
Agrarian Polices in British Punjab

Hukam Chand^{1*}, Dr. Seema Parihar²

^{1*,2}Department of History, C.T. University Ludhiana Punjab India.

Email: ²Seemaparihar17273@ctuniversity.in
Corresponding Email: ^{1*}sonu.live18@gmail.com

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Abstract- *Agriculture is the spine of Indian financial system because the time immemorial. About 85% of India's population engaged in agricultural practices, facing different types of ups and downs and changes with the passage of time. By 1833 C.E., various Parliamentary Acts brought the Indian administration under the complete control of the British Government. The Governor General had become the de facto ruler of India and Indian rule was under the supervision of the British Government.*

The British government was in dire need of Indian land tax to run various administrative expenses, the burden of which had to be borne directly or indirectly on Indian agriculture and farmers. Thus all the expenses (administrative, war, etc.) were borne by the farmers in the form of land tax all over India including Punjab. The British Government had adopted policy of commercialization to make changes. It recommended marketplace oriented manufacturing of cash vegetation inclusive of opium, tea, espresso, sugar, jute and indigo. Peasants had been compelled to grow those coins vegetation that spoiled the fertility of the land and no other crop could be grown on it.

In this paper, I will try to describe the agricultural policies adopted by the British Government towards Punjab, and main objective of their agricultural policies was to raise as much money as possible. For more benefit the British Government exploited farmers and peasants to the maximum, which will be find out through the study.

Keywords: *Imperialism, Expenses, Capitalist, Arrangement, Zamindars, Talukdara.*

1. INTRODUCTION

British East India Company was founded in 1600 CE. By 1833 C.E., various Parliamentary Acts brought the Indian administration under the complete control of the British Government. The Governor General had become the de facto ruler of India and Indian rule was under the supervision of the British Government.

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farmers. Thus all the expenses (administrative, war, etc.) were borne by the farmers in the form of land tax.

The British government could not have conquered a large country like India without imposing heavy land taxes on Indian farmers.

Thus from 1757 C.E. from time to time different policies on land tax and agriculture were

Formulated by the Company and the British Government. But the main purpose of those policies was to raise as much money as possible by all means. Their imperialist and capitalist policies had to have an impact on the Indian economy.

Initially, the land tax system in India since the time of the Mughals was continued and the annual land tax was fixed on the basis of land auction. In 1765 C.E, the company got the 'Diwani' of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, but even then the task of collecting land tax was in the hands of the local authorities. In 1769 C.E., the East India Company appointed British officers to oversee them. But conditions were not very good.

Warren Hastings formed a committee to reform the land tax system, of which he was the chairman. He took over the task of land tax collection and appointed British collectors for land tax collection in the districts and appointed Indian staff to assist them.

In 1770 C.E., the Revenue Committee (named after the Board of Revenue in 1786 C.E.) was established in Calcutta. Under the rules of 1793 C.E., it came to be known as the Cornwallis Code and its structure was further improved.

Warren Hastings introduced a five-year contract in 1772 C.E. According to this the highest bidder was given the right to collect land tax for five years. In 1777 C.E, Warren Hastings introduced a one-year land lease instead of a five-year land lease.

Shortly after becoming Governor-General, Cornwallis asked the Revenue Board to gather all the information regarding the land tax arrangement. Soon after consulting with members of the Board of Revenue, Shore, Grant, Start, and after much deliberation, the 1790 C.E. Introduced land lease for 10 years

In March 1793 C.E, with the approval of the directors, the Governor-General declared the 10-year settlement a Permanent settlement. This arrangement was implemented in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. According to this arrangement, the landlords were considered as the owners of the land by the government

'Ryotwari' settlement capt. Alexander Read and Thomas Munro In the late 18th century, when he was governor of Madras (1820-1827 C.E), the 'Ryotwari' settlement was introduced in the Madras and Bombay presidencies. This arrangement was made with the 'Ryat' farmers instead of the landlords.



The 'Mahilwari' settlement become introduced by way of Holt Mackenzie in 1822 C.E to accumulate land tax in Awadh, Agra and parts of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, and after Punjab turned into annexed to the British Indian Empire on 29 March 1849 C.E, the settlement changed into prolonged to Punjab was achieved.

Prior to the British occupation of the Punjab, various systems of land tax had been in use in the Punjab since the time of Ranjit Singh.

Even in the time of Ranjit Singh, the main occupation of the people was agriculture, a large number of people lived in villages, the land of Punjab was very fertile and yields a lot, farmers depended heavily on rain for irrigation, farming methods The old ones were cultivated with a pair of ballads, trying to make up for the lack of rain by fetching water from wells, ponds and rivers. Land tax was levied from 1/3 to 2/5, land tax was also waived in case of famine and natural calamity.

In 'Mahilwari' settlement, collectively settled with the landowners of many villages or their representatives, who shared the responsibility of paying the fixed land tax of that 'Mahil' to the government. In view of the situation in the western province, Governor-General William Bentinck issued an order regarding this settlement in 1833 C.E (Regulation IX of 1833C.E). According to this, its features are as follows: Part of the land tax was fixed and the remaining 1/3 was left to the landowners. After this the amount of land tax was distributed among all the villages of the 'Mahil'.

The rights of the '*zamindars*' as landowners were sanctioned, arrangements were made with the '*zamindars*', including those '*zamindars*' who had earlier allotted land through '*talukdara*'. Arrangements were made to pay 18 per cent of the total amount collected as land tax to these '*talukdars*' from the exchequer. TC Robertson was the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories at the time the settlement was finalized for 30 years, and was succeeded by James Thomason in 1843 C.E. He resolved some of the problems of the settlement. In 1851 C.E, the Court of Directors approved the revised settlement.

From April 1849 C.E to February 1853 C.E, the administration of the Punjab was governed byan Administrative Board. John Lawrence, Charles Mansell, Sir Henry Lawrence, was made chairman of the boardand military and political assignments were given, John Lawrence was given land tax arrangements, 'Sir Charles Mansell was given financial arrangements, Punjab officials became very corrupt due to the chaos in Punjab after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They were not paying any attention to fixing or collecting land tax'. The Board of Management first divided Punjab into districts and fixed the land tax with the farmers, reducing the amount of land tax from 1/4 to 1/8. Henry Lawrence wanted John Lawrence to change his land tax policy a little bit. Land tax should at least for a while allow land to be deposited as commodity instead of cash, but John Lawrence did not agree at all and military and political assignments were given, John Lawrence was given land tax arrangements, Sir Charles Mansell was given financial arrangements, Punjab officials became very corrupt due to the chaos in Punjab after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. They were not paying any attention to fixing or collecting land tax. The Board of Management first divided Punjab into districts and fixed the land tax with the farmers, reducing the amount of land tax from 1/4 to 1/8. 'Henry Lawrence wanted John Lawrence to change his land tax policy a little bit. Land tax should at least for a while allow land to be deposited as commodity instead of cash, but John Lawrence did not agree at all'Due to which the farmers had to face many difficulties, John Lawrence made good arrangements for irrigation to increase the yield of agriculture, he repaired old canals, widened



the royal canal and Bari canal, irrigated the areas of Lahore and Amritsar. Henry Lawrence wanted to dig several canals, but John Lawrence, who had the department, was not in favour of spending on canals. Tea orchards have been set up in hilly areas especially on the slopes of Kangra like Patsan, Tobacco, Cotton, etc. Encouraged, Marine sheep were imported from Italy for wool, which resulted in better quality wool in Punjab and improved the economic condition of the farmers.

In 1851 C.E, the Agricultural Horticultural Society was established in the Punjab. Henry Lawrence, President of the Administration, was elected President of the Society, Robert Montgomery was elected Vice-President, Henry Kopp was elected Secretary and a five-member council was elected, Lord Dalhousie. The Society had a patronage and most of its members were not Europeans. By 1851 C.E, it had only six Indian members out of 105 members. Its main purpose is to improve farming methods and use of fertilizers in the fields, to improve agricultural tools and introduce new tools, to improve animal breeds and breeding, to improve the varieties of vegetables and fruits, To open nurseries in different parts of Punjab to grow good quality fruits and vegetables, to plant gardens in Lahore and to display periodic flowers, fruits, vegetables, agricultural produce and tools, to reward the best tools, thus The Society learned a great deal about agriculture and agro-practices of Punjab and opened a model nursery and a school in a part of Lahore which imparted education on agriculture and horticulture and also information on agriculture, new seeds, new crops, tools. The Society provided written information in English and other languages, but despite these efforts from 1851-1871 C.E, the Society did not have much success. In addition, after the breakup of the 'Khalsa Sena', some Punjabi soldiers were deployed in agriculture, which also increased the agriculture of Punjab.

John Lawrence was the Chief Commissioner of Punjab from 1853-1858 C.E. Due to the agricultural reforms introduced by the Board, the production increased a lot, so the prices of food grains came down, the land tax had to be paid to the farmers in cash, so John Lawrence in view of the problems of the farmers waived the land tax in many places and Land tax rate was fixed at 1/5 to 1/8 part, loans were also given to farmers for agriculture. Farmers who used to cultivate barren land by digging wells in the land to cultivate were exempted from land tax; plots of land were registered to protect the rights of landowners. The rights were described and the Agri Horticulture Society experimented with several new crops such as flax, sugarcane, tobacco, new cotton in different districts of Punjab and based on the success of those experiments, the farmers there were given wheat and also encouraged by growing the above crops.

The aim was that people would start growing other crops instead of wheat and the yield of wheat would decrease and the price of wheat would go up. Secondly, they needed crops for their factories, so they offered rewards and other greed encouraged farmers to plant these crops. After the annexation of Punjab by the British to the British Indian Empire, the British reduced the land tax to some extent. Thus continued till about 1865 C.E. From 1865-75 C.E, the government was constantly raising land tax, the government needed money for the construction of canals. Special attention was paid to the development of irrigation facilities in Punjab under British rule. Earlier, farmers' crop production depended on rainfall. Drought or famine occurred due to untimely rains. The British rulers felt that where the intensity of famine decreased with the expansion of railways, it could be prevented by means of irrigation. Therefore, it was



decided to develop means of irrigation. Due to the rivers of Punjab, there was a huge potential for canals for irrigation. The British made many plans for canal irrigation for the development of agriculture. The plans developed by them were of two types, one was the canals which ran all year round, and the canals were called 'Bara Masi' canals. The other is the canals that used to run in the days of floods. These canals were called 'Tugiani' canals.

There were similar famines in the Punjab in 1868-69 C.E, 1869-70 C. E and 1900 C.E, but the government kept the situation under control.

Loans were also given for the development of agriculture. In 1870 C.E, the Commissioner was given the authority to give strong loans up to five hundred rupees.

In 1871 C.E, the Land Improvement Act-XXXVI of 1871 C.E was passed to make certain rules for such loans, thereafter under this act the authority to give loan of Rs.500 for land improvement was given to the Deputy Commissioner, loan up to Rs.5000 could be given by the Financial Commissioner, loan of Rs.10,000 to the Punjab Government. More than this, the Government of India could repay the loan, which had to be repaid in six-month instalments over a period of twenty years at an interest rate of 6.5% to 4.5%, as per the Land Improvement Act, 1883. The amount of loan extended by the Deputy Commissioner and the Financial Commissioner has been increased. According to the Agriculture Loans Act of 1884 C.E, small loans have been provided to farmers for purchase of seeds, livestock and fertilizers Cooperative societies in Punjab also made significant contribution to the development of agriculture. In 1904 C.E, Lord Curzon's government passed the Co-operative Societies Act-X of 1904 C.E. 1905 C.E With the formation of the first co-operative society in Punjab, their number gradually increased, many co-operative societies started providing better fertilizers and seeds to the farmers, and also provided help for farming implements.

The Department of Agriculture was established in Punjab in 1906 C.E, due to which more attention was paid to the development of agriculture. The Punjab Agriculture College was opened in Lyallpur in 1909 C.E, it became a centre of agricultural education and research. It is safe to say that Lyallpur became the agricultural capital of Punjab. For the experiments of the research department of this college, agricultural farms were opened in Lyallpur, Multan, Montgomery, Rawalpindi, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Hansi and Sarsa. Research and experiments were carried out on prevention of harmful pests and diseases and use of new seeds and new implements, encouraging farmers to adopt new methods for agricultural development based on these findings and experiments.

Land mortgage banks were set up by the British government to provide loans to farmers for the development of agriculture. These banks provided loans to farmers for the development of agriculture at low interest rates, first in Punjab in 1920 C.E. A similar bank was opened in Jhang in 1936 C.E. By 1936 C.E, the number of these banks had increased significantly, but these banks were not very popular among the people of Punjab. The consolidation of the Holding Act was passed in 1936 C.E to legalize it.

Prior to 1937 C.E, the Unionist Party of Punjab passed a number of laws in the Legislative Council of the Governor, aimed at the development of agriculture and the welfare of the farmers, including the Land Revenue Act and the Registration of Accounts Act., the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, etc.

When Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan became Revenue Member of the Governor's Executive Council, he made efforts to bring these Acts in Punjab Unionist Cabinet reduced water tax, and 'Haveli canal scheme' started for irrigation, 'Punjab Alienation Act 1910 C.E passed.



The aim was to rectify the situation of landowners in Punjab. In this way many other Acts were passed in Punjab which helped in the development of agriculture in Punjab and also in an attempt to improve the condition of the farmers. During the British period many new varieties of seeds were used for crops, these seeds were imported from USA, England and many other countries, and many new crops were also grown. Rapid efforts were made to grow and popularize the flax crop. Thus potatoes began to be grown in the Terai and the plains of Lahore. Indigo was also cultivated during the British period. In 1901 C.E, about 91,000 acres of land were brought under Nile cultivation. Many new vegetables like leafy cabbage, cauliflower, peas, beetroot etc. were grown in Punjab as they were in great demand in the factories of England. New machine technology began to be used for agriculture. Machines, baskets, heroin were used to extract sugarcane juice, and drills were used to sow crops. Machines began to be drilled into the ground. By 1947 C.E, water was being pumped out of the land by tubewells in about 50 villages of Punjab and tractors were being used for agriculture and electricity reached about 57 villages of Punjab. Due to irrigation facilities, about 180 million acres of land was irrigated with canals. The British also devised a 'hydropower plan'. Mandi Hydro Electric Scheme for Punjab was started in 1926 C.E. Which was completed in 1933 C.E after this the 'Bhakra Dam Plan' was formulated and its work started in 1945 C.E.

2. CONCLUSION

So in the end we can conclude that whatever policies the British adopted in agriculture in India and Punjab, their main objective was to raise as much money as possible, due to these land revenue policies of the British government brought an end to the communal harmony of Punjab, and a large Number of farmers in Punjab became indebted and a large number of Punjab lands fell into the hands of non-cultivators, causing huge losses to agriculture.

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