. There are three inscriptions upon the top of the gun. One records the name of the person who made it, namely Muhammad, the son of Hasan Rumi Turk. Another gives the date of casting as in 1549 A.D. It is said have been taken to the battle field of Talikote in 1565 A.D., where it did considerable execution, and helped the Adil Shahis to win against the Vijayanagara King Ramaraya. (Cousens, 1916:29-30).

2.4.4. Turks in Army and Administration

The Adil Shahi army had soldiers from Turkey, Persia, Mangol, Afghan, Abyssinia, Deccanis and Hindus. In Adil Shahi administration the role of Turks and Persians as governors and as high level officials was very prominent. Turks lived in the cities and they encouraged the development of the cities. (Sheik Ali, 1997:203, 204 &208).

2.4.5. Turkish Style of Art

The manuscript entitled *Ajaibul Makhluqat* of Al Qazwini, written in 1560 A.D. belongs to King Ali I's reign. It was inspired by the Ottoman Turkish paintings and does not exhibit any local Deccani influence. (Nayeem, 2008:254). An elegant portrait of a Muslim priest, whose features were Turkish and complexion fair, is found amongst the numerous portraits in Sat Manzil palace at Bijapur. The painting was decorated by Muhammad Adil Shah. (Devare, 1961:118).The colossal mausoleum of Muhammad Adil Shah named Gol Gumbaz is the greatest structural triumphs of Indo-Perso-Ottoman architecture of Adil Shahi period. (Nayeem, 1974:25).

2.6. The Barid Shahis of Bidar

The Barid Shahi kingdom was established by a Turk named Qasim Barid who had come to Bidar in 1463 A.D. (Sheik Ali, 1997:67) and joined the services of the Bahmani King Muhammad III and who later became the Prime Minister also. Ferishta states that Qasim Barid got Udgir as a fief from the King Muhammad III in 1491-92 A.D. Qasim Barid took charge of the kingdom after the death of Muhammad III as the crown prince was only twelve years old at that time. Later in 1487 A.D. Qasim Barid found his dynasty and ruled till 1504 A.D., and was succeeded by his son Amir Barid. (Yazdani, 1947:12). One of the Barid Shahi

kings had a wife from Turkey. The Tarkash Mahal at Bidar was built for her. (KSGBD, 1977:565).

2.7. Wodeyars of Mysore

After the fall of Vijayanagara Empire, the Wodeyars of Mysore started to rule from 1399-1947 A.D. One of the famous kings Krishnaraja Wodeyar I ruled from 1734 to 1766 A.D. There is a reference to a tank named *Turukanayari* in the copper plate inscription dated 1722 A.D., belonging to this King found at Tonnur in Mandya district. (Gopal, 1977:176). This tank probably belonged to a Turk or was named after him.

2.8. Tipu Sultan's relation with Turkey

Tipu Sultan ruled Southern Deccan from his capital Srirangapattana (Mysore district, Karnataka) in between 1761-1799 A.D. He maintained contact and good relations with the rulers of Turkey. The Sultan of Rum was apparently considered the head of the Muhammadan powers. In 1783 A.D., Tipu Sultan sent Gulam Ali Khan, Nuhnu Meah and others to Turkey with presents, worthy of the two Sultans such as new muskets, fabricated in the Sultan's arsenal, ten lakhs of rupees newly coined, valuable cloths, with gold jewels of great value. (Kirmani, 1958:68). Tipu also sought foreign help in expelling the British from India and in between 1788-87 A.D. he had sent envoys to the Turkish Sultan in Istanbul to seek help. He had trade relations with Turkey and many other countries. He also had a Turkish horse bridle made in Turkey which had the Ottoman military decoration on it. Tipu's relations with Turkey show that many Turks had been regularly visiting Karnataka for political, economic and social purposes.

3. CONCLUSION

The Turkish rulers of North India entered Karnataka to plunder and loot the booty. Later Muslim and Hindu dynasties attracted Turks to serve and contribute their might in different fields in various capacities. Most of them served as nobles and soldiers. Some even established their dynasties and enriched the soil of Karnataka with their political, economic, socio-cultural and religious magnificence.

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