

Unit - II

Topic - Agriculture, Trade and Commerce during the Sultanate Period

Agriculture

The primary producers living in the villages formed the vast majority of the population of the country and the backbone of its economy. The village more or less self-contained in respect of both production and consumption, held its traditional position as an economic unit. Whether organized village communities existed and played an active role in rural economy, particularly in Northern India, is an open question. Under the Sultans of Delhi-except for a few years in Alauddin Khalji's reign – the State functioned in relation to the villagers generally through intermediaries such as khuts, muqaddams and Chaudharis. In the Kingdom of Vijaynagar the temples played a large part in economy in the capacity of landlord, employers of labour and bankers advancing loans on the security of lands.

All over India cultivation was a family enterprise, the head of the family being assisted by its male and female members. Prices were generally determined by local factors of which rainfall was by far the most important. No data are available about the average size of family holdings. The march of troops, which was quite frequent, was a recurring curse for the peasantry. The traditional system of cultivation was followed; there was no substantial change in old methods and implements. In the Punjab there was a widespread extension of cultivation in the fifteenth century as a result of the use of the Persian wheel. Ibn Batuta mentions the use of Persian wheels in East Bengal.

There are scattered references to the extensive cultivation of food grains and other crops, nurture of fruit trees and rearing of domestic animals. Foreign travellers have left for us much more useful data than the indigenous chroniclers. There are frequent references in the foreign travellers' accounts to the fertility of the soil. Ibn Batuta speaks of production of two crops every year, viz., seven varieties of autumnal crops and four varieties of spring crops. Rice, he says, was sown three times a year, and sesame as also sugarcane were cultivated along with the autumn crops. Mahuan, the interpreter of a Chinese mission which visited Bengal in the early years of the fifteenth century, gives a long list of cereals, vegetables and fruits grown in that province. In the early part of the sixteenth century Barbosa was impressed by the abundant and cheap production of wheat, millet, peas and beans in Gujarat. He also noticed villages with well cultivated lands and good breeds of cattle in the Bahmani Kingdom. Several travellers speak of Malabar as 'the pepper country'. Paes and Barbosa speak of the agricultural prosperity of the Vijaynagar Kingdom – the extensive cultivation of rice, peas, beans and other pulses. In Orissa there were fine gardens of fruit trees attached to the dwelling houses at the time

of Firuz Shah Tughluq's invasion (1360). That Sultan's programme of laying gardens in the neighbourhood of Delhi, as also in some other places, promoted a general improvement in the quality of fruits. The detailed description of flowers in the works of Amir Khusrau and Malik Mahammad Jaisi indicates the importance attached to horticulture.

Trade and Commerce

There was a large volume of internal trade. The mandis in big villages served as the base, and Delhi and the provincial capitals were the focal points. Ibn Batut's Indian itinerary brought him to towns and cities with large markets, and one market in Delhi appeared to him to be the largest in the world. Among important centres of trade in Gujarat Barbosa mentions the inland town of Limodara and the sea-port of Rander. Multan and Lahore were clearing houses for trade in the north-western region. There were good roads, constructed mainly for the use of the army, which facilitated the transport of commercial goods. A road extending from Delhi to Daulatabad, connecting North India with the Deccan, covered a distance of forty days' journey. But travel was often insecure and this was an impediment to the progress of trade.

In villages and small towns petty business was in the hands of pedlars, shopkeepers, itinerant dealers and middlemen who were professionals working on a hereditary basis. Large scale business was controlled by special groups or particular communities. Under the caste system the mercantile community was known as Vaisya. The Multanis and the Gujarati Banias were the most important business communities of Northern and Western India. Internal trade was almost wholly in the hands of Hindu merchants; but foreign Muslim merchants, generally known as Khurasanis, were engaged in trade all over the country.

The smooth flow of trade depended to a large extent on the co-operation of other classes such as carriers of goods, brokers, bankers and money lenders. The Banjaras of Rajasthan were engaged in transporting agricultural and other produce from one part of the country to another. Their operations were extensive. They employed hundreds and thousands of oxen in their carts and wagons. Brokers played an important role in commercial operations. They often raised the price of commodities by charging their commission to both the seller and the purchaser. Alauddin Khalji's price control measures included the suppression of the class of brokers. This was however, a temporary interruption of their work. By the time of Firuz Shah Tughluq 'the business rules and practices of brokers were sufficiently important to find a place in the legal compendium of the reign'. The bankers provided capital in the form of loans and accepted deposits (hundis). The money lenders, known as sahus and mahajans, played the same role on a smaller scale; they lent money on interest through bonds.

For foreign trade land routes as also sea routes were used. On the north-west the Mongol invasions interrupted, but did not cut off, trade with Turkistan and Khurasan. After the cessation of Mongol invasions trade in musk, furs, arms, falcons, camels and horses prospered. Horses were the principal article of import.

The bulk of foreign trade was sea-borne. On the west two routes were used. The merchandise was carried either along the Persian Gulf or thence overland through Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean coast, or by sea-route to the Red Sea ports and thence to the Mediterranean coast through Egypt. From Alexandria Indian goods passed on to the Italian merchants for distribution over the rest of Europe. In the fourteenth century Ormuz became the principal emporium of trade by the first route. Aden and Jiddah occupied the same position in the trade by the second route. Ibn Batuta says that Ormuz was the entrepot of the trade of Hind and Sind.

The ports of Malabar were the principal clearing house on the Indian side, but Cambay occupied an important position. Ships from this Gujarat port carried merchandise to, and brought imports from, Ormuz and Aden. The principal exports were cotton and linen cloths, carpets, drugs, gems, seed-pearls and carnelians. The principal imports were copper, quicksilver, vermilion, rosewater, gold, silver, woolens, coloured velvets, coral, lead, alum, saffron, etc.

Cambay had commercial relations with East Africa. According to Barbosa, ships from Cambay visited Makdashau with cloths and spices and returned with gold, ivory and wax. Cambay cloths and beads were exported in ships to the ports of Melinde, Mombasa and Kilwar and thence carried by local Muslim merchants to the ports of the Zambesi delta and Sofala for sale in the Bantu Kingdom. The Cambay cloths sold at the African ports, and the African ivory sold in Gujarat, were paid for in gold.

China established direct trade with India in the twelfth century. Regular voyages were made by the Chinese ships to the Malabar ports in the early fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century Malacca became the most important international port in South-East Asia. Next in importance was Pegu. Among north Indian ports Cambay and Rander in Gujarat, as also 'the city of Bengala', participated in the trade with Burma and the islands of South-East Asia. Mahaun says that ships were fitted out in Bengal and sent out for foreign trade. Not the Hindu merchants of North India, but the foreign Muslim merchants living in the country controlled the country's foreign trade till the Muslim control over the seas was effectively challenged by the Portuguese about the middle of the sixteenth century.

TOPIC

Unit - II

Provincial Administration under Delhi Sultanate.

The rulers of Delhi Sultanate reigned for about three centuries and five prominent dynasties ruled over Delhi during this period. As the Turk rulers were foreigners, their administration was based on their own principles. Alauddin Khalji, Firoz Tughluq and Sikandar Lodi were great administrators and they established a strong administrative system during their reigns.

Administration in the Sultanate period was a mixture of Indian and foreign systems. It was chiefly based on Arabic and Persian styles. The rulers adopted the Mughal army system for better results and continued the Hindu land revenue system. Thus their administrative system was a mixed one. It is really interesting as well as informative to have a broad knowledge of the administration of the Sultanate period.

For the sake of efficiency and better administration the empire under the Delhi Sultanate was divided into a large number of provinces. When this empire reached its widest extent (under Muhammad Tughlak) it had no less than 23 provinces. These provinces were put under the charge of governors who generally belonged to the royal family. Sometimes these provinces, were, however, given to some trusted nobles of the Sultan.

The head of the province exercised executive, judicial and military functions within his jurisdiction almost as a despot subject to the control of the Sultan. The power and authority of the heads of provinces varied according to the strength or weakness of the Sultan. Under Muhammad bin Tughluq the provincial viceroys declared themselves independent taking advantage of the confusion and weakness of the central government. The viceroy would pay the surplus of the revenue collections after meeting the local expenditure to the Sultan. He maintained his own troops and in times of need would be required to send contingents to the assistance of the Centre. The efficient working of the provincial government was hindered by the intrigues and the selfish pursuits of the nobles and there was no peace and order in most of the provinces. Besides the imperial provinces, there were hereditary Hindu chieftains who paid tributes to the Sultan and were allowed to rule their ancestral territories without any interference so long as they paid the tributes in time. The villages being more or less self-sufficient remained unaffected by changes of the government at the Centre. The Jagir system, the long distance of the provinces from the Centre and the great powers enjoyed by the provincial governors, all combined

to encourage them to raise a standard of revolt and become independent. Bengal and Deccan were always problem provinces and they often revolted against the authority of the central government. In order to check this habit, the Sultan maintained a large number of spies and kept himself informed of everything that was going on in the different provinces. The intrigues of the nobles, and lack of cooperation among the officers usually hampered the good working of the provincial government and consequently, peace and order were not perfectly maintained.

TOPIC

Unit - II

Revenue Administration under Delhi Sultanate

Among the sources of income, land revenue was the most prominent one. In comparison to ancient period various changes took place in land revenue. The Muslim rulers contributed to the progress of land revenue.

The entire land was divided into four parts: Khalsah, the land of Iqta, the land of Hindu nobles and the land of Waqf. The Khalsah land remained under the control of the central government. Amils or revenue collectors were appointed in each sub-division by the central government. They used to collect the revenue with the help of Chaudharis, Khuts, Muqaddams and Patwaris. A Khwaja was appointed in each Iqta to watch and inspect the work of Muqti or Hali. The revenue collectors submitted the statement of annual income and expenditure to the Sultan of Delhi. The Sultan also received upto date information about the administration of provinces from the reporters and spies also.

In Iqta the administration including assessment and collection of revenue was in the hands of the muqti who paid to the central government the surplus after deducting his own dues. It was naturally his interest to show as little surplus as possible and keep as much more for himself and to evade payment on one pretext or another whenever possible. The Sultan, therefore, on the advice of wazir appointed an officer called khwaja in each iqta to keep watch over revenue collection and to exercise check on the muqti. There was still possible of collusion between the khwaja and the muqti for which the Sultan appointed an elaborate espionage system and the spies had to report about the activities of the local officers directly to the central government. The Hindu chief and rajas who were in tributary alliance with the Sultan enjoyed autonomy in their respective states subject to the payment of the tribute. The zaminders also paid a fixed amount as revenue to the government and the ryots recognized nobody else's authority other than that of the zamindar within whose jurisdiction they lived. Land given in gift as inam or waqf were free from assessment of revenue and allowed to become hereditary possessions of the grantees. The above system continued to be in force till the time of Ala-ud-din Khalji who introduced certain vital changes in the revenue policy and revenue administration.

The entire land was measured during the reign of Alauddin Khalji and land revenue was enhanced from one-third to half of the total produce. The revenue dues were realized very strictly. Muhammad Tughluq endeavoured to establish uniformity in land revenue in his entire Sultanate, but he

did not get success in it. Firoz realized only four taxes which were referred to in the Quran and rejected all the other taxes. During the Lodi period all land was distributed among the Afghan Amirs.

The income of the Sultanate was spent on army, maintenance of family, court, wars, suppression of rebels and charity. The financial position of the empire began to deteriorate during the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq due to his preposterous schemes. In spite of merits, the revenue system of the Delhi Sultanate was riddled with defects also. Revenue was realized on contract basis and the contractors because of their own greed realized as much revenue as they could, but they deposited quite less in the royal treasury and thus swallowed up a lot of it for their own benefit. Besides this, the peasants had to pay some other taxes also.

TOPIC

Unit - II

Iqtadari System under the Delhi Sultanate

The iqta system occupied a pivotal place in the administrative arrangements made by Sultan Iltutmish. The term iqta literally means 'a portion'; technically it was the land or revenue assigned by the ruler to any individual. There were two types of iqtas, viz; Iqta-i-tamlik and Iqta-i-istighlal. The former related to land, fallow, cultivated or having mines; the latter related to stipends. The iqta of the former type, i.e. iqt-i-tamlik is only relevant to our discussion on Iqta system.

In the development of Islamic politico-economic institutions, the iqta has a long and interesting history. It existed since the early days of Islam as a form of reward for service to the state, and passed through various phases of development.... The early Turkish Sultans of Delhi, particularly Iltutmish used this institution as an instrument for liquidating the feudal order of the Indian society. Through this system collection of revenue in newly conquered areas was ensured.

Iqtas were both big and small. The small iqtadars held neither any administrative nor financial duty towards the centre. They held land in lieu of military service. The large iqtas (provinces) which were given to men of status, carried administrative responsibilities with them and the assignees had to maintain law and order and supply contingents to the centre in times of emergency.

Iltutmish granted Iqtas to the Turks on an extensive scale. He infused a bureaucratic form in the Iqtas by the institution of transfer of the iqtadars from one assignment to another. Iltutmish also realized the economic potentialities of the Doab and granted Iqtas to two thousand of his Turkish soldiers there for a two fold purpose; (i) to reward his Turkish soldiers for their services to the Turkish government in India and (ii) to utilize them for the consolidation of the Turkish rule in the most prosperous part of the country. The Iqtadars in the Doab were to realize revenue from the land assigned to them for their military service. But they being all small Iqtadars had no administrative duty in their locality, nor any financial responsibility to the centre. The dangers inherent in Iqta system were almost similar to those of the feudal system of the continental Europe. But Iltutmish's careful and vigilant control of the administrative

machinery eliminated the dangers of the Iqta system. But during the anarchy that followed the death of Iltutmish, the Iqta administration broke down and the Iqtadars assumed an attitude of defiance towards the central authority.

Balban's ideal of kingship did not permit this kind of an attitude towards decentralization. He instituted an enquiry into the terms and conditions of the grant of the Iqtas of the Doab. The enquiry revealed that the original iqtadars having died or become too old to render military service, the very purpose of making the original grants became useless. The sons of the deceased iqtadars claimed hereditary rights over the iqtas and with the connivance of diwan-i-arz retained hold on the iqtas. Balban's view was that the grant was personal in nature and on the basis of a contract for rendering military service. Thus with the death of the original assignee, the grant became null and void. After a full enquiry, Balban issued order for the resumption of these iqtas, with payment of compensation in certain cases. He also granted pension of 20 to 30 tankas as compensation in certain cases, where the soldier was too old or infirm. Balban's order caused great resentment among the grantees. Some of the Turkish leaders approached Fark-ud-din, the famous kotwal of Delhi and through his intercession succeeded in getting the order withdrawn.

Objective Questions and Answers

- Q. Who wrote the book, Tahqiq-i-Hind?
Ans: Al-Beruni (A Persian scholar).
- Q. Who built the city of Tughluqabad?
Ans: Ghiyas –ud-din Tughlaq.
- Q. Who did establish the Khalji dynasty?
Ans: Jalal-un-din Firuz Khalji.
- Q. Who was founder of Bhamani dynasty?
Ans: Alauddin Bahman Shah.
- Q. Name the Sultan who introduced copper currency?
Ans: Muhammad Bin Tughlaq.
- Q. Name the first lady ruler of the Delhi Sultanate.
Ans: Razia Begum.
