



The Sultanate Haryana and the Agrarian Policies of the Delhi Sultans (1206-1526 A.D.)

KEYWORDS

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Although, the Sultans regarded the peasant as the pivot of their economic progress, yet, they could not contribute much enough to improve cultivation of the region. In the 13th century, their agrarian policies were merely based to clear forests for the extension of 'cultivation' in some parts of the region. They would not introduce any new agriculture implements in the traditional agrarian system. However, under the Tughlaqs (1320-88) and Sikandar Lodi (1488-1517) more emphasis was not only given on the reclamation of forest land but also on the waste land and on the implementation of the new irrigational means to bring new land under plough.

In 1259, Ulugh Khan, iqtdar of Hansi and Rewari, resolved upon a campaign in the Hills (the forest tracts of Mewat) near Delhi. The Mewatis plundered the people on the roads which linked the region with the capital, drove away the cultivators, and also ravaged the villages in other districts of Haryana. They had theft from Hansi a drove of camels before three years. By the soldiers of Ulugh, their villages ravaged and many of them put to the sword. Again under Balban, the forest land of the Mewatis was reclaimed and put under plough. As the Mewatis increased their plunder activities on the roads in the neighbourhood of Delhi, so, the Sultan cleared the jungles, their villages were destroyed, and more than thousand were put to the sword. Even the Mewati raiyats (peasants) brought into submission.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1320-25), took keen interest to bring new land under cultivation. Barani remarks, "The Sultan noticed rapid growth in cultivation. So, he decided that a surplus from land was remained to the peasants so that the lands already in cultivation might be cultivated in future and some little (new lands) be added to them every year. So much was not to be exacted from the peasants at once that the cultivation should fall off, and no increase be made in future." Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325-51), formulated an elaborate agricultural policy, known as *asalib*, to increase agriculture production. According to Barani, if all his schemes would have been implemented, no fallow land would have remained in the country. He diligently made plans for promoting agriculture in Delhi and its environs. The superintendents of the waste lands were entrusted to distribute loans among peasants from the public treasury. About seventy lakh of tankas had been granted as loans to the peasants. But not a hundredth or a thousandth part of what was expended, was recovered in ag-

riculture, much of the pasture land remained uncultivated and the superintendents were punished by the Sultan. But in spite of Sultan's all efforts, the peasants of the region revolted against Sultan's repressive revenue policy. In 1343, the raiyats of Kuhram, Sunam, Kaithal and Samana rose in rebellion. They refused to pay taxes, abandoned agriculture, deserted the villages and took to highway robbery. They grouped themselves in bands (mandals) and lashed out at administration. The Sultan himself marched against them, decimated their mandals and deracinated them from their land. He transported the Berahas, Mandars, Jiwans, Bhattis and Manahiyans, the Jat and Rajput tribes of the region, to Delhi and converted them to Islam.

But during the reign of Firoz Tughlaq (1351-88), the reclamation of new lands under cultivation was stimulated and accelerated in the region as the Sultan provided irrigation means on large scale to the peasants and there was no shortage of rainfall. In consequence, the countless square of barren land brought under cultivation and the revenue settlements.

Under Sikandar Lodi (1487-1518), people were prosperous. Agriculture was increased considerably and peasants were contented. Not even a yard or an inch of land was left out of cultivation in the entire empire. No body could exploit the peasants or forcibly got a cot from their houses or pressed for forced labour. Peace and order was established in the vilayats and the robbers became law abiding. If any one turned from the path of obedience, he ordered to cut his head.

It is quite apparent from the study of above summary that the sultans of Delhi took many measures to enhance agriculture production in the country as well as in the Haryana region. The slave sultans in the 13th century stressed merely on the reclamation of forest and waste land. Nasiruddin Mahmud rehabilitated and restored cultivation in the Mewat region. After crushing the Mewati robbers, Balban maintained law and order in the region in order to promote agriculture in this region. Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq inspired the peasants to invest surplus from the land revenue to bring new land under cultivation. Muhammad bin Tughlaq in order to promote agriculture, granted seventy lakh tankas as loans to the peasants to bring new land under cultivation. But he could get much success in this task.

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