



# ADMINISTRATION OF THE PUNJAB UNDER THE BRITISH, 1849-53

BY-

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# BOARD OF ADMINISTRATION

Through the declaration of 29<sup>th</sup> March 1849 A.D., Lord Dalhousie annexed Punjab to the British Empire. For the administration of this new province of Punjab, Board of Administration was setup. It was comprised of three members (Henry Lawrence, John Lawrence & Charles Mansel). Henry Lawrence was the Chairman of the Board. This board ran the administration of the Punjab from 1849 to 1853 A.D.

## HENRY LAWRENCE

- President of the Board
- Incharge of military and political affairs

## JOHN LAWRENCE

- Department of Revenue and Financial matters

## CHARLES MANSEL

- Department of Judicial Affairs
- Later replaced by Montgomery

# PROBLEMS OF THE BOARD

- When in 1849, the board of administration was set up, it had to seek solutions to many problems..
- After the death of Ranjit Singh, there was an atmosphere of disturbances, looting and political instability in the Punjab. So the greatest problem before the board was to restore peace and law in the state.
- ▶ To disband the khalsa army.
- ▶ To disarm the Sikhs.
- ▶ To reorganise the administrative structure.
- ▶ To increase the govt income in the Punjab.
- ▶ To arrange for the defence of North-West Frontier.

# REORGANISATION OF PUNJAB

The first step that the board took after assuming the charge was to divide the province into territorial units. Thus the whole of the province was divided into seven divisions usually called commissionerships each under the administrative control of a commissioner

These divisions were further divided into 27 districts according to convenience. Each of the districts, containing around 1000 villages, was placed under the charge of a Deputy Commissioner who was assisted by Assistant Commissioners and up to five Extra-Assistant Commissioners

The districts were further sub-divided into tehsils, each of which contained approximately 150 villages. They were placed under the control a Tehsildars and NaibTehsildars who held revenue and judicial powers

# ACHIEVEMENTS/REFORMS

## Police System

After the Board of administration was constituted, the police system was completely reorganised by them. The main features include:

### 1) Military Preventive Police :

Approximately 7000 soldiers were selected and divided into 6 regiments each under a British officer. These include both infantry and cavalry. They were responsible for the protection of jails and roads.

### 2) Civil Detective Police:

These soldiers were always ready to assist the police in finding and imprisoning the offenders and notifying them in case of any suspicious activity.

### 3) Chowkidari System

They worked to help protect villages and also assisted the local police in catching thieves.

# REFORMS IN JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Several different courts were setup to provide easy and efficient administration.

- The highest court of appeal was the board itself. Only the board had the power to give severe punishments like death sentence. The decision taken by the board was final.
- The Tehsildars court was above the village Panchayat.
- Panchayats comprising the village elders were also given the responsibility of solving disputes of the villages.

## Economic Reforms

John Lawrence was responsible for the land revenue system.

- First he fixed land revenue.
- A special condition was attached that the revenue had to be paid in cash and not in kind. This resulted in large scale exploitation of the peasantry which made the system extremely unpopular among the masses.

# Agricultural Reforms

The Board of Administration tried to modernise agriculture through the introduction of foreign seeds ( tobacco ,cotton ,jute etc.) . These were specially imported to Punjab. In addition, tea plantations were started at Kangra.

## DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE & INDUSTRY

Many unnecessary taxes were removed . Agricultural taxes from 27 items were removed. This lead to an increase in trade.

Modern machinery was introduced in agriculture. Due to good harvest , Punjab also started exporting its produce. Thus industry and trade flourished due to the modernisation.

# PUBLIC WORKS

## ➤ Railways

John Lawrence had a major role in the reformation of means of transport in Punjab. He laid down an extensive network of railways in Punjab. First a rail line was established from Multan to Karachi. Later, another track was laid down from Multan to Amritsar. In this way in a short span of time, an extensive railway network was established.

## ➤ Roads

Under John Lawrences' guidance villages were linked to cities. The Grand Trunk (G.T) road was also repaired from Peshawar to Delhi. Bridges were made over rivers. All the big cities like Peshawar, Multan , Sialkot etc were linked through roads. The roads eased the transportation of goods from one place to another, leading to an increase in trade.



## ➤ Canals

Some big canals were diversified to make small canals to make the water reach farmers in far away villages. The water of these canals were transported to barren lands , which over a period of time increased the fertility of land.

## ➤ Electricity

In 1853 , the work of laying down electric lines was started . Initially wires were laid around the G.T road and later was extended to various cities.

## ➤ Postal System

The board paid special attention to the postal system. In many cities post offices were made. Many police officials incharge of writing reports were initially kept as postmasters with additional salary. This was done as they were the only educated people . In the beginning they were also distributed letters.

# ATTITUDE TOWARDS JAGIRDARS

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh jagirs were given to officials for meritorious work, bravery and courage shown during battles. After the British annexation their jagirs were confiscated and they were given salaries and pensions in its place.

# PROHIBITION OF FEMALE INFANTICIDE

Till 1851, the practice of female infanticide was very much in vogue. Under the leadership of Henry Lawrence a meeting was called in Amritsar, where people from all over Punjab gathered and the evils of female infanticide were discussed and the people were made aware of it. As a consequence in 1856 the practice of female infanticide was abolished. This is one of the greatest achievements of the board of administration.

# DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN EDUCATION

- John Lawrence played a major role in reforming the education system of Punjab.
- He introduced Woods Dispatch in Punjab in 1856. There was one Director of this department, 2 Inspectors, 11 Deputy Inspectors.
- Around 30 schools in the big cities of Punjab, approximately 100 schools in villages and Tehsils were also established .
- Training schools were established to train teachers. In Lahore , Central college was established .
- In all schools and colleges, mother languages were made medium of education.
- In higher classes English was made mandatory.

# DISSOLUTION OF THE BOARD

There were differences among the members of the board of administration right from its beginning. So it was impossible to have uniformity in the way of its working.

The members of the board, Henry Lawrence and John Lawrence [both brothers] had different on many vital issues. They were always against each other. Governor General Lord Dalhousie always sided with John Lawrence and Henry Lawrence had to face odd situations. So in 1853, the board was dissolved.

In brief we can say that during the short span of four years [1849-53], the board of administration did much useful work.

**✓ According to Khushwant Singh, "The administration by the board was an unqualified success. It brought peace and prosperity to the province."**

**THANK YOU!**