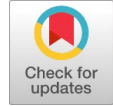


# Ala-ul Mulk: A Political Genius and Confidant of Alauddin Khalji



Syed Bashir Hasan

**Abstract:** Alauddin Khalji had usurped power with the help of his friends and confidants. Besides Ulugh Khan (brother of Alauddin Khalji), Zafar Khan Nusrat Khan and Alp Khan, he had Malik Ala-ul Mulk a very trusted person, in his confidential circle. He was posted with Alauddin Khalji during his governorship of Kara. This officer of Alauddin misled Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji by his fabricated reports when Alauddin Khalji took a bold action of proceeding on an expedition to Devagiri without obtaining permission of the Sultan. From his Kara days till his death, Ala-ul Mulk remained a confidant of Alauddin Khalji and gave him his sincere advices whenever the Sultan asked for. He was an officer who always spoke fearlessly while giving his sincere advices even against the wishes of the Sultan. His sincerity and truthfulness was truly acknowledged by the Sultan.

**Keywords:** Delhi Sultanate, Khalji, Kotwal, Administration, Religion, Nobility.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Exceptional military leaders succeed in the establishment of kingdoms and empires. They are helped in the establishment of their dynasties and running successful administration by a number of trusted and exceptionally talented nobles and officers. Since the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi, the founders of the dynasties and other rulers had a number of distinguished military generals and other talented nobles and officers possessing great political and administrative acumen whose support and candid advices enabled them not only in the establishment of their rule but also in carrying out the administration successfully and facing hopeless situations. There is a long list of great nobles and officers who rendered invaluable services in the establishment, expansion and administration of the Delhi Sultanate under different rulers. Some of them excelled in their administrative and diplomatic skills and enjoyed great confidence of the rulers for their candid advices and sincere services. Their individual careers and invaluable services rendered by them have not been given due attention by modern historians of medieval India. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight one such officer Ala-ul Mulk's career under Alauddin Khalji who by his distinguished services and frank advices enjoyed great confidence of the Sultan.

Ala-ul Mulk[1] the uncle of Ziauddin Barani, the author of *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*, was a great confidant of Alauddin Khalji. He was with Alauddin Khalji during his governorship of Kara under Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji. Towards the end of the year 1292, during his governorship of Kara, Alauddin Khalji sought the permission of the Sultan to invade the region of Malwa. He marched with his army to invade Bhilsa[2] and got enormous booty during this expedition. [3] Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji was so pleased with the performance of his nephew that he appointed Alauddin Khalji as *arz-i mamalik* and his administrative responsibility was increased by the addition of iqta of Awadh to the iqta of Kara. [4] During his expedition of Bhilsa, Alauddin Khalji got the information about the overflowing treasures and elephants of Devagiri.[5] He gathered information from the residents of Bhilsa about the route to Devagiri with the intention of executing an expedition to Devagiri by increasing his army, both infantry and cavalry without obtaining the permission of the Sultan.[6] After the successful expedition of Bhilsa, Alauddin Khalji visited Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji at Delhi. Taking advantage of the Sultan's happiness and kindness towards him for his material gains in Bhilsa, Alauddin sought the remission of surplus (*fawazil*) of Kara and Awadh in order to invest it in raising his army for further expeditions to Chanderi and the surrounding areas for capturing enormous booty from the region.[7] After obtaining Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji's permission, for recruiting new troops both infantry and cavalry for the purpose, Alauddin Khalji came back to Kara[8] in 1294.[9]

After making proper military preparations for his expedition to Devagiri, Alauddin also took care of the administration of Kara during his absence. Malik Ala-ul Mulk, who was a close friend and confidant of Alauddin Khalji was given the charge of administration during his absence.[10] Since Alauddin had kept his scheme of invading Devagiri a secret, he moved from Kara giving an impression that he was marching towards Chanderi with the intention of sacking that region.[11] It seems that Malik Ala-ul Mulk was also assigned the duty of sending false reports to Sultan Jalaluddin about Alauddin Khalji's whereabouts. Malik Ala-ul Mulk continuously sent false reports to the Sultan by saying that Alauddin Khalji was engaged in plundering and pillaging the territory of Chanderi and that Alauddin Khalji's petition to the Sultan informing him about his victories would reach the Sultan in a day or two.[12] Barani's statement gives the impression that as per the directions of Alauddin Khalji, his close confidant, acting with full sincerity and loyalty as his deputy at Kara kept the Sultan in dark by continuously sending fabricated reports with regard to Alauddin Khalji's whereabouts and engagements.

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## Ala-ul Mulk: A Political Genius and Confidant of Alauddin Khalji

Since Malik Ala-ul Mulk was a close associate and confidant of Alauddin Khalji and had served well as his deputy at Kara during his absence, Alauddin Khalji appointed him governor of Kara and Awadh in the first year (1296-97) of his accession on the throne of the Sultanate of Delhi.[13] Malik Ala-ul Mulk had been with Alauddin Khalji at Kara during the latter's governorship, he had much experience of administration of the province. While marching towards Delhi after the assassination of his uncle, Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji, Alauddin Khalji had left Malik Ala-ul Mulk as his deputy in Kara being in charge of the nobles and officers of Alauddin Khalji as well as elephant stables and treasures.[14] This attests that Ala-ul Mulk was the most trusted officer of Alauddin Khalji.

During the second year of his accession (1297-98), Alauddin Khalji summoned Malik Ala-ul Mulk from Kara to Delhi. He was also directed to reach the capital with the nobles and officers and the treasures which were kept in his charge.[15] On his arrival, Sultan Alauddin Khalji noticed his obesity and appointed him the Kotwal of Delhi.[16] This was a very important position and, therefore, the Sultan assigned it to his faithful officer Ala-ul Mulk. The Sultan also gave the custody of all the Tazik prisoners to him.[17] It seems that the Tazik prisoners were given special care, therefore, the Sultan kept them in his charge, who had an image of a sincere and responsible officer.

Ala-ul Mulk's status in the eyes of Sultan Alauddin Khalji may be gauged from the fact that he used to give candid advices to him whenever he thought it fit to speak. Towards the end of the third year of the Sultan's accession, the Mongols with a large army under Qutlugh Khwaja, son of Dawa Khan came to capture Delhi.[18] The Sultan got the news of Mongol army's movement towards Delhi late. He had a very short time for preparation to face the enemy.[19] At this critical moment, Ala-ul Mulk, the Kotwal of Delhi, came forward with his sincere advice to the Sultan. He advised Alauddin Khalji to avoid battle and adopt the way of diplomacy. Ala-ul Mulk pointed out that the Delhi army had an experience of fighting Hindu chiefs and were unaware of Mongol military tactics. He also asked the Sultan to seek some time from the Mongols engaging them in negotiations obviously for more preparations or to avoid battle.[20] Though Ala-ul Mulk had submitted his candid advices in strict confidence, but the Sultan summoned his nobles and appreciated his sincerity and diplomatic skills in their presence. Ala-ul Mulk's arguments at this unnerving moment impressed Alauddin Khalji so much that he uttered in the presence of his nobles that Ala-ul Mulk deserves the wizarat (wazirship).[21] Alauddin Khalji publicly acknowledged that Ala-ul Mulk had been his sincere and close advisor since the days when both of them were Maliks[22] (from their days of posting at Kara). Though Alauddin Khalji finally displayed firmness and courage at this critical moment and decided to meet the army of the Mongols at the battlefield, he expressed great trust in Ala-ul Mulk. Before proceeding to face the Mongols, Alauddin Khalji made him incharge of the harem and all the treasures of the Sultan during his absence. [23] This speaks Ala-ul Mulk's status in the eyes of the Sultan.

During the first three years of Sultan Alauddin Khalji's reign, his achievements were to his satisfaction as a king. He began thinking of executing some extraordinary projects that

came to his mind because of his lust for power and prestige. [24] One of his project was his ambition of founding a new religion. In his wine-drinking assemblies, the Sultan began saying that God Almighty had bestowed four friends to the Prophet of Islam and with their assistance, the Prophet succeeded in establishing *Sharia* (Canon Law) and Din (Religion). Alauddin Khalji used to say that similarly God has bestowed four friends, namely, Ulugh Khan, Zafar Khan, Nusrat Khan and Alp Khan, he could also establish a new religion that would enable him to enforce his new regulations and that the name of the Sultan and his friends would survive till the world exists.[25]

Another project of Alauddin that he began discussing in his wine-drinking assemblies among his friends and other nobles was concerned with his ambition of proceeding on the mission of world conquest leaving some person of his trust in the capital to govern the kingdom. In this dreamed project, the Sultan expressed his desire of entrusting the territories that he would conquer in the process of world conquest expedition, to his confidant officers one by one, and he himself would march on for further conquests.[26] Alauddin Khalji desired to execute his mission of world conquest as Alexander. His keen desire to repeat the role of Alexander and to impress his nobles, officers and common people that he was capable of bringing the inhabited world under his grip, he took the title of Alexander the second which began to be recited in the Khutba of Friday prayers. His coins also carried this title in their inscriptions.[27] Malik Ala-ul Mulk, the Kotwal of Delhi, a great confidant of the Sultan, had become so corpulent that he used to visit the Sultan once in a month to greet him. He used to enjoy the company of the Sultan in his wine-drinking assembly on that occasion. Malik Ala-ul Mulk had already heard about the Sultan's discussion of his dreamed projects in his assemblies and the approbation of the listeners because of the fear of his ill temper and ill manners. On one occasion, while Malik Ala-ul Mulk was attending his assembly of cups, Alauddin Khalji sought his trusted friend's opinion on his two important plans. The Kotwal humbly asked the Sultan to order the removal of the wine cups from the assembly and that except four close friends of the Sultan, namely, Ulugh Khan, Zafar Khan, Nusrat Khan and Alp Khan, and no person be allowed entry into the pleasure hall of the Sultan where this assembly was going on.[28]

As regards the Sultan's first dreamed project of inventing a new religion, Malik Ala-ul Mulk candidly told the Sultan that the religion was a matter of revelation from God. He warned the Sultan against discussing *Sharia* (Canon Law) and Din (Religion) as these concerns with Prophets and not the Kings. The religion could not be founded by human advice and designs. He argued that even Chengiz Khan, the great conqueror could not enforce the religion of the Mongols and their regulations among people despite large scale bloodshed of the Muslims. Despite all this, the result was that there was large scale conversion of the Mongols to Islam and no Muslim turned to the religion of the Mongols. He alerted the Sultan that if his idea of inventing a new religion reaches the masses,

There would be widespread rebellions which could not be suppressed by almost all means of the Sultan and no counseling would be of use in their suppression. This was the most powerful argument of the Kotwal which convinced the Sultan to give up his crazy plan of establishing a new religion. [29] When the Sultan heard his fearless arguments and got convinced with the points of view of Malik Ala-ul Mulk, he whole heartedly appreciated his faithfulness and truthfulness. Alauddin Khalji promised not to discuss on this matter in future. On the other hand, the Kotwal indicted all those who did not speak the truth and appreciated the Sultan's wrongful ideas being guilty of hypocrisy.[30]

After agreeing with the candid opinion of Malik Ala-ul Mulk, the Sultan sought his invaluable thought on his second project of world conquest. Since this was also a very serious and important political question, Malik Ala-ul Mulk replied with strong arguments to make the Sultan understand as to what he wanted to convey on the issue. The Sultan being in possession of vast resources desired to undertake the mission of conquering the whole inhabited world Malik Ala-ul Mulk had no objection to this plan of Alauddin Khalji but he knew the ground reality of the time. He tried to point out to the Sultan that from Alauddin's assassination in Kara to the capture of capital and other territories, he had to incur immense money and bear loss of lives.[31] He asked the Sultan that if you contemplate to proceed on world conquest, to whom you would assign your existing kingdom to. He asserted that a large army would be required for internal conquest as well as world conquest.[32] The Kotwal said that there were no revolts during the absence of Alexander. The time has changed. Moreover, Alexander enjoyed the services of Aristotle who was loyal to his king. In this age of Alauddin Khalji which was different from that of Alexander, the Sultan lacked loyal person to act as his deputy during his absence. The Kotwal argued that the Sultan's absence might jeopardise the firm administration of the Sultan and the recalcitry elements would revolt against him. He warned the Sultan that he could not trust his nobles.[33]

As a true master of politics, the trusted advisor of the Sultan, Malik Ala-ul Mulk advised the Sultan to concentrate on strengthening his political position and solidifying the foundations of his Sultanate as his first priority.[34] He tried to clarify to the Sultan, the ground realities of politics so that he could take the right decision. He knew that the Sultan did not have full control over the Indian territories. As regards the Sultan's second priority, Malik Ala-ul Mulk advised the Sultan that he should raise a large army for conquering the remaining territories of India and Mongol invasions be given strong resistance. Malik Ala-ul Mulk asserted that if the strategic locations on the north-west were guarded by experienced and faithful commanders and recalcitry elements were suppressed, the Sultan would remain in the capital governing his Sultanate peacefully and smoothly.[35]

As a true statesman and experienced administrator, Malik Ala-ul Mulk advised the Sultan to adopt the policy of conquering new territories and leaving them to their rulers on agreement of transmitting regular tribute to the capital.[36] The Kotwal pointed out that the King's life and behaviour had a direct effect on the life style of his subjects. Therefore, the Sultan should adopt proper disciplined life style of a king. He should stop drinking and never degrade the dignity and

prestige of the ruler. The Kotwal emphasized the need of good nobles and officers whose advices would be of benefit to the Sultan in running the state administration smoothly. [37] The Sultan greatly appreciated Malik Ala-ul Mulk's sincere and sagacious advices and rewarded him with an embroidered robe, a golden waistband bearing a weight of half a *man*, 10,000 tankas, two fine horses and two villages as *inam*.[38]

## II. CONCLUSION

We may conclude that Malik Ala-ul Mulk was an intimate friend and trusted officer of Alauddin Khalji. He was included in the group of officers posted under him at Kara on whom the future Khalji Sultan had great confidence. It was he who concealed the fact of Alauddin's departure for invading Devagiri by transmitting fabricated reports to Sultan Jalaluddin. The treasures secured in Devagiri and Malik Ala-ul Mulk's misleading reports and connivance in the assassination of Sultan Jalaluddin[39] enabled Alauddin Khalji to secure the throne. His career, from Devagiri expedition during which he served as Alauddin Khalji's deputy at Kara to his appointment as the Kotwal of Delhi saw a steady rise and he became more and more important to Sultan Alauddin Khalji because of his sagacity, sincerity and trust. His bold and candid replies to the queries of the Sultan speaks that he was greatly respected by Alauddin Khalji. As regards his sagacity and statesmanship, Sultan Alauddin Khalji himself declared that Malik Ala-ul Mulk possessed all the qualities of a Wazir. Throughout the period of the Sultanate of Delhi, there was no noble enjoying this level of trust and confidence of the ruler despite his fearlessness to speak the truth.

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Authors Contributions	I am only the sole author of the article.

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6. Barani, p.220-21.
7. Ibid.
8. Barani, p.221.
9. Firishta, Vol.I, p.172.
10. Barani, p. 222; Tabaqat-i Akbari, Vol.I, p.144. Firishta gives the detail of Alauddin's military preparations and march of Alauddin for his Devagiri expedition but he does not refer Ala-ul Mulk's appointment as his deputy at Kara during his absence, Firishta, Vol.I, p.172.
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22. Ibid.
23. This speaks Alauddin Khalji's trust on Ala-ul Mulk.
24. Barani, pp.261-53; Firishta, Vol.I, p.188; Tabaqat-i Akbari, Vol.I, p.160.
25. Barani, pp.262-63; Tabaqat-i Akbari, Vol.I, p.160. Firishta has referred to Alauddin Khalji; ambition of founding a new religion but does not give these details of his arguments.
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29. Barani, pp.265-67; Firishta, Vol.I, pp.188-89; Tabaqat-i Akbari, Vol.I, p.161.
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