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AAUDDIN'S KHILJI : ECONOMIC POLICIES & HIS PRICE CONTROL POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Allauddin was the second monarch of the Khilji Dynasty. He was a prominent as a great conqueror amongst the Turk Afghan Sultans. He was an able administrator, who thought of consolidating Muslim supremacy in India. He surpassed his predecessors and many of his successors as regards his achievement and reputation. He was the first to conquer Hindu States of Deccan and it was he who fought against onslaughts of Mongols and under whom power the Mongols were suppressed and crushed. He can be attributed as the fore-runner of Sher Shah and Akbar. Allauddin needed to maintain a large army not only to resist Mongols but also to carry on campaigns of conquest. Besides expense of army, he needed money for administrative purposes. He wanted provision of necessities of life to his soldiers and subjects on fixed prices in order to keep state.

Key word: Pricing, Economic Policies, Control Policies

PRICE POLICY :

The price control policy of Allauddin is remarked as one of the wonders of that time. This policy comprised of different steps which are as under:

1. Fixation of price of commodities: The other rulers of Delhi used to fix the prices of only the most important commodities of life to the maximum but neglected the other items. But Allauddin, though illiterate, had made such a thoughtful policy that he fixed prices of all the commodities of life to maximum. He fixed the prices between 1.5 to 7.5 jitals. Wheat was to be sold at the rate of 7.5 jitals per maund, barley 4 jitals per maund, grams 5 jitals per maund, mash 5 jitals per maund, sugar 1.5 jitals a seer, butter 1 jital per 2.5 seer, salt 2.5 per 5 jitals. Similarly prices of all other articles such as vegetables, fruits, clothes were fixed. Even prices of horses, cattle, goats and slaves were fixed as per their categories. A first grade horse was to be sold at 120 tankas, milch cow for 4 tankas, milch buffalo for 6 tankas and so on.

2. Royal Granaries: he had made large royal godowns in which the grains were stored and from there were distributed to the dealers in the market, thus making sure that that everything was available to common man and there was no black marketing. No merchant, farmer or dealer was allowed to hoard grain or to sell it at a higher rate. All traders and merchants had to register their sales in a state register and they would bring all the good for sale to the market called Sara-i-Adl situation inside the Badaun gate.

3. Strict action on hoarders: The hoarders were dealt with iron hand and were punished severely. Sultan not only controlled the price and hoarding but also supply/transport of various articles. Traders, who carried goods from one place to other, were registered and every type of facility was provided to them in transportation of goods. He also instituted rationing system. Grain of lower quality was not allowed to be sold. The principle dealers, who were supplied grains from government granaries, were not allowed to sell more than half a mound to any individual.

4. Strong espionage system: Allauddin had a very strong espionage system, which kept him aware of the all the conditions of the market. He took special interest in this espionage system.

5. Strict action on complaints: A strict and quick action was taken on complaints of the general public.

6. Establishment of 'Diwan-e-Riayasat': Allauddin had established a price control department named 'Diwane Riyasat' whose head was Malik Ulugh Khan and the head of markets was Yaqoob Khan. Thus, a new government market was established under the Badaun gate and was named 'Sarae Adl', which was under control of Diwan Riayasat. altered during his rule of 14 years.

MARKET REGULATION AND PRICE CONTROL POLICY OF ALAUDDIN KHILJI

Allauddin was motivated to adopt the market regulations and price control policy due to the following factors and considerations:

1. Alauddin Khalji had organized a vast army in order to check the incessant invasions of the Mongols and to attain victories for the expansion of his territory. As the number of soldiers reached 4,75,000, the expenses in the army were enormous. No doubt, the Sultan had increased his income by introducing reforms in the revenue system and reduced the salaries of the soldiers but it too proved insufficient to meet the entire expenses of the Sultanate. Besides this, it was essential to make the lives of the soldiers comfortable to avoid revolts out of frustration. Hence he fixed the prices for the satisfaction of the soldiers. Barani writes in this context, "If Alauddin would have paid even ordinary salaries to his soldiers and their officers, the treasury of the State would have exhausted within five or six years. Therefore, Alauddin reduced the salaries of his soldiers with a view to limiting the expenditure on the army. But because he desired that his soldiers should live comfortably, he reduced and fixed prices of all articles."

2. Along with territorial expansion, the administrative expenditure had enhanced a lot. The Sultan wanted to lessen this financial burden, so he resorted to the policy of price control.

3. No doubt, the Sultan had gathered immense booty from the victories over Rajasthan, Gujarat and Southern India but he distributed this booty among his supporters and Jalali nobles lavishly which devalued the currency in the market. Hence the prices of things began to shoot up and Alauddin was forced to introduce his system of price control and market regulation.

4. Some historians opine that he introduced price control in the interest of his public. Dr. Ishwari Prasad has written, "Alauddin did much to relieve human want and misery by his control of market." Once

Alauddin said to one of his officials, "Even if I give wealth to the people, they will not be pleased, therefore I have decided to bring down the prices of the things." Dr. K. S. Lai writes in this context, "It was simple arithmetical calculation and simple economic principle, since he had decided to reduce and fix the salary of the soldiers, he also decided to reduce and fix the prices of articles of common use." But he further writes, "In these circumstances the control of price was the outcome of an imperative necessity rather than of philanthropic motives." Barani, the contemporary historian, has also mentioned that he had not introduced the price control system for the benefit of the people but it was the dire necessity of the time.

Dr. U. N. Dey holds an altogether different opinion about his price control system. He remarks plainly that his chief aim was to check the shooting prices. In his words, "As for the amount of salary we find that Alauddin gave 234 tankas per year, i.e., 19-5 tankas per month. This amount certainly was not a small sum for the first decade of the 14th century when we find that Akbar calculated the salary of a tabinan at the rate of Rs. 240 per annum while during the reign of Shah Jahan it was Rs. 200 per annum. Thus, Alauddin paid a soldier only Rs. 6 per annum less than what Akbar paid and Rs. 34 per annum more than what Shah Jahan paid. We cannot, therefore, say that Alauddin paid a low salary to his soldiers."

It is also evident from the accounts of the contemporary historians that the prices fixed by Alauddin Khalji were not very low. We know that during the reign of Firoz Tughluq the rates were quite low and people had not to suffer the tortures and torments which were exercised on them during the reign of Alauddin Khalji. Hence, Dr. Dey's opinion is quite correct that there was some margin of profit for the businessmen in the prices fixed by the Sultan of Delhi."

Alauddin Khalji, earlier known as Juna Khan Khalji, was the most powerful king of Khalji Dynasty. He captured the throne in 1296 A.D. He became famous as an organizer of real purposeful kingdom.

Mongal Policy: Ala-ud-din had to face Mongal attack from the time he assumed the power of the Sultanate. From the year 1296 A.D. to 1308 A.D. every year Mongals invaded Delhi. Indomitable Mongal leader like Kader Khan, Saldi, Kutlagh Khaja, Ali Beg, Tartak attacked Delhi repeatedly. The existence of Sultan Shahi became endangered. But Alauddin checked all the attacks with courage and determination. At the same time, he made the security of the northwest frontier strong and firm.

Expansion of the kingdom: From the time of Alauddin Khalji, Muslim imperialism in India began. Soon after his establishment on the throne he embarked upon a career of conquests. He carried out these expeditions in Northern India as well as Southern India. His military expedition to North India ranged from 1297 A.D. to 1305 A.D. He invaded South India from 1306 A.D. to 1312 A.D. The nature and purpose of his invasions to North and South India were different. He conquered the North Indian kingdoms and took them into the direct fold of Sultan Shahi rule. But by conquering South Indian kingdoms, he plundered rich wealth. He also compelled the ruler of conquered kingdoms to pay yearly tax. Alauddin was happy with that.

Conquests of North India: The Sultan had motive of political control as well as economic purpose behind the invasion of Northern India. He first sent his army to Gujarat. Then his army attacked Ranthambhor and captured it. Rana Hamirdeva died in the battle. Then Ala-ud-din proceeded against Mewar (1303 A.D.). After long battle Chitore fort came under his control. Then he captured Malab, Marwar, Jaloree, Chanderi, etc.

Conquests of South India: Before assuming throne Alauddin Khalji once invaded Devagiri. According to the pact the king of Devagiri was to pay money as tax. But he failed to pay. Alauddin attacked Devagiri again. After that he invaded Kakatiya kingdom (1308 A.D.), Hoisal kingdom (1310 A.D.) and Pandya kingdom (1311 A.D.) of Telengana one after another. He invaded Devagiri for the third time and compelled them to accept his supremacy and pay tax regularly.

Administration: Alauddin took steps to make administration rigid and sound along with conquering of kingdom. He banned the meddling of Ulemas and other religious leaders in the administration. He declared that the Sultan's will is the law. To curb the audacious relatives and aristocrats he took few very important steps. For example:

Economic Reforms: Ala-ud-din's aim of revenue system was to fund the royal treasury and to save poor villagers from the hands of middle earners. Probably he was the first king to make survey of land to determine land revenue. Khut, Mukaddam, Chowdhury, etc. were made powerless and taxes began to be collected directly from the subjects. Other than land revenue, he introduced tax for cattle grazing, taxes for buildings, etc. The rate of revenue was 50% of the crops produced.

Market control policy: The most extraordinary economic reform of Alauddin was his market control or price control policy. Alauddin not only fixed prices, but also ensured their regular supply by prohibiting thin hoarding. Starting from clothing, food grains to cattle even slaves, he imposed price control upon everything. For that he established few markets in and around Delhi, as for food grain, clothing, medicine, fruits, sugar etc. Prices of all the items were fixed by the administration. Any businessman, if found taking higher prices or cheating the buyer by giving material in less weight had been dealt with firmly.

Last days: Last life of Alauddin was very painful and tragic. Taking the opportunity of his inability his commander Malik Kafur assumed the entire power. He became hopeless and sick and died in the year 1316 A.D.

Estimate of Alauddin Khilji: Most historians praised Alauddin as great ruler and reformer. Still his work lacked permanence, as it was based on naked force and not on the goodwill of the people.

End of Khilji Rule: Within four years of Alauddin's death, the rule of the Khiljis came to an end. Ala-ud-din's younger son Shahabuddin was dethroned by his third son Mubarak Shah, who ruled from 1316 to 1320 A.D. He again was killed by a conspiracy by Nasir-ud-din (1320); finally he was dethroned and killed in a battle by one Ghazi Malik, the governor of Punjab.

AAUDDIN'S ECONOMIC POLICIES

Economic policies of Alauddin can be divided into two:-

- I) Agrarian Reforms
- II) Market Policy

Alauddin Khilji's agrarian and market reforms should be seen both in the context of the efforts at the internal restructuring of the Sultanate, as also the need to create a large army to meet the threat of the external Mongol invasion.

I) Agrarian Reforms

Types of Taxes: The essence of Alauddin's agrarian reforms was to bring the villages in closer association with the government in the area extending from Dipalpur and Lahore to Kara near modern Allahabad. In this region, the villages were to be brought under **Khalisa**, i.e, land not assigned to any of the nobles as Iqta. Lands assigned in charitable grants were also confiscated and brought under Khalisa. Further, the land revenue in this area was fixed at half of the produce and assessed on the basis of measurement.

Apart from Khalisa, no extra cesses were to be levied, except a grazing tax on cattle (**charai**) and house tax (**ghari**). Both these taxes had been levied earlier and were traditional. The land revenue was calculated in kind, but demand in cash. For the purpose, the cultivators had either to sell the produce to the banjaras, or take it for sale to the local market.

How these taxes were enforced?

- a) To Upper Class: The enforcement of these taxes over a large area of land was a significant contribution of Alauddin. When the Turkish Sultanate consolidated their rule in India, the earlier intermediaries (small chiefs) such as the *rai*, *ranas*, etc. disappeared. In place of them, a new set of intermediaries whom Barani called *khuts* appeared. The privileges of these *khuts* (also *muqaddams* and *chaudhuris*) were curbed by Alauddin through these taxes.

Earlier these intermediaries were very wealthy and they rode Arabian and Iraqi horses, wore fine clothes, etc. they often passed on the burden of their share of the land revenue on to the shoulders of the weak. But after Alauddin came to the throne, he not only forced the *khuts*, *muqaddams* and *chaudhuris* to pay the grazing and house taxes but they were also deprived of collecting land revenue. In the exaggerated language of Barani, they were reduced to the level of the *balahars*, or the lowest of the low in village society. Their women were forced to go and work for wages. Though this might have been exaggerated, Barani words show that the intermediaries became obedient to the king.

- b) To the Lower Class or Cultivators: The cultivators benefitted from these taxes as their burden were also shifted to the upper class. But since Alauddin's market policy was very harsh, the cultivators could hardly see the benefits. The fear of the government was such that the cultivators would sell even their wives and cattle to pay land-revenue.

How successful was the agrarian reforms?

While reforming the agrarian system, Alauddin tried to ensure the efficient and honest working of the machinery of revenue administration. This was not easy since with the extension of the *Khalisa*, large number of accountants (*mutsarrif*), collectors (*amils*) and agents had to be appointed.

Alauddin desired that the accounts of all these officials should be audited strictly by the Naib Wazir and Sharaf Qais. Any mistakes made by them were severely punished. Alauddin was prepared to give them sufficient wages to lead a decent life, but took a serious action of bribery and corruption. Barani says that none of the *amils* and *mutsarrifs* could take bribes, and had long been reduced to such a position by hardships, imprisonment for long period or torture for small outstanding dues that people considered these posts to be worser than fever, and were not prepare to marry their daughters to those who hold these posts.

A significant and lasting effect of Alauddin's agrarian reforms was the furthering of the growth of market economy in the villages and bringing about a more integrated relationship between the town and the country.

II) Market Reforms or Policies

Alauddin Khilji's market reforms were oriented towards administrative and military necessities. But the reforms also helped in many ways, whose effectiveness was a cause of wonder to the contemporaries. Few rulers of the Islamic world were able to control market prices effectively as Alauddin Khilji. He was in fact the first ruler who looked at the problem of price control in a systematic manner, and was able to maintain stable prices for a considerable period.

Barani says that Alauddin wanted to institute the market reforms because of two reasons. First, was due to the Mongol Threat. He wanted to recruit a large army to protect against the Mongol invasion. In order to give them a reasonable salary, he controlled the market prices by letting the price to fall. Second, was to impoverish the Hindus so that they would cease to harbor thoughts of rebellion. Alauddin set up three markets in Delhi.

- a) The food-grains Market
- b) The cloth, sugar, ghee, oil, dry fruits, etc. market
- c) The horses, slaves and cattle market

a) The food-grains Market

Alauddin tried to control the supply of food-grains from the villages, its transportation to the city by the grain merchants (banjaras/ karmanis) and its proper distribution to the citizens. These undoubtedly were the three most important aspects in controlling food prices.

b) The cloth, sugar, ghee, oil, dry fruits, etc. markets

Alauddin ordered that all cloth brought by the merchants from different part of the country including foreign lands was to be stored and sold only in this market at governmental rates. If any commodity was sold even at a jital higher than the official price, it would be confiscated and the official price, it would be confiscated and the seller punished. All the merchants whether Hindu or Muslim, were registered and a deed were taken from them, so that they would bring the same quantities of commodities of commodities to the *sarai-adl* every year, and sell them at government rates. The rich Multani merchants were given advance money for their trade from the royal treasury. They were also given the power and responsibility for obeying these orders.

In order to ensure that costly clothes were not sold outside Delhi for double/ triple prices by the merchants, an official was appointed by the king in order to give permit to the *amir* or *maliks* of Delhi to buy the stuffs.

c) The horses, slaves and cattle market

The third market dealt with horses, cattle and slaves. The supply of horses of good quality at fair prices was important both for the military department and the soldier. In horse trade, the overland trade was being monopolized by Multanis and Afghans, but they were sold in market by middlemen or dallals. According to Barani, the rich dallals were as powerful as the officials of the market and were shameless in their dealings, resorting to bribery and other corrupt practices. They were always on the lookout for raising the prices of horses.

CONCLUSION:

Alauddin Khilji's military ambitions required a standing and strong army, especially after the Mongol siege of Delhi. Maintaining a large army at regular salaries, however, would be severe drain on the treasury. A system of price controls reduced the salary amount that needed to be paid. Three separate markets were set up in Delhi. The first one for food grains, the second for cloth and items such as ghee, oil and sugar. The third market was horses, cattle, and slaves. Regulations were laid out for the operations of these markets. He took various steps to control the prices. He exercised supervisions over the market. He fixed the prices of all the commodities from top to bottom. Market officers called shahna were appointed to keep a check on the prices. The defaulters were heavily punished. Land revenue was fixed and the grain was stored in government granaries. These market regulations and stability of prices were the wonders of his age. The soldiers and the civil population were greatly benefitted from these measures due to the low prices of the essential goods

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