

Price Control Policy of Alauddin Khalji:

Achievement or Failure

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Abstract

The current study is focused on to the introduction and evaluation of Price Control Policy of Allauddin Khalji. When he ascended the throne, the kingdom was in complete disorder. As a consequence of rising powers of the *zamindars* and the Mongol threat, trade and agriculture were paralyzed. This paper covers all these problems and tries to explore the causes of Allauddin Khalji's Price Control Policy. The study also provide a comprehensive account of all steps taken for price control including fixation of prices of commodities, royal granaries, strict action on hoarders, strong espionage system, strict action on complaints, establishment of '*Diwan-i-Riyasaṭ*', and elimination of *dallal* (middleman). It particularly highlights major steps adopted for the successful implementation of the policy.

Key Words: Allauddin Khalji, Price Control Policy, India, Sultanate of Delhi, Administrative Reforms

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Introduction

Allauddin Khalji was the second monarch of the Khalji Dynasty who ruled over India from 1290 to 1320 A.D under the banner of Sultanate of Delhi. He was an able administrator, who surpassed his predecessors. Most of his successors regard his achievements and reputation. He was the first to conquer Hindu states of Deccan and it was he who fought against on slaughter of the Mongols and under who power the Mongols were suppressed and crushed¹. He can be attributed as the fore-runner of Sher Shah and Akbar. He laid the foundation of an empire based upon a policy of imperialism, secularization of the state and comprehensive administrative system. Alauddin, however, was the first who introduced price control policy in India.

Alauddin Khalji's Price Control

Besides administrative, social and public reforms, the economic reforms of Alauddin are considered as the 'miracles of history'². Alauddin was the first person to give the concept of Planned Economy in medieval period which was, later on, adopted by Sher Shah Suri and Akbar the Great. The most significant aspect of his economic reforms was his Price Control Policy which distinguishes him for his acumen and intelligence from all his contemporaries. This policy of Allauddin Khalji has always been admired by all the historians and the scholars of all the ages. Stanley Lanepool opines that "What made Alauddin distinguished from other monarchs of Delhi is his Price Control Policy"³. According to S. M.Ikram, "His policy was the marvel of the age."⁴ Lanepool also pays regard to him by saying that, "He is the greatest political economist."⁵

Price Control: Its Purposes

The historians have different views about the reasons for the Alauddin's Price Control Policy. Ziauddin Barni in his book '*Tareekh-i-*

¹ . M. H. Syed, *History of Delhi Sultanate*, Vol. I (New Delhi: Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2004), p. 84.

² . Peter Jacson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 156.

³ . Satnley Lane-Poole, *Medieval India under Mohammadan Rule (712-1764 A.D.)* (London: Book Surge Publishing, 2002), p. 192.

⁴ . S.M.Ikram, *History of Muslim Civilization in India and Pakistan* (Lahore: Education Publishers, 1962), p. 82.

⁵ . Op. cit., Lane-pool, p. 187.

Firoz Shahi' describes that Alauddin had made such a policy because he had to maintain a large army due to the threat of Mongols, to increase the royal grandeur, to achieve the economic stability and to get rid of social injustice.⁶ Dr. K.S. Lal commented favorably. He writes, "He had to maintain a large army due to the permanent Mongol threat, due to which he had to make an effective price control policy."⁷ However, Allauddin needed to maintain a large army to resist Mongols but also to carry on campaigns of conquests as he is regarded as an imperialist too. The political successes during Alauddin's period were backed by administrative measures. The conjunction of a Mongol raid to the Jumna, a disaster in Waringal and difficult campaigns in Rajputana, made an increase in the standing army seem necessary, and a number of rebellions raised the problem of internal security. Similarly, R.C. Majumdar opines that Alauddin rightly realized that a strong army was an indispensable requisite for the system of government; he had been trying to build up. But its efficient maintenance required a huge expenditure at a time when the influx of wealth from the South had caused a fall in the value of money and augmented the prices of articles⁸. In order to overcome this inflation, Alauddin introduced the wage and price control policy.

On the other hand, L.P. Sharma gives another reason for this inflation. He writes that 'Alauddin had distributed wealth lavishly among his subjects which reduced the value of the currency in the market. Therefore, it became necessary for Alauddin to reduce the salary of his soldiers and also to reduce the cost of articles in the market'⁹. He wanted provision of necessities of life to his soldiers and subjects on fixed prices in order to keep state intact.¹⁰ Dr. K.S. Lal strengthens this view point when he writes: 'It was simple arithmetical calculation and simple economic principle; since he had decided to reduce and fix the salary of soldiers, he also decided to reduce and fix the prices of common use'.¹¹

Yet the primary reason of controlling the market by Alauddin was not to reduce the salary of his soldiers but to check the rising prices of different articles in terms of inflation. "As for the amount of salary we

⁶ . Ibid., pp. 446-447.

⁷ . K. S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis* (Bombay: Asian Publishing House, 1967), p. 197.

⁸ . R. C. Majumdar, *An Advanced History of India* (Lahore: Aziz Publishers, 1980), p.308.

⁹ . L. P. Sharma, *History of Medieval India, (1000-1740 A.D.)* (India: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., n.d.), p. 90.

¹⁰ . Op. cit., Peter Jackson, p. 173.

¹¹ . Op. cit., K.S. Lal, p. 197.

find that Alauddin gave 234 *tankas* per year i.e. 19½ *tankas* per month.¹² 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 to 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."¹³ Alauddin did not fix the prices of different articles lower than the prevalent prices of those articles in places around Delhi. Besides, the prices fixed by Alauddin were not very different from what we find then afterwards during the reign of Firoz Shah Tughlaq. Barni writes in this regard that "the villagers for their personal benefit used to bring personally as much of the grain as they could from their storage and used to sell them in the '*mandi*' at the government rates."¹⁴

Certainly there was a margin of profit left to them in the prices fixed by the Sultan. Here question arises that when Alauddin did not fix the prices lower than the country-side and these were certainly not below the normal prices then what was the need of fixing the prices and taking strong measures to see that these were observed? The answer of this question is that Delhi in Alauddin Khalji's time had become the capital of a mighty empire and a central mart with a rapidly increasing population to which the constant movement of the merchants added a floating population. It also had become a large cantonment. This entire situation not merely intensified the demand for food-grain but also introduced a strong cash nexus and increased the money circulation.¹⁵

However, these factors inevitably produced inflationary conditions because the price of a commodity is not merely governed by the intensity of demand but also directly proportion to the amount of money in circulation. This condition offered an opportunity to the business community to increase the prices by creating artificial scarcity. Therefore, it may be inferred that 'Alauddin's motive was to check the rising prices which were due to manipulation of the business community and not to produce the prices to a lower level than the normal.'¹⁶ This view point is quite logical, yet, it has also to be

¹² . The value of a *tanka* was a little more than that of a rupee.

¹³ . Dr. U . N. Day, *Some Aspects of Medieval Indian History* (New Delhi: Kumar Brothers, 1971), p. 128.

¹⁴ . Op. cit., Barni, Sp. 319

¹⁵ . Op. cit., Dr. Day, p. 135.

¹⁶ . Ibid., p. 137.

accepted that the necessity of his market-policy arose because of the necessity of keeping a huge standing army and paying it in cash.

According to some historians, another reason for this policy was humanitarian. Sultan desired that all his subjects should get all necessary articles in sufficient quality and at proper price. Therefore, he fixed the prices of all articles. This opinion is mostly based on the narrative given by Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh in his work, '*Khairul Majalis*' which he wrote in Feroz's reign¹⁷ and by Amir Khusro who praised the economic measures of Alauddin in his work, '*Khazain-ul-Futuh*'.¹⁸ But both of these sources are not very much dependable and, therefore, not sufficient to justify this humanitarian motive.

On contrary, the rigorous imposition of his economic measures and the resultant effects on his subjects clearly exhibit that Alauddin was guided neither by considerations of public welfare nor by any economic principles. Thus, we can conclude that his primary object in enforcing these measures was purely political. For the political stability and consolidation he needed a permanent standing army at the centre, a large staff of state officials, on civil and military administration and on slaves.¹⁹ He curtailed the salaries of his soldiers but desired that the soldiers remain comfortable with this reasonable amount of salary. For this purpose, he tried to check the inflationary prices, and the manipulation of merchants to raise the prices artificially and, thereby, was forced to fix the prices of all articles and enforce them strictly.

Steps towards Price Control

The Price Control Policy of Alauddin is remarked as one of the wonders of that time. This policy comprises of different steps which are as under:

- **Fixation of prices of commodities**

The other rulers of Delhi Sultanate used to fix the prices of only the most important commodities of life to the maximum but neglected the other items. But Alauddin, though illiterate, had made such a thoughtful policy that he fixed prices of all the commodities of life to maximum. Alauddin fixed up the prices of nearly all articles. The

¹⁷ . Ref. Op. cit., K.S. Lal, p. 218.

¹⁸ . Amir Khusru, *Khazain-ul-Futuh* (Aligarh: Allahabad University Press, 1927) p. 87.

¹⁹ . According to Ferishta, Alauddin had 50,000 slaves.

prices were fixed not only of all variety of grain, pulses, cloth, slaves, cattle and horse only but even those of necessary articles of daily use as that on meat, fish, dry fruit, sugar-cane, vegetables, needles, colors, betel-leave, silk, horse, shoes etc²⁰. Alauddin fixed the prices between 1.5 to 7.5 *jitals*.

Ferishta mentions in his works that in Alauddin's times a *tanka*, whether of gold or silver, was equal to one *tola* in weight, and that a *tanka* of silver was equal to fifty *jitals*. The weight of the *jital*, a small copper coin which continued to be current in Ferishta's time also weighed, according to some, one *tola* and according to some others $1\frac{3}{4}$ *tolas*. The *tanka* of Alauddin, adds ferishta, was equal to one *tola* consisting of 96 *rattis* and so also was later found by Babur²¹. Therefore, the *tanka* of Alauddin was exactly equal in weight to the *rupee*.

a) **Food grain**

Food grains, the staple food, to which the sultan gave his first and fullest attention. The government fixed the maximum prices for a number of commodities. These comprised basic foodstuffs – wheat (*hinta*), barley (*jaw*), rice (*shali*), pulse (*mash*, *nukhud*) and moth; cloth, sugar, sugar-cane (*nabat*), fruit, animal fat (*rawghan-i suture*) and wax (*rawghan-i chiragh*); and slaves horses and live stock.²²

The Prices of food articles were fixed as follows: ²³

<i>Wheat</i>	per <i>man</i>	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ <i>jitals</i>
<i>Barley</i>	“	4 “
<i>Gram</i>	“	5 “
<i>Rice</i>	“	5 “
<i>Mash</i>	“	5 “
<i>Nakhud (pulse)</i>	“	5 “
<i>Moth</i>	“	3 “
<i>Sugar</i>	per <i>ser</i>	1 $\frac{1}{3}$ “
<i>Gur (brown Sugar)</i>	“	$\frac{1}{3}$
<i>Butter or Ghee</i>	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ <i>sers</i>	1 “
<i>Oil of sesame</i>	3 “	1 “

²⁰ . Op. cit., M. H. Syed, p. 84.

²¹ . Mohammad Qasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Translated by Abdul Hai Khawaja (Lahore: Book Talk, 1991), p. 356.

²² . Op. cit., Peter Jackson, p. 245.

²³ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 448.

Price Control Policy of Alauddin Khalji:

Shirin Baft Middling	3	“
Shirni Baft Coarse	2	“
Silhati Fine	6	“
Silhati Middling	4	“
Silhati Coarse	2	“
Red Striped stuffs	6	jitals
Common Stuffs	3 ½	“
Red Lining of Nagor	24	“
Coarse lining	12	“
Long – Cloth Fine	1	<i>tankas</i> for 20 <i>yards</i>
Long – Cloth Coarse	1	<i>tankas</i> for 40 <i>yards</i>
Chadar	10	<i>jitals</i>

It will be interesting to note that in many cases the contemporary chronicles does not give measure of the cloth that price been mentioned. But it will be well-nigh certain that cloth was not cheap in early medieval times. While wheat was sold at 7 ½ jitals per man (one man included 12 sers); a chadar was sold at 10 jitals. Compared with food, therefore, cloth of even ordinary quality was costlier in those days. Barni says that the outside Delhi, the prices of cloth were comparatively four or five times higher still²⁷.

c) Horses and cattle

Rules were also formed to regulate the sale of horses, and cattle. Cavalry was the most important branch of army and horses were much valued. Horses, considered fit for military service were divided into three grades according to their quality and breed. Their prices were as below:²⁸

Best quality horse	100 – 120	<i>tankas</i>
Second form quality horse	80 – 90	“
Third form “ “	65 – 70	“
Ponies	10 – 25	“

The Prices of cattle were as under:²⁹

Good beast of Burdon	4 – 5	<i>tankas</i>
Cow for slaughtering	1½ - 2	“
Milch Cow	3 – 4	“
Buffalo for slaughtering	5 – 6	“

²⁷ . Ibid., p. 456.

²⁸ . Ibid., p. 459.

²⁹ . Ibid., p. 462.

Milch Buffalo	10 – 12	“
Goat	10 – 14	<i>jitals</i>

To maintain these low prices, Alauddin had to treat brokers and middle men in the horse trade very severely. He instituted very harsh measures to put an end to the nefarious activities of the *dallals* (middle-man).

b) Slaves

On lines similar to these were fixed the prices of slaves. Those are given as below:³⁰

Working slave girl	5 – 12	<i>tankas</i>
Good looking girl	20 – 40	“
Slave boys	20 – 30	“
Ill favored	7 – 8	“

Alauddin fixed the prices of each and every commodity, however trifling. It was as a matter of sound economic policy also. The prices of different commodities were interconnected, though were under control. The prices fixed for once were never altered during his rule of 14 years. Yet a very beautiful girl of a very high price say of 1,000 or 2,000 *tankas*, was offered for sale in the market, nobody dared to buy her for fear of the *Muhyians* (secret police).³¹

- Royal Granaries

Alauddin 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 every thing 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,³² so that in times of scarcity the Sultan could supply the market with his own grains. Barni states that, “there was scarcely a Mohalla where two or three royal stores filled with food stuffs did not exist.”³³ However, in times of scarcity, everybody was allowed to purchase only that much which was just sufficient for his need. Thus, arrangement was so made that the people might not feel scarcity of any thing any time.³⁴ That is why

³⁰ . Ibid., p. 461.

³¹ . M. A. Farooqi, *The Economic Policy of the Sultans of Delhi* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1991) p. 98.

³² . Op. cit., Majumdar, p. 309.

³³ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 499.

³⁴ . Op. cit., L. P. Sharma, p. 92.

revenue was collected in kind both from Khalsa- land and the lands of feudality chiefs.³⁵ Only store traders who were registered with the state were allowed to purchase grain from the peasants.³⁶

- **Strict action on Hoarders**

Hoarding and regreting was strictly forbidden. The hoarders were dealt with iron hand and were punished severely. Sultan not only controlled the prices and hoarding, but also those of supply and 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. All the merchants were required to register themselves in the office of *Shahna-i-mandi* (Inspector-General of the markets)³⁷ and to bring all goods for sale to the *Sarai adl*, an open place inside the Badaun gate. They had to furnish sufficient securities for their conduct.³⁸

However, serious punishments were provided against the violation of the Sultan's regulations. Nobody could dare to sell any commodity underweight as the same amount of flesh was cut off from his body.³⁹ For this reason speculation and black-marketing was totally stopped. All the regulations were strictly enforced and the guilty ones were severely punished. *Diwan-i-riyasat* and *Shahna-i-Mandi* assisted by a judge called *Sara-i-adl* and a host of subordinate officers were held responsible for the enforcement of these laws.⁴⁰

- **Strong Espionage system**

These regulations were enforced by means of highly organized intelligence system and by drastic punishments for evasion. For this purpose Alauddin Khalji established a very strong espionage system, which kept him aware of the all conditions of the market.⁴¹ He took special interest for active implementation of this system. The officials of grain market were the *Barid-i-Mandi*, who reported on the quality of the wares, and the '*Munhiyans*' who may be compared to the secret service police of today. There officials were inferior to the *Shahna-i-Mandi* in status but they submitted their reports separately and

³⁵ . I. H. Qureshi, *Short History of Pakistan*. (Karachi: Karachi University Press, 1997), p. 288.

³⁶ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 450.

³⁷ . Op. cit., M. H. Syed, p. 84.

³⁸ . Op. cit., Majumdar, p. 309.

³⁹ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 454.

⁴⁰ . Ibid., p.455.

⁴¹ . Op. cit., L.P.Sharma, p. 93.

directly to the sultan. Thus, the shrewd monarch received reports of the market from these different sources and scrutinized them carefully. This compelled the market officials and traders to be correct in their account and honest in their dealings.⁴²

- **Strict action on Complaints**

The system of accountability against the complaints was very quick and fast. A strict and immediate action was taken on complaint of the general public. The fixation of low prices of the grain was good for almost all the classes except the peasants and others who depended upon land for their livelihood. These people had to sell grain at very low prices but had to pay dearly for other necessities of life.⁴³

- **Establishment of ‘*Diwan-i-Riayasat*’**

Alauddin had established a price control department named ‘*Diwan-i-Riayasat*’ whose head was Malik Ulugh Khan and the *Shahan-i-Mandi* (the head of markets was Yaqoob Khan). Thus, a new Government market was established under the Badaun gate and was named ‘*Sara-i-Adl*’, which was under the control of *Diwan-i-Riayasat*.⁴⁴ The purpose of this market was to ensure that the goods supplied to the markets by the traders and were sold on the prices fixed by the *Diwan-i-Riayasat*.

- **Elimination of *Dallal* Middleman**

Allauddin’s policy that involved the enforcement of maximum prices for a wide range of commodities and in some cases the elimination of middlemen appears to have been a remarkable piece of government interventionism. Sultan had eliminated *Dallali* system to ensure the smooth flow of commodities in the market.⁴⁵ However, Sultan’s policies were reinforced by harsh penalties. To some extent the victims were middlemen: horse traders and horse-brokers, for instance, whose operations tended to inflate prices, were in many cases fined or expelled from the capital and imprisoned in distant forts.⁴⁶

⁴² . Op. cit., K.S.Lal, pp. 205-206.

⁴³ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 458.

⁴⁴ . Ibid., p. 467.

⁴⁵ . Op. cit., Barni, pp. 313-14.

⁴⁶ . Op. cit., Peter Jackson, p. 246.

Price Control: Its Implications

Success of every plan and policy is hidden in the correct implementation of that plan. Alauddin was lucky enough to have honest and capable five loyal persons named Ulugh Khan, Zafar Khan, Nusrat Khan, Alp Khan and Khwaja Jahan as the heads of different department. For the successful implementation of the policy he adopted two main steps:

- **Granted concessions and facilities to the traders**

The fixation of low prices of the grain was good for almost all the classes except the peasants and others who depended upon land for their livelihood. These people had to sell grain at very low prices but had to pay dearly for other necessities of life.

The merchants dealing in cloths had to procure manufacture goods from places beyond Alauddin's control where the prices were higher, but they had to sell them at Delhi at the fixed rate and the king allowed them a margin of profit; this must have caused a considerable loss to the treasury.⁴⁷

Except the food grain, some of the commodities of daily use were imported from the foreign countries. To ensure this swift import, Sultan gave advances to the Multani traders for purchasing goods from abroad. All sort of concessions and facilities were granted for this purpose.⁴⁸

- **Rationing**

In favorable season, people could buy as much grain as they liked. But in times of scarcity, the consumption of these items was controlled by rationing. During those times each household was given half a man of grain per day⁴⁹. There were no ration cards nor were people numbered or counted for obtaining grain in fixed quantity. This action prevented grain from smuggling or profit gaining.

The system of rationing was a novel idea of Alauddin, and Barni asserts that on account of his various regulations, no famine occurred in Delhi even when there was drought and people thought famine to be unavoidable. At least in Delhi the people live a life of contentment,

⁴⁷ . Ghulam Sarwar Khan Niazi, *The Life and Works of Sultan Alauddin Khalji* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1992), p. 95.

⁴⁸ . Ibid., p. 97.

⁴⁹ . Op. cit., K.S.Lal, p. 203.

undisturbed by any fear of scarcity.

Areas where the 'Policy' practically implemented

Now we have to see whether this policy was in practice all over the country or only in the capital and its nearby areas. Only Ferishta and Barni provide account in this regard which are, however, in contrast from each other. Ferishta has mentioned that the prices of articles in other parts of the empire were the same in Delhi. Barni has not written anything specific about it. Yet, what we gather from his account indicates that the system was limited to Delhi and its nearby areas. . Barni forcibly expresses that it was a source of wonder to his contemporaries.⁵⁰ The majority of historians accepted this view.

But the following paragraph of '*Fatawa-i-Jahandari*' leaves the impression that the Sultan's economic measures were extended to the cities of empire. He states that 'the King should also know that every arrangement (*naqsh*) in the matter of buying and selling the price fixation which he makes for his capital will also appear in all provinces. The officers and *raiyyat* of the country will accept it and follow.⁵¹ But in the narrative of the '*Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*', whenever a reference is made to the activities of officers like the *Divan-i-Riyasat*, *Shahna-i-Mandi*, etc. the impression gathered is that they were confined to Delhi alone. Not a single name of a *Shahna* or *Gumashta* of any other city has come to light.⁵²

Secondly, traders and merchants were forced to register themselves with the *Divan-i-Riyasat* and give an undertaking individually and collectively, to reside and work in Delhi.⁵³ Here the question arises that why was there a fear of their migration to other place? Obviously because of the prices elsewhere were not controlled and the merchants could hope for better profits outside Delhi.

Policy: Achievement or Failure?

Barni is emphatic in this regard that so long as Alauddin ruled, price of commodities never rose or fell but ever remained fixed.⁵⁴ However, other witnesses did not confirm Barni's testimony and state that the effectiveness of Allauddin's price control was a 'byword among later

⁵⁰ . Op. cit., Barni., p. 317.

⁵¹ . *Ziauddin Barni, Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, Translated by Prof. Dr. Riaz Ahmed (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2004), p.36.

⁵² . Op. cit., Barni, p. 312.

⁵³ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 306.

⁵⁴ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 312.

generations.⁵⁵ Ibn Battuta, visiting the Sultanate in the 1330s and early 1340s, heard Alauddin praised in this connection as one of the best previous sultans, and mentions in particular the price of meat, woven cloth and grain.⁵⁶ Hamid Qalandar, writing in 1354, likewise pays tribute to the sultan's achievement in reducing the cost of grain and to the low wages paid in his reign.⁵⁷

The policy was advantageous to the people of Delhi also as they could get every commodity on reasonable rates. L.P.Sharma praised for it in these words: "Thus, the market system of Alauddin was a novel and successful experiment."⁵⁸ According to Dr. I. H. Qurishi, "the price control policy was successful in its implementation." On the other hand, V.A.Smith criticized Alauddin's price control policy in these words, "His measures certainly succeeded in preserving an artificial cheapness in the markets of the capital even during years of drought, but at the cost of infinite oppression."⁵⁹ K.S. Lal who was pointed out many defects of the policy has written: "What is of real importance in Alauddin's reign is not so much the cheapness of price, as the establishment of a fixed price in the market which was considered one of the wonders of the age."⁶⁰

Majumdar points out another weakness of his policy that "the regulations worked according to the Sultan's desire so long as he lived, and enable him to maintain a large standing army at a cheap cost".⁶¹ M.H. Syed says that "Bold and original in conception, the new economic policy of Alauddin evokes our admiration; but its defects and shortcomings should not be overlooked or minimized. The control of price and rationing obtained in and near Delhi only, and the regulations adversely affected both the trade as well as agriculture. Only the army and; incidentally and the population of Delhi benefited by these regulations. Judged by the objective which inspired them, they proved highly successful. Opposed as they were to economic laws, they died with their author."⁶² Barni remarks that the "unvarying price of grain in the market was looked upon as one of the wonders of

⁵⁵ . Op. cit., Peter Jackson, p. 246.

⁵⁶ . Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta 1325-1354 A.D.*, tr. H. A. R. Gibb, vol. iii (London:Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 184-85.

⁵⁷ . Hamid Qalandar, *Khayr al-Majalis ed. K. A. Nizami (Aligarh, 1959) pp. 240-41.*

⁵⁸ . Op. cit., L.P.Sharma, p. 93.

⁵⁹ . Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 246.

⁶⁰ . Op. cit., K.S.Lal, p. 224.

⁶¹ . Op. cit., Majumdar, p. 309.

⁶² . Op. cit., M. H. Syed, pp. 84-85.

the time.”⁶³ But he does not definitely state the effects of these devices on the economic conditions of the country as a whole.

The success of this system, however, is said to be based upon various reasons such as an extremely efficient intelligence system, severe and exemplary punishments, and the scarcity of money with the people and the absence of other means of loose living such as the drinking and dancing and big feasts.⁶⁴ But I infer that the success of policy mainly depended upon the fact that it was introduced after giving it a proper consideration from every angle by the Sultan and his advisors. The courage and his sincerity of purpose influenced all, high or low, and made them cooperate with him in carrying out his plans.

Yet after giving due credit to the success of Alauddin, one has to conclude that the price control policy of Alauddin was neither in the interest of the people nor in the permanent interest of the state. The policy was not conducive to the welfare of the peasants also. How those peasants could be prosperous and happy who, besides other taxes, had to pay half of their produce as revenue,⁶⁵ and the rest of it on fixed rate to the traders but had to purchase their necessities of life from their local market where the price should have been higher than the fixed price prevalent in Delhi?

The workers also could not be happy as they were forced to sell their produce only with the little margin or a little higher cost than the cost of their production. The traders could not be happy as their profit depended on the will of the state. Sultan had forced traders to bring fixed quality of commodities to Delhi and sell them at fixed rates. Therefore, there was no incentive for initiative either in industry or in trade. There is no doubt that the benefits of the price control policy were enjoyed by the civil as well as the military population of Delhi, still the agriculturists of the Doab and the tracts in the vicinity of Delhi, of Jhain and of Bayana, suffered privations for the benefit of the people of the capital.⁶⁶ Alauddin was not learned enough to philosophize on the benefits of a far distant future and to foster trade, commerce and agriculture.

Although Alauddin worked vigorously to pursue the goals of his policy, he sacrificed remote but permanent gains for immediate

⁶³ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 215.

⁶⁴ . Op. cit., Sherwani, p. 99.

⁶⁵ . Op. cit., Barni, p. 320.

⁶⁶ . Op. cit., K.S.Lal, p. 223.

benefits of the army. Dr. K. S. Lal expresses that 'the motive of Sultan may not have been to crush the poor peasants against whom he possibly could have no grudge, but the exigencies of the state required him to take such steps under which the interests of commerce and cultivators were sacrificed of those of army.'⁶⁷ The capital was fed, while the country was at large was bled: so large a quantity of grain was stocked at Delhi that Ibn-i-Batuta, who arrived there in 1334 A.D., consumed the rice stored by Alauddin.⁶⁸

There is no doubt that in the reign of no other ruler the Mongol invasions were so persistent as in the time of Alauddin and in the reign of no other sultan of Delhi Sultanate period conquests were made on such a large scale. Here question may arise that how many renowned Turkish kings of India could afford to keep the happiness and prosperity of the peasants and traders above those of the army? Necessity, religious zeal and personal ambition rendered the glory of conquest much more appealing to them than the glory of making such laws as would make the peasants rich and traders richer. Besides the above mentioned achievement another remarkable feature of his policy was the appointments of Shahnas for the various markets, *Barids* and the secret and efficient service of Munhiyans, all independent of one another and all responsible the king improve the tone of administration. Their efficiency, loyalty and vigilance were out of question and in the times of scarcity, there was no damage of famine in the capital city.

Conclusion

The price control policy of Alauddin khalji brought down the prices of the essential commodities so low that nobody was left in want. People were prosperous and happy. For this achievement, his measures had full support of his subjects is testified to by numerous contemporary references in the 'Mulfuzat' of the period.⁶⁹ Long after his death, people looked to his reign when articles of daily use were to be had in plenty and at moderate prices. There could be no great testimony to the value of his work and the public appreciation of the same than the fact recorded in mulfuzat that Alauddin's tomb became a place of pilgrimage and people in distress went to his tomb.⁷⁰ However, the price control policy of Alauddin Khalji died with him. His son Qutubuddin Mubark Shah had no desire to extend his empire and had no fear of Mongol invasions. Therefore, he neither needed a

⁶⁷ . Ibid., p. 223.

⁶⁸ . Op. cit., M. H. Syed, p. 85.

⁶⁹ . Op. cit., Ghulam Sarwar Khan Niazi, p. 136.

⁷⁰ . Op. cit., Hamid Qalandar, *Khayr al-Majalis*, p. 220.

large standing army not in consequence the price control policy. It was a temporary measure, restored to in a state of exigency. When the emergency was over, the policy was also permitted to fall into disuse. Besides, the policy which could be enforced only by force could not continue for long. Therefore, the price control policy of Alauddin finished with his death.

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