
Economic Contribution of Alauddin Khalji in Medieval Indian History

Amit Kumar Singh

*Assistant Professor, PG Department of History, Dev Samaj College for Women,
Ferozpur, Punjab, India.*

Nancy Bindra

Student, BA, 1st Year Dev Samaj College for Women, Ferozpur City, Punjab, India.

Abstract

The current study is focused on to the economic contribution of Alauddin Khalji in medieval India. Alauddin Khalji despite being a despot king of Khalji dynasty kept in mind the best economic reforms for his people. His first target was to raise the economy of Delhi Sultanate. With his proper planning and recruitment system he raised the economy in his dynasty. He introduced the market reforms, agrarian reforms and price control policy. These reforms were carried with proper planning and implementation. Alauddin with his price control policy implemented and fixed the prices of necessary commodities like food grains etc. The officials like Choudharis, khuts known as zamindars and Muqaddams were called headman of village were appointed for the same which he removed and appointed his own officials for better functioning of the revenue collections. The tax system also included the house tax and the tax on herds. His market reforms were so incredible that for this he was called as marvels of medieval statesmanship by the historians. The study highlights the fact that how Alauddin transformed from the despot into an economist.

Keywords : *Alauddin Khalji, Sultanate of Delhi, Price Control Policy*

Introduction

India had a unique cultural unity, but Alauddin gave it such administrative unity as was possible under conditions of transport and communication in medieval India after Gupta era. The rule of Delhi Sultanate started with Qutub-ud-din Aibak of slave dynasty who ruled over the areas of Delhi. The Delhi sultans being of Muslim origin were facing resistance from the common population which consisted mainly of Hindus. Alauddin Khalji was one who improved the administration and economy system. Alauddin Khalji was successor of Jalaluddin Firuz Khalji and was the second ruler of Khalji dynasty. He ruled over India from 1290-1320A.D. He was an able administrator and a great economist. Under his rule policies were so well implemented that people never faced starvation in his period. He was the first ruler to implement price control policy. He was also given the rank of *Amir-i-Tuzuk* (master of ceremonies). He also fended off the Mongols at various places. His annexation of Hindu kingdoms led to ending of various Hindu dynasties. During his last days he handled administration to Malik Kafur. He died in 1316A.D. and Qutub Din Mubarak Shah seized the power after him.

Price Control Policy: A Revolutionary Initiative

His price control policy concept is distinguished policy and is liked by the scholars of all ages. Stanley Lane pool opines that “what made Alauddin khalji distinguished from other monarchs of Delhi is his price control policy”¹. The main purpose of this policy was to maintain large army and economic pace. Alauddin was not in position either to reduce the salaries of his soldiers or levy more taxes. This made him fix the prices.

Table 12- Rate list given in Barni’s *Tarikh-i-Firozshah*

“Wheat	7.5 jeetal maund
Barley	4 jeetal maund
Sugar	1.5 jeetal maund
Salt	5 jeetal 2.5 maund
Butter	1 jeetal 2.5 seer

There was margin of profit left to sellers in prices fixed by Sultan.

Proper implication of Supply Control Mechanism

He fixed the prices of general commodities, but he made sure that commodities sold were fully available. He made complete management for availability of goods. He ordered that no landlord in area of 100 *kosas* of the Doab could keep with him more than 10 *maunds* of grains. Huge godowns were constructed to store the grains and stored grains were made available at the time of emergency.

Control over Transportation to Regulate Sufficient Supply of Goods

The goods were transported by *banjaras* who were controlled by government. They registered their names in *Shahana-i-Mandi* for check on them. During the time of emergency government gave loans to business men. Traders and *banjaras* transported the goods. Every facility for transportation was provided. The *banjaras* purchased grains from areas of Delhi and sold to traders. There was never shortage of grains in the capital. He controlled the availability and distribution of commodities. For this *karawans* or *banjaras* carriers formed the guild and became guarantors for each other. They kept check on cultivators that only 10 mounds of grain (1 mound= 40kg) could be stored. Strict punishment was awarded for cheating and underweighting.

The Agrarian Reforms to Ensure Regular Supply of Food Grains

“Iqtadars were put under constant surveillance”³. He levied *kharaj*, *jazia*, *karai*, *ghari*, *charai* on the peasants which worsened the condition of suffering peasants. Merchants bought from

¹ Lane Poole, Stanley (2002), *Medieval India under Mohammedan rule (712-1764)*, London :Book surge publishing, p192

² Barni, Ziauddin (1991), *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi* (History of Firoz shah), Lahore: Urdu Science Board, pp 67

³ Mondal, Puja, *The Agrarian and Economic reforms of Alauddin Khalji and How did it Strengthen the Sultanate* [Online]; URL:<http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/economics/the-agrarian-and-economic-reforms-of--alauddin-khalji-and-how-did-it-strengthen-the-sultanate/4041>

peasant at fixed price. "For assessing the basis of land he introduced measurement of land *Zabita*"⁴. *Biswa* was considered as standard unit of measurement. To raise salaries of soldiers he introduced new ministry *Diwan-i- Riyasat* to overview reforms and its head was Malik Kafur. His policies were highly successful as no revolt was put on against these policies. The cultivators sold the produce of land to the *banjaras* or sold it in the local market. The land revenue in the area of *khalisa* (the land not assigned to iqta) was fixed at the half of the produce and the land under charitable grants were brought under *khalisa*.

Allauddin's Contribution of Economic Reforms

In *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi*, Barni writes that objective of Khaljis economic reforms was the maintenance of strong and efficient army against Mongols. The army was paid out of land revenue collected from the state. Alauddin khalji decided to lower the price of commodities as he could not increase the salaries of his soldiers. Thus he turned into political economist. "All the merchants who traded with Delhi were required to register themselves in office of Inspector general of market."⁵The cloth merchant had to sell the cloths at fixed rate. Clothes storage needed in times of famines and scarcity was also provided. "Hoarding and Regrating was strictly forbidden"⁶. Regrating was purchasing at low prices and selling at high prices-was the only possible for rich. He established the *Darul Adl* (the palace of Justice). During rainfall season which is full of vegetation the transport merchants (*Saudagar-i-Karwani*) and market merchants (*Saudagar-i-Bazari*) adopted the practice of selling commodities at high prices. Strict rationing system was followed during the time of famines. Farmers got no surplus as they could not sell to merchants at higher prices. Superintendents or Inspector of market was called *Shahana*. The *Shahana* and Karkunan (agents) were required to be guarantees that they would cause the grain from farmers to be delivered to the caravans of merchants on field at fixed rates."⁷The *Sera-i-Adl* id was exclusive market in Delhi for imported and manufactured goods. "The goods sold at *Sera-i-Adl* included cloth, sugar, herbs, dry fruits, butter including ghee and lamp oil"⁸. "To avoid the regrating, Alauddin appointed the rich Multani merchants as officers of *Sera-i-Adl* and asked them to sell these goods directly to the public in such a way that these goods did not fall into the hands of other merchants."⁹ Alauddin appointed Yaqub as *Diwan-i-Riyasat*.

Land Revenue Policy

Alauddin was the first ruler to take step in organising the new revenue system for villages. Barani has an account on Alauddin's land revenue reforms. Alauddin made reforms for land revenue. Also special officer Mustakh Raj was appointed for collecting unrealized balance for land revenue. Corruption also prevailed in the revenue department. They could pay the

⁴*ibid*

⁵ Munshi, KM, (1967), *The Delhi Sultanate*, Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, p28

⁶ *Ibid*,p28

⁷ Mahajan.Vidya Dhar (1970),*The Delhi Sultanate*(707-1526AD),New Delhi: S.Chand and Co. (pvt.) ltd. p 132

⁸ Saksena,Banarasi Prasad (1992), *A Comprehensive History of India: The Delhi Sultanate* (1206-1526AD) New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, p 132

⁹ *ibid*

land revenue in cash or kind. The peasants had to pay one third to one half of total land produce as tax. *Biswa* was the unit of measurement. There was 50% *Kharaj* tax on agricultural produce. Maximum number of cattle t was also fixed that could be kept by *Muqaddam* as well as for peasant was-4 bullocks for cultivation purposes ,2 cows, 2 buffaloes,12 goats and sheep. *Sharaf Qaini* was the revenue minister of the empire. The cultivators were not allowed to accumulate wealth rather they were left with so much of agricultural produce, milk and curd for year.

Other Taxes Imposed by Allauddin Khalji

Beside *kharaj* tax on residence *ghari* and *charai* known as grazing tax was introduced. “*Zazia* tax was imposed on its non Muslims subjects.”¹⁰ . Now Hindus were to pay fifty percent of the product as the land revenue. Hindus were being oppressed due to more of taxes and faced many problems. Eighty percent of their income went as tax so they lead a miserable life. *Zakat* was from Muslims. “Women and children as well as those with mental disorders and intellectual disability were exempt from the *Zazia*.”¹¹ “The Muslims were obligated to contribute *zakat* instead”¹². “Alauddin demanded four fifth share of the spoils of war from soldiers instead of the traditional one fifth share (*khums*)”¹³

Conclusion

From the above study we conclude that Alauddin khalji maintained a good economy system .The market reforms were incredible. The introduction of grain market, cloth market which led to formation of *Diwan-i-Riyasat* that is the rationing department and also *Shahana-i- Mandi* .The *iqtas* were introduced to check bribery. The ban of Hoardings was also there .For the first time he introduced price control policy for proper maintenance of his army. Ziauddin Barni’s account on Alauddin Khalji tells us about the market reforms, rationing system and the commerce department that is the *Shahana-i-mandi* and *Sera-i-Adl* .The market reforms and the rationing system that he introduced in his times is put into practice by Indian government for the better performance of business cycles. His one of the two ambitions was to become second Sikander and for becoming this, he had to maintain a huge army for that he required money for which he looted South India kingdoms and then established huge army and through which he created the market reforms such that the soldiers could get the commodities at cheap rate so that they can suffice with lesser income also. Usually the sultan kings were despots but besides being a despot Alauddin Khalji worked for the his subjects and kept check on his economy. So by proper planning and recruitment he built a good economic system and thus turned out to be political economist.

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¹⁰ Saran Lal ,Kishori (1950) *History of khaljis* (1290-1320) p 248 Allahabad: The Indian press

¹¹ *ibid* p249

¹² *Ibid* p 250

¹³ *Op.cit.* p250



International Journal of Research
e-ISSN: 2348-6848 & p-ISSN 2348-795X Vol-5, Special Issue-9
**International Seminar on Changing Trends in Historiography:
A Global Perspective**
Held on 2nd February 2018 organized by **The Post Graduate
Department of History, Dev Samaj College for Women,
Ferozpur City, Punjab, India**



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