



The Delhi Sultanate-II: Khilji Dynasty (1290-1320)

For Prelims: Chronology of Rulers, Reforms at the Time of Alauddin Khilji

For Mains: Khilji Dynasty, Expansion of Delhi Sultanate

After the fall of the **Slave Dynasty** (1206 - 1290), the **Khilji Dynasty** (1290-1320) emerged as a new ruling power in the Delhi Sultanate.

Who was Jalaluddin Khilji (AD 1290-1296)?

- **Jalaluddin Khilji laid the foundation of the Khilji dynasty.** He ascended the throne at the age of 70 years.
 - Jalaluddin ruled only for a short span of six years. He tried to **mitigate some of the harsh aspects of Balban's rule.**
- Although Jalaluddin retained the earlier nobility in his administration. However, **the rise of Khiljis to power ended the monopoly of the nobility of slaves to high offices.**
- He was the **first ruler of the Delhi Sultanate to clearly put forward** the view that the state should be **based on the willing support of the Governed**, and that since the large majority of the people in India were Hindus, a **state in India could not be a truly Islamic state.**
- Jalaluddin **tried to win the goodwill of the nobility through a policy of tolerance. He avoided harsh punishments**, even to those who revolted against him. He not only forgave them but at times even rewarded them to win their support.
 - However, many people including his supporters, **considered him to be a weak sultan.**
- Jalaluddin's **policy was reversed by Alauddin Khilji who awarded drastic punishments** to all those who dared to oppose him.

Who was Alauddin Khilji (AD 1296-1316)?

- Alauddin Khilji was **Jalaluddin's ambitious nephew and son-in-law.** He had helped his uncle in his struggle for power and **was appointed as Amir-i-Tuzuk** (Master of Ceremonies).
- Alauddin had **two victorious expeditions during the reign of Jalaluddin.**
 - After the first expedition of Bhilsa (Vidisa) in AD 1292, he was given the Iqta of Awadh, in addition to that of Kara.
 - He was also appointed Arizi-i-Mumalik (Minister of War). In AD 1294, he led the first Turkish expedition to southern India and plundered Devagiri.
- The successful expedition proved that **Alauddin was an able military commander and efficient organiser.**
- In July AD 1296, **he murdered Jalaluddin Khilji and crowned himself as the Sultan.**
- Alauddin **decided to revive Balban's policies of ruthless governance.** He decided to **curb the powers of the nobles and the interference of the Ulema** (Scholars of Islamic studies) in matters of the state.
- He also **faced a few rebellions in succession during the early years of his rule.** According to Barani, the author of Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi, **Alauddin felt that there were four reasons for these rebellions:**

- The inefficiency of the spy system
- The general practice of the use of wine
- Social intercourse among the nobles and intermarriage between them
- The excess of wealth in the possession of certain nobles
- In order to prevent the reoccurrence of these rebellions, **Alauddin formulated certain regulations and implemented them:**
 - Families that had been enjoying free land to support themselves should pay land tax for their holdings.
 - This curbed the excess of wealth owned by some people.
 - The Sultan reorganized the spy system and took measures to make it more effective.
 - The use of liquor and intoxicants was prohibited.
 - The nobles were ordered not to have social gatherings or intermarriages without his permission.
- He **established a huge permanent, standing army to satisfy his ambition of conquest** and to protect the country from Mongol invasion.

Note:

- Alauddin Khilji **laid the foundation of his capital Siri in 1303 A.D.** He also commissioned a minar (Victory Tower) **exceeding the Qutab Minar but the same could not be completed.**
- He also **excavated a reservoir known as Hauz Khaz to meet the requirement of Siri township.** He also **constructed semicircular gateway with horseshoe shaped arch with lotus motifs.**
 - This **gateway is popularly known as Alai Darwaja and has been considered, in the history of [Islamic Architecture](#)** a representative of a true arch.

What Internal Reforms and Experiments took Place During Khilji Dynasty?

- By the time Alauddin Khilji came to the throne, the position of the Delhi Sultanate was **fairly well consolidated in the central portion of the empire, i.e., the portion comprising the upper Ganga valley and eastern Rajasthan.**
- This **emboldened the sultans to undertake a series of internal reforms and experiments,** aimed at improving the administration, strengthening the army, gearing up the machinery of land revenue administration, taking steps to expand and improve cultivation and providing for the welfare of the citizens in the rapidly expanding towns.

Market Regulations of Alauddin Khilji

- Alauddin's measures to **control the markets were one of the most important policy initiatives.** Since Alauddin wanted to maintain a large army, he, therefore, **lowered and fixed the price of the commodities of daily use.**
- To control the prices, he set up **three different markets for different commodities in Delhi. These markets were:**
 - The **grain market** (Mandi), the **cloth market** (Sarai Adl) and the market for horses, slaves, cattle etc.
- To ensure implementation, Alauddin **appointed a superintendent** (Shahna-i-Mandi) who was **assisted by an intelligence officer.**
 - Apart from Shahna-i-Mandi, Alauddin **received daily reports of the market from two other independent sources, barid** (intelligence officer) and munhiyans (secret spies).
- Any **violation of the Sultan's orders resulted in harsh punishment,** including expulsion from the capital, imposition of fine, imprisonment and mutilation.
- Control of the prices of **horses was very important** for the Sultan because, without the supply of good horses at a reasonable price to the army, **the efficiency of the army could not be ensured.**
 - Low prices in the horse market were ensured by putting a stop to the purchase of horses by horse dealers and brokers (dalals) in the Delhi market.

Agrarian Reforms

- Apart from the control of the market, **Alauddin took important steps in the field of land revenue administration.** He was the first monarch in the Sultanate who **insisted that in the doab, land revenue would be assessed on the basis of measuring the land under cultivation.**
- This implied that the **rich and the powerful in the villages who had more land could not pass on their burden to the poor.** Alauddin wanted that the landlords of the area—called **khuts and muqaddams**, should pay the same taxes as the others.
- Thus, they **had to pay taxes on milch cattle and houses like the others and forgo other illegal cesses** which they were in the habit of realizing.

How did the Delhi Sultanate Expand?

- Under Alauddin Khilji the territorial expansion of the Delhi Sultanate, beyond North India, was the most important achievement.
- **Gujarat:**
 - Alauddin **first began his territorial conquest with a campaign against Gujarat.** He was **motivated by his desire to establish a vast empire** and obtain the wealth of Gujarat.
 - The riches of Gujarat were to pay for his future conquests and seaport was to ensure a regular supply of Arab horses for his army.
 - In AD 1299, an army under two of Alauddin's noted **generals Ulugh Khan and Nusarat Khan marched against Gujarat.**
 - Rai Karan the ruler of Gujarat fled, and **the temple of Somnath was captured.** An enormous treasure was collected. Even wealthy Muslim merchants were not spared. Many slaves were captured.
 - **Malik Kafur was one among them who later became the trusted commander of the Khilji forces** and led the invasions to South India. Gujarat now passed under the control of Delhi.
- **Rajasthan:**
 - After the annexation of Gujarat, Alauddin **turned his attention towards Rajasthan.** Ranthambore was the first target that was being ruled by the Chauhan successors of Prithviraj.
 - **Ranthambore was reputed to be the strongest fort of Rajasthan** and had earlier defied Jalaluddin Khilji.
 - The capture of Ranthambore was **necessary to break the power and morale of the Rajputs.** The immediate cause of the attack was that the ruler of Ranthambore, **Hamirdeva gave shelter to two rebellious Mongol soldiers and refused to hand over** them to the Khilji ruler.
 - Hence **an offensive was launched against Ranthambore.** To begin with, the Khilji forces suffered losses. Nusrat Khan even lost his life.
 - Finally, **Alauddin himself had to come on the battlefield. In AD 1301, the fort fell to Alauddin.**
- **Chittor:**
 - In AD 1303, **Alauddin besieged Chittor**, another powerful state of Rajputana.
 - According to some scholars, he **attacked Chittor because he coveted Padmini**, the beautiful queen of Raja Ratan Singh.
 - However, many scholars do not agree with this legend as this is first **mentioned by Malik Muhammad Jayasi** in his Padmavat more than two hundred years later.
 - According to Amir Khusrau, the Sultan ordered a general massacre of the civil population. **Chittor was renamed Khizrabad after the name of the Sultan's son Khizr Khan.**
- Alauddin had **completed the conquest of large parts of Rajputana and became the master of North India.** However, it seems that Alauddin did not try to establish direct administration over the Rajput states. The **Rajput rulers were allowed to rule but had to pay regular tribute and obey the orders of the sultan.**

How were Deccan and South Conquered?

- The imperialist ambitions of Alauddin were not satisfied with the conquest of the North. **He was determined to conquer the South as well.** The wealth of the southern kingdoms attracted him.

- The **expeditions to the south were sent under Malik Kafur**, a trusted commander of Alauddin who held the office of the Naib.
 - In AD 1306–07, **Alauddin planned a fresh campaign in Deccan**. His first target was Rai Karan (the earlier ruler of Gujarat), who had now occupied Baglana and defeated him.
 - The second expedition was against Rai Ramachandra, the ruler of Deogir who had earlier promised to pay tribute to the Sultan but did not pay. **Ramachandra surrendered after little resistance to Malik Kafur and was treated honourably.**
 - He was **kept a guest at Alauddin’s court and was given the title of Rai Rayan** (King of Kings). He was also given a district of Gujarat and one of his daughters was married to Alauddin. **Alauddin showed generosity towards Ramachandra because he wanted to have Ramachandra as an ally for campaigns in the South.**
- After AD 1309 Malik Kafur was despatched to launch a campaign in South India. **The first expedition was against Pratab Rudradeva of Warangal in the Telangana** area. This siege lasted for many months and came to an end when Rai agreed to part with his treasures and pay tribute to Sultan.
- The **second campaign was against Dwar Samudra and Ma’bar** (modern Karnataka and Tamil Nadu). The ruler of Dwar Samudra, Vir Ballala III realized that defeating Malik Kafur would not be an easy task, **hence he agreed to pay tribute to Sultan without any resistance.**
- In the case of Ma’bar (Pandya Kingdom), a direct decisive battle could not take place. However, **Kafur plundered as much as he could including a number of wealthy temples such as that of Chidambaram.**
 - The Sultan **honoured Malik Kafur by appointing him Naib Malik of the empire.** Alauddin’s forces under Malik Kafur continued to maintain control over the Deccan kingdoms.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/the-delhi-sultanate-ii-1290-1320-khilji-dynasty>

