

The Delhi Sultanate: A Slave Society or A Society with Slaves?

Fouzia Farooq Ahmed*

Abstract

The article aims to assess the contribution of slavery in the socio-economic structure of the Delhi Sultanate. It delineates the socio-economic life of the slaves and attempts to address a fundamental question pertaining to nature of the Sultanate society. It takes into account the classical debate about the distinction between 'slave society' and a 'society with slaves' and applies it on the Delhi Sultanate. It is maintained that while slaves were omnipresent in the villages and towns of the Delhi Sultanate, yet their numerical strength cannot credit the Delhi Sultanate as a slave society. The contribution of slave labour in the urban life of the Delhi Sultanate was very significant, however, the evidence to confirm notable peasant-slave population is not available. Agriculture was the primary means of production in the Sultanate economy and the peasantry was largely composed of free elements. This peasantry was taxed and the instances of non-payment of taxes resulted in its mass enslavement and their subsequent conversion into urban labour. Therefore, despite the fact that the slave populations in the Sultanate towns were clearly significant, even then their role in the Sultanate economy was secondary to the peasantry. Thus, the Delhi Sultanate may be explained as a society with slaves rather than a slave society.

The extension of Ghaurī Empire in Northern India and the consequent establishment of the Delhi Sultanate brought a visible

* Lecturer, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

change in the Indian economic structure. The Indian economy had been reliant upon the self sufficient village societies for centuries. However, the Turkish and Afghan invaders generally settled in cities and promoted an urban culture.¹ Many new cities emerged in this era and various old towns expanded as cities. Being a classic conquest state, the economy of the Delhi Sultanate was dependent upon the success of the military expeditions in the petty Hindu kingdoms and their agrarian lands. The population, vocations, means of revenue generation and much of the economic policies of the Sultans were connected with the phenomenon of war in one way or another. Similarly, the very character of the urban societies that constituted the Delhi Sultanate was demarcated with the phenomenon of war, as it had deep imprints over the social institutions, social stratification, value systems and social relations of the Sultanate society. The demography of Northern India in this era had some unique characteristics. It was not only heterogeneity of the racial stock² that made the Sultanate society distinct, but the demographic division of slave and free people seems the most salient feature of the Sultanate society. The contribution of slaves in the establishment and consolidation of the Delhi Sultanate is undeniable. There is a plethora of literature that features elite slavery within the Delhi Sultanate.³ Therefore, the scope of the present work is not political or military aspects of the Sultanate slavery. The article embarks upon a singular question that whether the Delhi Sultanate was a society with slaves or a slave society, by elaborating upon the economic roles of the slaves. Therefore, the present article aims to problematize the data regarding the Sultanate economy and society in accordance to one of the most

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- 1 Irfan Habib, *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception* (New Delhi: Pauls Press, 1995), p.172.
 - 2 The population of the Delhi Sultanate was racially diverse which included Indians, Turks, Arabs, Persians, Afghans, Europeans, Mongols and Chinese.
 - 3 For instance see, Peter Jackson, "The Mamluk Institution in Early Muslim India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1990); Khurram Qadir, "The Amiran-i-Chihalgan of Northern India," *Journal of Central Asia* 4 (December 1981); Gavin Hambly, "Who were the Chihalgani: The Forty Slaves of the Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish of Delhi," *Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 10 (1972); Indrani Chatterjee and Richard M. Eaton, eds. *Slavery and South Asian History* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006).

popular theoretic contrast of ‘slave societies’ and ‘societies with slaves’ extended by M.I. Finley.⁴

Who Were Slaves in the Delhi Sultanate

Slave is a term of closest approximation in order to explain the nature of bondage in the Delhi Sultanate. Slaves are generally referred to as, *bandagān* (sing. *bandah*), *ghilmān* (sing. *ghūlām*), *burdāh*, *kanīz*, *laundī* and *mamlūk*, in the sources of the Delhi Sultanate. The terms *bandah* and *ghūlām* were also used metaphorically in order to depict loyalty and association of both free and unfree persons, towards a particular person or God.⁵ *Burdāh* is the word exclusively used for captives of war whereas, *laundī* and *kanīz* were the terms applied to female slaves and, at times, free maids too. In the Delhi Sultanate, the traditional Muslim institution of *walā*⁶ existed as well. *Mawlā* was a freed slave who became a lesser family member of his manometer. Owing to this institution the master slave association was conserved even after the manumission.⁷ This phenomenon must have preserved the distinct slave social identity throughout bondsman’s life. *Mamlūk*⁸ is the term that is rarely mentioned in the Sultanate primary sources, nevertheless in secondary sources the military elite slaves were generally mentioned as *mamlūk*. Thus, all slave soldiers who participated in wars cannot be labelled

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- 4 M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology in Historical Context*, Brent D. Shaw ed. (New York: Marcus Wiener, 1998), p.67.
 - 5 Khurram Qadir, “The Political Theory and Practice of the Sultanate of Delhi” (PhD. Diss., B.Z.U. Multan, 1992), pp.239-41.
 - 6 For discussion on *wala* see Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).
 - 7 Sunil Kumar, “When Slaves were Nobles: The *Shmasi Bandagan* in the Early Delhi Sultanate,” *Studies in History* 10 (1994), p.48.
 - 8 Although the military slaves were the key figures in the armies of the Sultans yet in the sources on Delhi Sultanate they are not exclusively discussed under the term of *mamlūk*; unlike the historical sources of other near contemporary Muslim societies. For the emergence and role of *mamlūk* armies in medieval Muslim societies see Osman Sayyid Ahmad Ismail Al-Bili, *Prelude to the Generals: A Study of Some Aspects of the Reign of the Eighth Abbasid Caliph, Al-Mutasim Bi-Allah (218-277 AH/ 833-842 AD)*[sic] (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2001); Denial Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System*, (London: Yale University Press, 1981); Ayalon, David, “The *Mamluk* of the *Seljuks*: Islam’s Military Might at the Crossroads,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

as *mamlūk*. In the present article therefore, instead of using multiple terms such as *bandah*, *burdāh*, *kanīz*, *ghūlām*, *laundī*, *mawlā* and *mamlūk*, a single English term ‘slave’ is uniformly applied, regardless of the subsequent status of the bondsman, in order to keep the explanation simple.

In Delhi Sultanate slavery ranged from elite military slavery to menial slavery. It had neither economic, racial, linguistic, cultural connotations nor was it an emblem of powerlessness or dependency always. While elite slaves were financially more powerful than the free common people, they had no specific ethnicity as well, although it is a well established fact by now that the word ‘Turk’ was taken as a synonym for elite slaves who usually were political administrators and military commanders.⁹ The slaves were aliens in the Sultanate environment yet not everyone who was an alien was a slave. Majority of the free ruling class were émigrés who belonged to the crumbling Abbasid Empire and the Muslim Sultanates of Central Asia and Persia.¹⁰ Thus, alienation was not a distinguishing feature of this institution in the Sultanate. Slavery did not necessarily mean destitution as some slaves were not financially dependent upon their masters rather they became the bread earners of the families they served.¹¹ Slavery in the Delhi Sultanate was a legal status that converted one human being into the property of another and thus distinguished the slaves from other socio-economic groups.

Slave Societies and Societies with Slaves

The concept of distinction between slave societies and societies with slaves was first extended by M.I. Finley which is as follows:

9 For discussion on term ‘Turk’ as a synonym of ‘slave’ see Appendix I in Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Sunil Kumar, “Service, Status, and Military Slavery in Delhi Sultanate: The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century” in Chatterji and Eaton, eds. *Slavery in South Asian History*, p.89.

10 Irfan Habib, “Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class of the Thirteenth Century.” *Medieval India 1: Researches in History of India (1200-1750)*, ed. Irfan Habib, (1992): pp.1-21. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, “Social Mobility in the Delhi Sultanate,” in *Ibid*.

11 Muhammad Aslam, *Malfūzāī Adab kī Tārīkhī Ahmīyat* (Lahore: n.p., 1995), p.29.

Theoretically a distinction can be drawn between societies in which slavery was a marginal or incidental aspect of the economy and those in which slavery was a central feature. In the latter case, a slave mode of production can be said to have existed; methods of enslavement, slave production and slave regeneration were integrated into the very socio-economic structure of the society.¹²

Thus, a slave society essentially has a slave mode of production. A society could have been credited as having slave mode of production when slavery was responsible for more amounts of the exploited surplus products than any other means or force of production. However, in this situation slavery is not always the largest type of labour. There might be situations where the free labour force is more than the slaves yet the economic roles of the slave minority are more significant than the labours. The slaves in these cases provide the economy with the surplus product that was transferred to the urban centres and distant markets. Thus, slave exploitation in such society would be the defining character of the society and not the services rendered by the free labour majority.¹³

In his much celebrated categorization¹⁴ M.I. Finley credits five societies, i.e., ancient Greek and Roman societies and three American plantation societies as genuine slave societies. While he argues that the Medieval Muslim societies, despite their extensive use of slaves, were merely 'societies with slaves' or 'slave-holding societies' rather than 'slave societies'; since the economic roles of slaves were not very significant.¹⁵ The question arises here is that if Finley's categorization be applied, would it be pertinent to call the Delhi Sultanate a 'slave society' while the slaves had a major contribution in the establishment and sustenance of the Sultanate? Moreover it can be argued that the wealth that pumped into the

12 This is the classical distinction between 'slave society and 'society with slaves' as provided by Moses I. Finley in, *International Encyclopedia of Sociology*, 2003 ed., s.v. "Slavery." And Moses I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (California: University of California Press, American Council of Learned Societies, 1999), p.71. See also, Enrico Dal Lago and Constantina Katsari, *Slave Systems: Ancient and Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.5.

13 James W. Russell, *Modes of Production in World History* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1989), pp.62-63.

14 Lago and Katsari, *Slave Systems*, p.70.

15 *Ibid.*, p.33.

administration system of the Delhi Sultanate primarily came through the phenomena of military triumphs generally executed by the military slaves of the Sultans. Yet, neither the military slaves were exclusively responsible for the military triumphs nor war can be rated as a means of production even in a conquest state. The military class of the Delhi Sultanate relied upon the agricultural surplus produced by the peasantry at large.¹⁶ The questions arise here are: what was the role of slaves in the agrarian economy of the Delhi Sultanate? Do we find any evidence of slaves being employed as agrarian labour in the Delhi Sultanate?

In order to assess the significance of the economic roles of the slaves it will be pertinent to first estimate the slave population, the sources from which it was obtained and its value in the Delhi Sultanate and then to explore the nature of the professions that slave population was employed in.

Slave Population in the Delhi Sultanate

The total population of medieval India was somewhere between one hundred to one hundred forty million¹⁷ which was mostly settled in villages.¹⁸ The number of the Muslims probably did not exceed several hundred-thousand. As early as the times of Iltutmish, mass enslavement supplied population for the cities.¹⁹ Most of the people among the urban class owned slaves. Even the most destitute possessed some slaves.²⁰ Master-slave proportion in the Sultanate therefore, was one to many. Slaves seem to be involved largely, in the works of government control and organization. They were found in menial pursuits as well.

16 For an elaborate discussion on evolution of *iqḏā's* and the nature of agrarian output see Habib, *Marxist Perception*, pp.80-90.

17 Kanhaiya Lal Srivastava, *The Position of Hindus Under the Delhi Sultanate: 1206-1526* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1980), p.153.

18 Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World: The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest 11th-13th Centuries*, Vol.2 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.170.

19 Irfan Habib, "Economic History of the Delhi Sultanate An Essay in Interpretation," *Indian Council of Historical Research* 4, No.2 (Jan 1978), p.293.

20 Sayyid Muhammad Mubarak Alvī Kirmānī Amīr Khward, *Siyar al-Awalīyah*, trans. Ejazul Huq Quddusi (Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board, 1980), pp.735-37.

According to an estimate the population of Delhi was around four *lacs* during the thirteenth, fourteenth century,²¹ among which fifty thousand during ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī’s reign²² and one lac eighty thousand in Fīrūz Shāh’s time²³ are known to be slaves. The number of slaves owned by rich and poor classes was in addition to that. In the Delhi Sultanate, the slaves were permitted to marry and raise families. The slave families multiplied the people connected with the phenomenon of slavery. Thus, from above mentioned facts it may safely be inferred that slaves were at minimum one third of the total population of the Delhi Sultanate. The question that arises here is, whether this numerical strength had equal economic significance which can qualify the Delhi Sultanate to be termed as a slave society? In order to answer this question it is necessary to survey the slave system through which slaves were made available in the Sultanate society.

Supply of Slaves in the Sultanate

The supply of slave population in the society was through multiple mediums. War, trade, tax, debt defaulting, and inheritance were among the major means of acquiring slaves. Also, in the times of Fīrūz Shāh *recruitment en mass* took place. The number of slaves was not static; it fluctuated in the Sultanate due to the internal political conditions, phenomena of war, international slave trade and relations with the neighbouring powers.

Military victories of the Sultans substantiated mass enslavements of the defeated populations. The act was meant for dual purposes, that are, expansion and subduing the rebels. Enslavement of the tax defaulters and war captivation led to large scale slave-trading, both import and export. Thus, the slave labour emerged as a significant component of urban labour, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As mentioned earlier, the numbers of slaves in the Sultan’s establishments witnessed

21 Simon Digby, *War Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Study of Military Supplies* (Oxford: Orient Monographs. 1971), p.23.

22 Ghulam Sarwar Khan Niazi, *The Life and Works of Sultan Alauddin Khalji* (Lahore, 1990), p.49.

23 Habib, *Marxist Perception*, pp.174.

noticeable increase; fifty thousand under ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī and one lac eighty thousand under Fīrūz Shāh.

The Delhi Sultanate was expanding at the cost of its military successes. These triumphs resulted in mass enslavements. The extent of success in a campaign was estimated by the captives obtained for enslavement. Quīb al-Dīn Aybaq’s military operation in Gujrāt in 1195 yielded twenty thousand slaves. Seven years later, the Kālinjer campaign netted him another fifty thousand slaves. In 1253, Balban obtained abundant horses and slaves from an expedition in Ranthambōr. His successful expedition in the Dōāb made slaves prices visibly economical in the capital. For Malik Kāfūr’s celebrated expeditions in Deccan, it is assumed that the horses and slaves formed a large number of booty. As the Sultanate began to strengthen, the suppression of *mawās* or rebellious villages within its limits yielded a continuously rich harvest of slaves.²⁴ In the spring of 1380 Fīrūz Shāh marched to Katēhr to subdue the rebellious *rājā*. The raja fled into the hills, leaving his subjects to the mercy of Fīrūz, who killed vast numbers and enslaved twenty three thousand.²⁵ Similarly, one Nūr al-Dīn relates how a village in the territory of Ajūdhan (Punjab) was attacked and its people made into slaves by the *muqī’ī* or governor.²⁶

The revenue system of the Delhi Sultanate also produced a considerable proportion of the native slave population. It was a policy of the Sultans and their subordinate *muqī’īs* to enslave the revenue defaulters, since defiance to pay revenue meant revolt. While those communities that were loyal to the Sultan and regularly paid taxes were provided security by the Sultan, the dissidents were dealt with an iron hand. Thus, Balban ordered his *muqtīs* in Awadh to enslave those people who were resistant to his authority, implying those who declined to supply him with tax revenue. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī seems to have legalized the

24 Irfan Habib, “Economic History of the Delhi Sultanate: An Essay in Interpretation”, *Indian Council of Historical Research* 4, No.2 (Jan 1978), p.293.

25 J. Allan, H.H. Dodwell, T. Wolseley Haig, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India* 1, ed. H.H. Dodwell (London: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p.246.

26 Tapan Raychaudhuri, Irfan Habib and Dharma Kumar, *The Cambridge Economic History of India: c.1200-c.1750* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1982), p.90.

enslavement of the revenue defaulters. This policy continued during Mūghal era.²⁷ Since these raids were generally on rural areas, it can be inferred that the Sultans took the enslaved populations to growing Sultanate cities where there was a great demand of slave labour.

The process of enslavement was directly related to the conquest and expansion of the Sultanate. However, under Fīrūz Shāh this medium of slave-taking no longer remained a cardinal feature of the state policy. The Sultan very carefully selected and recruited the slaves. The criterion Fīrūz fixed for their selection was their quality and loyalty to the throne and the Sultan. In order to build a political powerbase with the support of his slaves, he ordered mass recruitment all over the Sultanate.

The Sultan took special care about the slave training and their employment. In order to maintain the large number of slaves properly, the Sultan retained forty thousand at the court and distributed the rest in various *iqā'as* of Dēōpālpūr, Multān, Hisār Fīrūzah, Sāmānah, Gujarāt and so on.²⁸ The slaves were imparted literary and technical knowledge both. Twelve hundred slaves were trained in crafts. The *amīrs* and *maliks* were also entrusted with some slaves for training. They were employed in army and were made *muqā'īs*. Those living in cities were given stipends.²⁹ For the purpose of collecting slaves, the Sultan issued a number of instructions to his *muqā'īs*. Such as, a selection was made from the prisoners of war and the best among them were sent to the capital. A large number of slaves were included in their annual benevolences to the Sultan. Thus, the *muqā'īs* on the occasion of their visits to the courts offered as slave presents. In return, the *muqā'īs* were either paid in cash or an equivalent amount was adjusted to their annual remittances. This policy naturally led to a constant increase in the number of slaves assembled at the capital. Moreover, the city *kōtwāl* occasionally recruited slaves from the unemployed and sent them to the provincial governors. Such

27 Scott C. Levi, "Hindu Beyond Hindu Kush: Indians in the Central Asian Slave Trade." *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 12, Part 3 (November 2002): p. 282.

28 Jamini Mohan Banerjee, *History of Firoz Shah Tughluq* (Lahore: Progressive books, 1967), p.135.

29 *Ibid.*

persons were recruited only when they volunteered themselves for it.³⁰

In order to cater the needs of slaves, the Sultan created an exclusive department, *Sāhib-i-Dīwān-i-Bandahgān* under a *Majmūdār* (muster master of the slaves), with other officers called *Chāwūsh-i-Ghurī* and a deputy *Chāwūsh-i-Ghurī* besides a distinct *dīwān*. There was also a separate treasury for the payment of their allowances.³¹ Consequently, they were the royal body of supporters in the instigation of the civil war their population was one lac in the capital.³² Although, Fīrūz Shāh deployed a part of his conscripted slaves in the *iqālā's* of Dēōpālpūr, Multān, Hisār Fīrūzah, Sāmānah and Gujrāt in addition to Delhi, yet we do not find any mention of these slaves being employed as peasants. It will be interesting here to note the prices of slaves in the Delhi Sultanate which can give an idea about the demand and supply of slaves in the Sultanate.

Prices of Slaves

In the Sultanate sources, the number and prices of the slaves are given to explain the economic status of the masters and also to depict the fiscal conditions of the country at a particular time. The prices fluctuated in the times of war and famine.³³ The talented and well-trained slaves were undoubtedly very expensive and were only meant for those who could afford them. For instance, Iltutmish was purchased in one hundred thousand *jītal*³⁴ or *tankā*.³⁵ Iltutmish himself is known to have purchased a particular slave in 50,000 *jītal*.³⁶ Similarly, the price for Malik Kāfūr was a thousand

30 *Ibid.*, p.134.

31 *Ibid.*, p.135.

32 *Ibid.*, p.136.

33 R.C. Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1950), p.400.

34 Minhāj al-Sirāj Juzjānī, *Ībaqāt-i Nāīrī*, Eng. trans. by H.G. Raverty, Vol.1 (Lahore: Amir Publications, 1977), p.603. Iltutmish was not purchased in this sum alone, as there is a mention of another slave Aibak. This price was of the couple.

35 'Abd al-Qādir ibn-i Mulūk Shāh Badā'ūnī, *Mūntakhab al-Tawārīkh* 1 (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1898), p.89.

36 Juzjānī, *Ībaqāt-i Nāīrī*, Vol.1, p.742.

dinār.³⁷ There were some concubines, who valued around twenty thousand *tankā* or even more.³⁸ The slave girl ‘Gul Chahrah’ cost nine hundred *tankā*, because of which she was unaffordable for many.³⁹ A female slave, who embroidered a fabric to present as a present for Nizām al-Dīn Awaliyā, valued a hundred *tankā*. Nizām al-Dīn Awaliyā in return prayed for her emancipation, this an indirect gesture to advise the master for her freedom. However, the master found himself incapable to manumit her, due to her price. Therefore, he decided to sell her, so that the new buyer may release her. The prices of the menial slaves were very inexpensive throughout the Delhi Sultanate. In the times of Muhammad ibn Tughluq there was a further decline in the prices of slaves.⁴⁰ Al ‘Umarī, while writing in the times of Muhammad ibn Tughluq, reports that the price of a slave girl for service in Delhi, did not exceed eight *tankā*. The slave girls who were fit for both service and cohabitation cost fifteen *tankā*. In other cities and towns they were still cheaper. His informer, Abū Safā ‘Umar al-Shiblī’ purchased a competent slave of adolescent age for four *dirham*.⁴¹ There were many rustic women captured in the course of armed expeditions that fetched very low prices. This was certainly because of their large numbers and uncultured ways.⁴² Ibn-i Baīūlah purchased a young slave in two *tankā*.⁴³

Horses were always many times more expensive than the high quality slaves. Nevertheless, an ordinary slave was of more value than the domestic animals. Nizām al-Dīn Awaliyā, refers to one pious person Burhān al-Dīn Kāshānī of Turkish origin, who was

37 Kishori Saran Lal, *History of the Khaljis A.D. 1290-1320* (Karachi: Union Book Stall, 1950), p.71.

38 Ahmd ibn Yahyā Ibn Fadl Allāh al-‘Umarī, “A Fourteenth Century Arab Account of India Under Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughluq”: Being English Translation of the Chapters on India from Shihāb al-Dīn al-‘Umarī’s *Masālik al-absār fi Mamālik al-Amsār*; Eng.trans., Iqtidar Hussain Siddiqi and Qazi Muhammad Ahmad (Aligarh: Siddiqi Publication House, 1972), pp.51-52.

39 Ibn-i Baīūlah, ‘*Ajā’ib al-Asfār*’; Urdu trans. Maulvi Muhammad Hussain (Islamabad: NIHCR, 1983), p.212.

40 Habib, *Economic History*, Vol.I. p.91.

41 *Ibid*.

42 Habib, *Economic History*, p.90.

43 Ibn-i Baīūlah, ‘*Ajā’ib al-Asfār*’, p.212.

contemporary of Balban. He owned ten horses, but a hundred slaves.⁴⁴

Baranī, gives prices which he affirms were current in the bazaar of Delhi. The prices are in *tankā*, the heavy and pure silver coin of circa 170 grains. A table is drawn to conveniently compare the prices of slaves, horses and livestock, henceforward.

Table 1. Comparison of the Prices in <i>tankās</i>		
Slaves		
Details	From	To
A servant girl	5	12
A male consort	20	30
A concubine	30	40
An inexperienced servant boy	7	8
An experienced servant man	10	15
Horses		
A race-horse of quality from Arabia or Persia	1,000	4,000
An exceptional Tātāri war horse	500	---
An ordinary Tātāri war-horse	100	---
Domestic Animals		
A pack mule of the best class	4	5
A mule of another class	3	---
A cow for eating	1.50	2
A milch cow	3	4
A milch buffalo	10	12
A buffalo for meat	5	6
A fat sheep	10/48 of <i>a tankā</i>	14/48 of <i>a tankā</i>

Source: Simon Digby, *War Horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Study of Military Supplies* (Oxford: Orient Monographs. 1971), pp.37-38

Baranī also mentions a rise in the price in the days when he was writing in 1359.⁴⁵ This was undoubtedly part of a general rise in prices. It also reflected a possible fall in the supply of slaves on the markets, due to the decline in the military power of the Sultanate.⁴⁶

44 Amīr Khward, *Sīrat-al Awaliyāh*, pp. 813-14.

45 Habib, *Economic History*, p.91.

46 *Ibid.*

Slave Trade

Slave trade was a profiting business. The specialized slave markets⁴⁷ were present in many cities and towns. From the *Malfūzat* of Sayyid Muhammad al-Husaynī Gaysū Darāz, it is evident that in Delhi there were many slave trade centres. The traders used to import slaves from distant places. There was a slave market inside the Pālam gate.⁴⁸ Pālam village was an adjacent area of Delhi,⁴⁹ and Pālam gate opened into the village, it was situated in the old Delhi which had fourteen gates.⁵⁰ There was a hospice of Ibrāhīm Qunūnwī outside the Pālam gate as well.⁵¹ There was some market place in Sind from where Ibn-i Baġlūlah purchased slaves.⁵² He also mentioned that a slave from Kamrūp in Āsām fetched a price many times more than the average slave in the market. He also found many slave girls in Bengal.⁵³

Import and export both were carried out in the markets. Besides large number of Indian slaves, of whom the Āsām slaves were most liked because of their strong physique, male and female slaves were imported from other countries including; China, Turkistan, Central Asia,⁵⁴ Byzantine, Africa, Arabia, Persia,⁵⁵ and Khurāsān.⁵⁶ The eunuchs were imported from Bengal and Malya Islands.⁵⁷

The abundance of slaves in India encouraged a continuous export of slaves as well. For whom the demand in the outside

47 Wink, *Al-Hind*, p.164.

48 Khaliq Ahmad Nizamī, *Awrāq-i Musawwir: 'Ahd-i Wustā Kī Dillī* (Delhi: Delhi University, 1972), pp.21-22.

49 Ibn-i Baġlūlah, *'Ajā'ib al-Asfār*, p.43.

50 Aslam, *Malfūzatī Adab*, p.118.

51 Ibn-i Baġlūlah, *'Ajā'ib al-Asfār*, p.209.

52 *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

53 Kanhaiya Lal Srivastava, *The Position of Hindus Under the Delhi Sultanate: 1206-1526* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1980), p.124.

54 Levi, "Hindu Beyond Hindu Kush," p.285.

55 Majumdar, *Advanced History*, p.400.

56 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Royalty in Medieval India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997), p.193.

57 K.M. Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan (1200-1550 A.D.)* (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1978), p.51.

world was quite considerable. Purchase of the slaves from India and their sale in Ghazni, is documented even before 1325.⁵⁸ When Juzjānī received news that his sister was alive in Khurāsān and he wished to send her help, the Sultan gave him forty slaves and a hundred ass-loads of goods to send to his sister. He arranged their dispatch from Multān. Nizām al-Dīn Awaliyā narrated an anecdote of a dervish who was engaged in commerce and sold at temptingly high profits slaves carried from Delhi to Ghaznī. When Tīmūr invaded India in 1398-99, collection of slaves formed an important object for his army. One hundred thousand Hindu slaves had been seized by his soldiers and camp followers during various expeditions. Even a Muslim religious man had collected fifteen slaves. However, all of the slaves were slaughtered before the attack on Delhi for fear that they might rebel. After the occupation of Delhi, its inhabitants were distributed as slaves among Tīmūr's nobles. The captives included several thousand artisans and professionals.⁵⁹

Different Sultans had their specific slave-trade policies. For instance, 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī banned the export of slaves to Afghanistan. In return, Qutlugh Khwajā, a Mongol general, ordered a ban over the supply of horses to India.⁶⁰ Similarly, Fīrūz Shāh also banned the export of slaves.⁶¹ It is evident from the statement of Al 'Umarī that slaves were cheap in India. Since, the Sultans aimed to collect a large number of slaves for themselves, therefore, it can be assumed that the policy was made by the Sultans to keep the prices and supply of the slaves in control.

An Estimate of Salaries

Slaves were always given financial benefits by their rich masters. They were also given regular salaries and stipends. At the time of Iltutmish's death, we find most of his slaves appointed on *iqṭā's* or the land revenue assignments. Seven slave *umarā'* are

58 Hasan 'Alā Sijzī, *Fūwāid al-Fūād*, Urdu trans. Muhammad Sarwar (Lahore: Ulema Academy 1973), p.240.

59 Habib, *Economic History*, p.91.

60 Muhammad Jamāl Qawām, *Qawām al-'Aqāid: Hazrat Khwājā Nizām al-Dīn Awaliyā' kay Chasham dīd Hālāt*, trans. Nisār Ahmad Farooqi (Rampur: Jamiah al-Ulum Faruqaniyyah, Idarah-i Nashr-o-Ash'at, 1994), p.46.

61 Habib, *Economic History*, p.91.

mentioned in the *Ībaqāt* as holding *iqġā'* by the time of Iltutmish's death. Bihār was under the command of 'Izz al-Dīn Ūghān Khān Ūghril, Palwāl was administered by Kabīr Khān who was earlier the *muqtī* of Multān,⁶² Bayānā and Gwāliyār were commanded by Nūrat al-Dīn Tāīsī, Baran by 'Izz al-Dīn Balban, Kuchat and Nandanah (Salt Range) by Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Aitgin, Multān by Qarāqash Khān Aitgin and Uchch by Sayf al-Dīn Aybag-i Uchch.⁶³ *Iqġā'* of Lakhnawatī and Bengal was under the authority of Awār Khān Aybag.⁶⁴

Under the Khaljīs many of the slaves seem to have been paid through *iqġā'* too. For instance, Malik Kāfūr, Khusraw Khān and his brother Hasām were given governorships.⁶⁵ According to Al-'Umarī, slaves were present in large number in Muhammad ibn Tughluq's army.⁶⁶ The army officers were assigned *iqġā'* in lieu of cash salary. However, the soldiers and Turkish slaves were not allotted *iqġā'*; but they were paid by the royal exchequer. Every slave of the Sultan received one *maund* of wheat and rice, along with his ration monthly. Besides, he was supplied three seers of meat coupled with other necessary cooking utensils, daily. He was also paid ten silver *tankās* every month and in every year four suits of cloth.⁶⁷ A salary table of the twenty thousand Turkish slaves of the Sultan is henceforward. It is significant to note that the source does not provide the details that whether these allowances were given monthly, quarterly, biannually or annually.

62 Sunil Kumar, "When Slaves were Nobles: The Shamsi *Bandagan* in the Early Delhi Sultanate" *Studies in History* 10 (1994), p.45.

63 Habib, "Formation of the Sultanate Ruling Class" p.12.

64 *Ibid.*

65 Abdul Malik 'Isāmī, *Futūġ al-Salāġīn*, Eng. trans. and Edited by Agha Mahdi Husain, Vol. 1 (Aligarh: University Press of Aligarh, 1976), pp. 457-458: Diyā' al-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i Firūz Shāhī*. Urdu trans. by Sayyid Mu'īn al-Haqq (Lahore: Shafiq Press, 1969), p.552-65.

66 Siddiqi and Ahmad, *Masālik al-Abġār*, p.37.

67 *Ibid.*, pp.38-9.

Table 2

Estimated Salaries in the Times of Muhammad ibn Tughluq	
Rank	Salary in <i>tankās</i>
Khān	200,000
Maliks	60,000 to 50,000
Amir	40,000 to 30,000
Isfahla	20,000
Soldier	10,000 to 1000
Turkish slaves	5000 to 1000

Source: Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi and Qazi Mohammad Ahmad, *A Fourteenth Century Arab Account of India Under Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughluq (Being English Translation of the Chapters on India from Shihāb al-Dīn al-'Umarī's Masālik al-Abfār fī mamālik al-amsār)* (New Delhi, n.d.), pp.38-9.

Similarly in the times of Fīrūz Shāh, slaves were employed in army and were made *muqī'ī*. Those living in cities were given allowances of hundred, fifty, thirty, twenty-five or ten *tankā* at the interval of six, four or three months.⁶⁸ Those living in *iqā'ā'* were paid through their revenue assignments.

Interestingly, there were many who financially sponsored their masters. For instance, Nūr Turk's slave who was a cotton-carder used to give him a *tankā* every day.⁶⁹ The pay of an artisan was around four or six *jītal*.⁷⁰ Similarly, in the early life of Nizām al-Dīn Awaliyā when he lived in Badayūn, his female slave worked side by side with the poor family, to sustain the living. Nizām al-Dīn's slave Iqbāl was responsible for administering most of the financial affairs of his master.⁷¹ Similarly, a man complained to Shaikh Nā'ir al-Dīn Ma'lmūd Charāgh-i Dellī about his strained financial conditions. He informed the Shaykh that his only source of income is the one third of the earnings of his slave.⁷² Thus, a survey of the number and value of slaves confirms their vital

68 Banerjee, *Firoz Shah*, p.135.

69 Aslam, *Malfūzātī Adab*, p.29.

70 *Ibid.*, p.99.

71 Hamīd ibn Fazalullah Jamālī, *Siyar al-'Arifīn*, trans. Muhammad Ayyūb Qādrī (Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board, 1989), pp.122-23.

72 Nā'ir al-Dīn Ma'lmūd, *Khair al-Majālis*, ed. Khalīq Ahmad Nizamī (Aligarh: Muslim University Aligarh, n.d.), p.33.

presence in every aspect of urban life. In order to understand the significance of slaves in the Sultanate economy a brief overview of the professions that the slaves were employed in is henceforth.

Slave Professions in the Sultanate

In the pre-scientific and pre-industrial era, the phenomena of human development owed greatly to the institution of slavery. Slaves were the human machines who, in the absence of mechanical technology and industries, were ubiquitously employed in large scale organized labour and dreary menial tasks. They were the back bone of most of the pre-modern economies and the Delhi Sultanate economy was no exception. The slaves were, drafted in every sphere of urban activity, which ranged from domestic errands to elite bureaucratic levels. In state apparatus, they were required in thousands for large enterprises both military and civil. The slaves were employed in construction of government buildings, *kārkhānah* or royal factories, in army, at work in palace or royal court; they were used as spies by both ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī and Muhammad ibn Tughluq. The menial slaves were employed in every kind of work, from domestic chores to weaving. However, it will be interesting to note that almost at no place we come across large scale slave peasantry in the Delhi Sultanate sources.

1-Urban Labour

One of the most salient features of the Turkish rule was the growth of an urban culture.⁷³ The Turks and Afghans settled in the cities and towns by making their colonies. The villages and rural areas on the other hand, maintained much of their local autonomy. However, their only contribution to the Sultanate economy was the revenue on agricultural produce. The village continued to be the basic economic unit. Its production was largely for the local consumption and surplus was extracted by the Sultans. In addition, each village had its own free craftsmen, who ‘spun and wove cloth, made ploughs, yokes, wooden carts with larger wooden wheels, leather buckets for carrying water, household pottery, ropes, mats, baskets, metal utensils, horse shoes, knives, daggers, swords, and

73 H.C. Verma, *Dynamics of Urban Life in Pre-Mughal India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1986), p.xii.

all the various articles used in the villages.⁷⁴ The technologies employed by these artisans were primordial, yet adequate for their limited production. Artisans were structured in craft castes and the distinction between castes was clearly practiced.

The Sultanate ruling class, not only created demand for new products and services due to their central and west Asian backgrounds, but also introduced a reasonably wide range of craft technology to India. Technology they added to India included right-angled gearing (for the final form of the Persian wheel), the spinning wheel, paper manufacture, vault construction, use of bitumen and lime-cement, iron horse-shoe and so on.⁷⁵ Consequently, new vocations, such as, 'paper-makers, lime-mixers'⁷⁶ came to be known.

It seems improbable that new techniques were immediately adopted by the Indian artisans. Since, they were organized in hereditary custom-bound castes, familiar with different traditions. For certain new crafts, no professional caste might have existed at all. Gradually, there must have been adjustments within the caste labour to suit the new situations. Large scale enslavements provided cheap labours in the cities.⁷⁷ These workers, skilled and unskilled generally belonged to the non-regular caste (*antyajā*). They lived within the four walls of the city.⁷⁸ Thus, unlike the Indian society, the Sultanate did not impose any restriction on inter-professional mobility. Consequently, thousands of slaves were found, trying to seek an upward movement in the social ladder.⁷⁹ Cities were the heart of the Sultanate rule where the need for a new class of artisan and skilled labour population arose. The

74 Romila Thapar, *A History of India 1* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), p.294.

75 D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), p.370.

76 Habib, *Marxist Perception*, p.173.

77 [Irfan Habib, "Economic History of the Delhi Sultanate: An Essay in Interpretation," *Indian Council of Historical Research*, Vol.4, No.2 \(January 1978\), p.292.](#)

78 Verma, *Dynamics*, p.xii.

79 *Ibid.*, p.79.

new demands in a changing environment led to an urban revolution.⁸⁰

2-Slave Soldiers

The Sultans did not employ the elite slaves in their armies only, the common slaves soldiers were also present in large numbers. There were a thousand of *pā'ik* slave (slave foot-soldiers) in Ghiyāthī and 'Alā'ī army. Slave guards of 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī saved his life during an intrigue.⁸¹ Muhammad ibn Tughluq's *pā'ik* slaves fought in front of his elephants.⁸² When the Sultan moved from one palace to the other, there were 12,000 slaves around him and all of them were on foot. Only *chitar bardār* (the carrier of the royal umbrella), the *silā'dārs* and *jamādārs* (carriers of garments) rode in this rite.⁸³ The Sultan possessed twenty thousand Turkish slaves. According to Al-Bizī there were also ten thousand eunuchs besides, one thousand *Bashmaqḍīs* (officer-in-charge of shoes or horse-shoes) and two thousand such armed slaves who always accompanied the Sultan. They fought on foot in front of the Sultan.⁸⁴ Fīrūz Shāh's slaves largely controlled elephants.⁸⁵ Ten thousand among those were employed as night guards of the royal palace.⁸⁶ Slaves accompanied the Sultans in the hunting expeditions as well.⁸⁷

3-Royal Gifts

Gifts have always been used by the rulers, as a diplomatic tool for appeasement of their addressee. The Sultans of Delhi were also aware of the tactic, and considered slaves among the most valuable goods to be utilized in this regard. Therefore, on one occasion, Nā'ir al-Dīn Ma'īmūd gave forty slaves to Juzjānī.⁸⁸ Similarly,

80 Habib, *Marxist Perception*, p.173.

81 Baranī, *Tārīkh*, p.403: Lal, *Khaljis*, p.87.

82 Siddiqi and Ahmad, *Masālik al Abṣār*, p.53.

83 *Ibid.*, p.63.

84 *Ibid.*, p.37.

85 Yahya ibn Ahmad Bin 'Abd Ullah Sirhindī, *Tārīkh-i Mubārakshāhī*, K.K. Basu | (Karachi: Karimsons, 1977), p.242.

86 Banerjee, *Firoz Shah*, p.135.

87 'Affī, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūz Shāhī*, p.224.

88 Banerjee, *Firoz Shah*, p.133.

when the Chinese Emperor's emissary brought a hundred slave men and women to the court of Muhammad ibn Tughluq, in order to take permission for constructing a temple in the Sultan's territory, the Sultan, as a gesture of goodwill, sent one hundred slave men and one hundred slave women who could sing and dance, in return.⁸⁹ The Sultans also favoured their nobles by presenting them slaves as gifts. On his *eid* galas, Muhammad ibn Tughluq used to present slave girls to his nobles.⁹⁰

Those who visited the Sultan also presented slaves as gifts to them.⁹¹ Ibn-i Baīūlah gives an account of this transaction of presents in his travelogue. He presented a slave girl to the mother of Muhammad ibn Tughluq, who in return gave a thousand rupee, gold jewellery and expensive clothes to him.⁹² Similarly, the slaves were among the receivers of the royal robes, endowed by Muhammad ibn Tughluq.⁹³ The royal slaves also entertained the masses on special occasions. Just as, when the Sultan returned to the capital after some expedition, the slave girls entertained every one in the celebrations. There were thousands of slaves parading in front of the Sultan while the army marched behind him.⁹⁴

4-Builders

The Sultan constructed various cities and monuments. Iltutmish, 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī and Fīrūz Shāh were considered to be great builders. The large scale organized labour could have been obtained from the collection of the royal slaves, since this method was less expensive and more practical. 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī had seventy thousand constructing labours who could, according to Baranī, build a house within three days, palace or a fortress within two weeks.⁹⁵ Many among them must have been slaves. Fīrūz Shāh imparted training to his four thousand slaves for construction.⁹⁶

89 Ibn-i Baīūlah, *'Ajā'ib al-Asfār*, p.243.

90 *Ibid.*, p.108.

91 *Ibid.*, p.22.

92 *Ibid.*, p.211.

93 *Ibid.*, p.104.

94 *Ibid.*, p.109.

95 Baranī, *Tārīkh*, p.497.

96 Srivastava, *Hindus under the Delhi Sultanate*, p.174.

5-Espionage

Slaves, being the most reliable group among the servicemen, were employed for espionage by the Sultans.⁹⁷ ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī used slaves as spies to detect short weight in the markets.⁹⁸ Ibn-i Baīūlah and ‘Afīf also refer to some slave spies in their accounts.⁹⁹ About the spy networks of the Delhi Sultans Ibn-i Baīūlah writes that, ‘it is the tradition of the Sultans of Hindustan that, in the household of every important or unimportant noble, slaves of the Sultan are appointed, who kept the Sultan informed about the *amīr*. The female slaves report to the sweepers, who inform to the investigation officers.’ A noble was killed by Muhammad ibn Tughluq, when the report of the preceding night’s conversation between the noble and his wife were reported by the chamber-maid. Similarly, a slave of one noble ‘Ain al-Mulk reported about his treason to the Sultan.¹⁰⁰ This noble also had personal slaves, such as Ibn-i Baīūlah refers to ‘Ain al-Mulk’s slaves, whose lives were spared, after the death of their master, by the orders of the Sultan.¹⁰¹ Likewise, Balban and Fīrūz Shāh had also given many of their slaves to the nobles for training, who might have carried on the service of espionage as well. ‘Afīf mentions an incident when Fīrūz Shāh’s slaves reported about the irregularities in the royal mint.

6-Royal Kārkhānahs

Acquiring slaves was undoubtedly one of the major concerns of the Delhi Sultans. It is however, difficult to say how far their desire of keeping them was accentuated by the latter’s absorption in the productive purposes. The royal *kārkhānahs* in which large number of slaves were engaged cannot be labelled as productive institutions, since their output was exclusively for the royalties.¹⁰² Nevertheless, these *kārkhānahs* provided employment to many.

97 Baranī, *Tārīkh*, pp.417, 453.

98 I.H. Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Dehli* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1958), p.170.

99 Ibn-i Baīūlah, *‘Ajā’ib al-Asfār*, p.176.

100 *Ibid.*, p.179.

101 *Ibid.*, p.184.

102 Verma, *Dynamics*, p.113.

For instance, twelve thousand of Fīrūz Shāhī slaves were employed in *kārkhānahs*.¹⁰³ The royal house-hold departments were also manned by slaves and they held posts like, the *ābdār* (incharge of water), *jāmādār* (incharge of dresses), *chitrdār* (incharge of royal canopy), *pardāhdār* (incharge of curtains), *sharābdār* (incharge of drinks), *shamādār* (incharge of light), *itrdār* (incharge of perfumery) and so on.¹⁰⁴

7-Artisans

The slaves provided the large, controlled supply of labour. With reasonably priced male and female slaves available for work and training, they became a convenience for the master craftsmen and merchants, as well as royal and aristocratic masters. The slave was mere chattel, and could not flee. He could thus be forced to perform any kind of labour at the desire of the master, irrespective of the origin and caste of the slave.¹⁰⁵ In the royal palace they were accommodated in every kind of job. In Ibn-i Baīūlah's account of the royal palace, the slaves were everywhere. Even the slaves sprinkled rose water which was in silver and gold vessels on the guests,¹⁰⁶ and were also the transporters or *pālkī* carriers.¹⁰⁷ Non commercial masters applied the artisan slave into business. Around twelve thousand of Fīrūz Shāh's slaves were artisan. Nūr Tūrks's and Nizām al Dīn Awaliyā's female slaves were employed in cotton-carding and spinning.¹⁰⁸

8-Artists

In his account of the Delhi Sultanate, Ibn-i Baīūlah frequently mentions the royal slave singers and dancers. These artists performed in the weddings of the nobles.¹⁰⁹ There were some artists who were exclusive for the Sultan. Al-'Umarī stated that, "the court musicians besides the slave musicians number twelve hundred. There are one thousand other slaves who train the

103 Habib, "An Essay in Interpretation," p.293.

104 Banerjee, *Firoz Shah*, p.136.

105 Habib, "An Essay in Interpretation," p.294.

106 Ibn-i Baīūlah, *'Ajā'ib al-Asfār*, p.108.

107 *Ibid.*, p.134.

108 Habib, "An Essay in Interpretation," p.293.

109 Ibn-i Baīūlah, *'Ajā'ib al-Asfār*, p.132.

singers. If any singer attached to the Sultan sings for some other person, he is put to death.”¹¹⁰ The dancing girls were also sent as presents to the emperor of China. The daughters of the defeated rajas were also employed on the professions of singing and dancing in the royal courts.¹¹¹

9-Eunuchs

Eunuch slaves were employed for the care and surveillance of the female inmates of the *harem*. During Sultanate era, their numbers increased phenomenally as they played a very significant administrative role in the households of the upper class.¹¹² They could have been trusted due to their sexual neutrality and ‘since they had no progeny they had no reason to siphon away the money’.¹¹³ They were usually bought in childhood and castrated. Trade in eunuchs was carried on in Bengal in the thirteenth century. They were sometimes imported from the farthest Malay islands also.¹¹⁴ Some of the eunuchs became the catamites of their masters. In the Sultanate history, Malik Kāfūr and Khusraw Khān were two slaves who killed their masters and became *de-facto* rulers.

Delhi Sultanate, A Society with Slaves or a Slave Society?

Since the writ of the Delhi Sultans’ authority did not exceed beyond the major cities and the rural fortifications in northern India,¹¹⁵ it is difficult to find references of slaves in the village life in the Sultanate sources. The above mentioned survey of the slave social life and their professions establishes one major finding that the role of menial slaves in the Sultanate was limited to urban labour and domestic slavery in both royal and common households. Despite their extraordinary numerical presence in the

110 Siddiqi and Ahmad, *Masālik al-Absār*, p.41.

111 Ibn-i Baīūnah, *‘Ajā’ib al-Asfār*, p.243.

112 Saleem Kidwai, “Sultans, Eunuchs, and Domestics: New Form of Bondage in Medieval India,” in Utsa Patnaik, Manjari Dingwaney, eds. *Chains of Servitude: Bondage and Slavery in India* (Madras: Sangam Books, 1985), p.77.

113 Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, eds. *Same-Sex Love in India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p.109.

114 Ashraf, *People of Hindustan*, p.51.

115 W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India* (Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Cooperation, 1968), p.21.

Sultanate their economic roles were less significant as compared to the role of peasantry who produced major economic surplus. Slaves are mentioned in the Sultanate sources as soldiers, builders, artisans, domestic servants, artists, spies and labours in royal *kārkhānahs*, yet no where there is any mention of large scale slave peasantry. Keeping in view the economic roles of the slaves the Delhi Sultanate cannot be termed as a slave society. Nevertheless the slave population had been present in extraordinary number due to which the Delhi Sultanate can be termed as a society with slaves or a slave holding society.