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## **Market Policy of Alauddin Khilji**

The market control policy introduced by Alauddin in Medieval India was a great step and a unique one which attract the attention of not only Indian but foreign historians. Alauddin was forced with the complex task of maintaining resources for a huge standing army. On the other hand situation was more complicated because of the frequent wars that took place combined with the Mongol Invasions. Alauddin therefore had two alternatives:-

- i) Either to pay high salaries to the soldiers
- ii) To pay low salaries and reduce the market price.

The first alternative was impossible because if Alauddin started paying high salaries to the huge army, he would soon become bankrupt. But it was also necessary to satisfy the army because the responsibility of fulfilling the dream of imperial expansion of Alauddin rested on the army. So, Alauddin went for the second option of price control and market regulation which would ensure the soldiers maintenance at low cost.

### **Principle of Market Reform**

The basic principle which Alauddin set for his market policy were division of market, price control and set up market administration for proper regulation. Discussing general market in Tarikh-i-firozshahi, Barni says that 'Alauddin spent day and night to set-up the production cost of everything, even of small things like needles, slippers, shoes etc. Dr. K.A Nizami observes that Alauddin came very near to the Marxist principle that prices depend upon the social necessary labour and labour time. But Marx was dealing with a free market which had grown up as a result of capitalism, industrial competition etc. Whereas, Alauddin had to impose the calculated price according to production cost in medieval society.

However, after fixing the prices of the grain which was not an easy task though Alauddin fixed the prices of other things taking in account the profit for the merchants and the wages of artisans and labourers.

Alauddin did nothing to control the Hindu bankers. In fact, the Hindu bankers developed under the regulation of Sultan due to the guaranteed profit which was given to them through this market regulation. However, two groups of Hindu merchants the Naib : controlling the grain market and the Multanis : controlling the cloth trade were brought under state control. As regard to currency and weight, Alauddin set a common weight system which was followed by every shopkeeper.

### **Division of Market**

After fixing the price of commodities Alauddin went for division of market. He divided the market broadly into three categories.

- i) The Central grain market or Mandi with subsidiary control shops in every mohallas of the city.
- ii) The Ser-i-adl, an exclusive market for cloths and luxury items.
- iii) Market of slaves, horses and cattles.

### **Mandi/Central Grain Market**

To run the central grain market commonly known as Mandi, Alauddin set up some rules and regulations :-

- 1) The prices of all variety of grains were fixed by the first regulation or Zabita. The prices per month prescribed by the government was as follows:
  - a) Wheat - 7,1/2 jital (1Jital = 2/3 of tola)
  - b) Barley - 4 jital
  - c) Rice - 5 jital
  - d) Pulses - 5 jital
  - e) Gram - 5 jital
- 2) We do not know how Alauddin arrived at these rates but both Amir Khusrao and Barni tells us that no rise in price was permitted. The permanence of the price in the grain market was a wonder of that age. Malik Kabul Ulughkhani was made the controller of the Mandi popularly known as Shuhana-i-mandi.
- 3) All khalsa towns in doab were ordered to pay Kharaj in kind and would be deposited in the royal stores of the cities. As a result of this all the mohallas in delhi had two or three houses in which grain was stored.
- 4) Agents were appointed for the collection of grains from the merchants. It was done on a very strict regulation. Hoarding of grain was prohibited and all the officers were required to give an undertaking that they would prevent such practice in their area. The defaulters were severely punished and the grain used in the transaction was confiscated.

5) The next regulation legally bound the market officers to ensure that the peasants sold their grain to the authorized agent in the field at fixed price. However the peasants had the option to take the grain to the open market to sell there at the official rate.

6) The last regulation was about the report that Alauddin received on the working of the Mandis and this report came from Shuhana-i-Mandi. Apart from him Alauddin also appointed Barid (spy) and Munhiyas (local news agents) whose duties was to give detail account of each and every movement of the market. People behaved honestly because they knew that Sultan was informed about everything.

During Alauddin's rule there was no famine in delhi and there was no rise in the prices of commodities. But during the time of emergency Rationing System was imposed under which every shopkeeper in the mohalla of a city was supplied grain from the Central Sultani Store depending upon the population of that area. The general public had the option to purchase one or half of mann of grain from the Sultani store.

### **Sher-i-Adl (Cloth market)**

The Sher-i-Adl was like a super market for manufactured item. This market was also for the items purchased from outside and overseas. This market was built near Badayun gate and the costly commodities were sold from the strongly built shop. The Sultan's ordinance proclaimed that all items ranging in price from 1 tanka to 10,000 tanka should be brought to Sher-i-Adl and must be sold at fixed price. The items sold in the market were cloths and luxury goods.

For running this market smoothly the Sultan had formed certain rules and regulations. They are as follows :-

i) All merchants should be registered with the Diwan-i-Riyasat for regulation of trade.

ii) Subsidy was given to Multani merchants as they brought costly cloth from great distance and sell to the consumer at a lower rate. To prevent re-sell of these items at higher price outside delhi by ordinary merchants the system of subsidy was introduced. Alauddin gave 20 lakh tankas to a group of Multani merchants who were made the officers of Sher-i-Adl.

iii) The sale was controlled by permit officer known as Parwana Rai. He used to issue permit to people to buy clothes.

### **Market of Slaves or Horses**

Apart from these two markets there were markets where slaves and horses of different kind were sold. The regulation which Alauddin made for this market was

little different from the other two. The price of the commodities were fixed according to quality. He also eliminated middle men and subjected the brokers to intense supervision and ensure periodical personal review by the king.

In Alauddin's army people intending to join the cavalry had to appear at a review with one or two horses and other equipments. If he was eligible he was paid the price of the horse by the army under the guidance of horse broker. Also if the horse died during the service the person was paid the price of new horse. The prices varied from 100-120 tankas for the first grade of horses, 80-90 tankas for the second grade of horses and 60-70 tankas for the third grade of horses. The Indian ponies was not accepted by the army. Their price was fixed at 10-20 tankas. Although, broker system was curbed down but not all together ended it completely. Whereas, the brokers were allowed to carry on with their business that too at a fixed price by the Sultan.

The general market scattered throughout the city selling vegetables, sweets, fish etc. This general market was under Diwan-i-Riyasat. Yaqud Nazar was appointed as the superintendent of this market. Apart from all these commodities prices were also fixed for slaves. A maid servant could be purchased for 5-12 tankas. A beautiful woman slave for 20-40 tankas and male servant for 10-15 tankas and handsome slaves for 20-30 tankas.

### **Impact of the Market Policy of Alauddin Khilji**

The market reform policy had different impact on various group but of all the classes the government was one who was benefitted the most because it successfully achieved its objective of maintaining a large standing army at unusually low salaries. Because of his market reform Alauddin raised such a strong army that whether at home or in foreign kingdom, the army always stood victorious. The Market regulation also proved to be a source indirect taxation for the state.

Moreover, the government did profit on the grain purchased from the farmers, as the rate at which the government purchased the grain were much lower than the official controlled rate, prevalent in Delhi. However, the army, the government servants and all other people who resided in Delhi were benefitted the most.

### **Impact on Merchants and Traders**

The fixation of price of almost every commodity that too at a very low price along with the severe policy adopted towards the merchants and the traders left no initiative for the trader and industry to flourish. According to K.C Lal 'on the one hand the merchants were forced towards under compulsion, on the other the fear of a slight deviation in weight resulted in giving more than the actual weight'. However, the class of merchants or traders suffered a stage of frustration but they always formed an essential power of economic development of state.

### **Impact on Artisans, Manufacturers and Craftsman**

They also suffered an economic setback because reduction in price forced them to reduce the payment of raw material including that of skilled labour. The manufacturer suffered a lot because the merchant inspite of all the regulations could always devised means to purchase commodities at the cheaper rate. Passing the maximum financial burden to the manufacturer and artisans.

### **Impact on the farmers and the common people**

The most affected class were however the farmers or the cultivator who formed the backbone of agricultural economy. However, the revenue regulation of the Sultan was meant to crash the rich middlemen and not the poor farmers (According to Mooreland).

However, as most of them resided out of Delhi and the price control theory was only prevalent in Delhi and areas around it. In case of emergency the farmers had to pay more to purchase the grain that they had sold at lesser price to the merchants and the state officers because no farmer could afford the time or money to visit Delhi on a regular basis to make his necessary purchase.