

## **Diwan Sawan Mal's Administrative System in Multan Province 1821-1844**

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### **Abstract**

*Under the Sikh period, several reforms were introduced in Multan to collect revenue for the Sikh State and Military. They improved land revenue, built many wells and perpetual canals under the governorship of Sawan Mal and his son Mulraj. This study focuses on Land Revenue, irrigation, and agrarian system that was prevailing in Multan during the period of Sawan Mal (1821-44). The reason behind the selection of this era and area is that the revenue system adopted by him has unique significance because he not only provided the right direction for future policies but also gave peace and calm to the native people. At that time, Multan was an important unit of Punjab where policies were formulated at a higher level and translated into action throughout Punjab. It has been tried to break new ground, challenging the viewpoint of previous writers about the local history in the first half of the nineteenth century.*

**Keywords:** Ranjit Sing, Sawan Mal, Land Revenue Administration, Agrarian and irrigation system, Kardar, and Chahat.

### **1. Introduction:**

After the decline of the Mughals, the Sikhs appeared on the scenario of Punjab in the late eighteenth century as ruling power and founded the Sikh Kingdom under the headship of Ranjit

Singh in 1799. Later on, he captured Multan in 1818 and appointed his *Nazims* (governors). From 1818 to 1821, six governors were appointed but they could not maintain law and order situations. In 1821, He was appointed as the seventh governor in Multan who already had pulled in the consideration of the *Maharaja*. (Amarnath, 1928)

## **2. Significance of the Study:**

This study focuses on Land Revenue, irrigation, and agrarian system that was prevailing in Multan during the period of Sawan Mal (1821-44). He was a wonderful representative and presented extraordinary enhancements during his long rule. A profitable income framework was presented and broad measures were taken for horticulture improvement; harmony and request were reestablished and equivalent equity was accommodated all classes. Because of new managerial changes, development, success, and populace expanded. As Governor of Multan, he showed a gigantic limit concerning difficult work a splendid handle of income matters. He improved peace and by the income age, he added attractive add up to Government's economy. Diwan's authoritative strategies were unsystematic in extraordinary. Limits of administrative developments were indistinct and unpredictable, income settlements changed all around.

## **3. Conceptual framework of the research:**

In 1821, Sawan Mal was assigned as Kardar<sup>1</sup> of the half territory of Multan. (Chand, 1884) In 1829, he was made the Nazim of the whole area which comprised of Montgomery<sup>2</sup>, Jhang<sup>3</sup>, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan<sup>4</sup>, and Muzaffargarh<sup>5</sup>. In 1832, he was granted the title of Diwan. (Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh: Chronicle of the Reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1831-1839*, 1961) During a concise period, he changed the whole appearance of the territory by presenting remarkable and imaginative changes. He managed value with strong and fair endeavors. He devoted his whole energies to the improvement of his charge and its reclamation from the decay into which it had crumpled attributable to the fights and commotions of the late years. His unprejudiced nature was prominent for his equity. He was an incredibly insightful and liberal director. Ranjit Singh was continually happy with his administrations to everybody. (Wadehra, 2001)

## **4. Administrative setup and reforms:**

The Multan, which subsequently went under Sawan Mal's control, consisted of Multan, Dera Ismail Khan, Leiah, Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, and some parts of Jhang. This province

was further divided into *Pargnas* and *Talluqas* in the headship of *Kardar*. There were fifty or a hundred villages or *Mouzas* in each *Talluqa*. More than one *Kardars* were appointed in a big *Pargna*. The smallest administrative unit was called a village in which the *Punchayat* system was enforced. Although, there was not a police department yet *Kotwal*<sup>6</sup> was responsible to maintain law and order situations. (Malik, 1990) As a *Nazim*, he showed a colossal limit concerning diligent work and caused extraordinary changes during a long rule. Here, the followings are the real changes and plans implemented by him which not only made him a unique ruler but also one of the best and effective governors.

#### 4.1. Judicial system:

There was no written constitution and laws in the judicial system of the Sikh dynasty. Customary laws were utilized for the provision of justice. Separate *Qazi* courts were established for the Muslims where justice was provided by their religious principles and the law of *Sharia*. (Malik, 1990) *Nazim*'s court was the biggest one in the province. Besides this, special courts were established in city areas. Although the *Nazim* had the main status in the court yet *Kardars* were given the right to hear the judicial proceedings. Besides this, *jagirdars* were authorized to decide the cases of their relevant departments and areas. There was not any discrimination between civil and criminal cases, and both parties could submit their appeal to the *Kardar*. Generally, punishments were given in the form of fines, yet deterrent convictions (hanging and cutting of hand) were given in criminal cases. (Malik, 1990)

Sawan Mal turned his consideration to launch a law and order situation. He chose Diya Ram and allotted him the mission of smothering robberies and burglaries. He instantly assaulted the notorious freebooter *Baku* Langrial of Tulamba and assassinated him. (Maclagan E. , 1926) Different looters and thieves were harshly chastised. He held his *Durbar* consistently and dispensed equity to all with no segregation of caste and ideology. His justice was eminent for his fairness. A peasant once charged that his product had been destroyed by an aristocrat's horse that had been permitted to run slack. Similarly, his son Ram Das was found to be blameworthy, he was detained by him for a few days. To Edwards:

Between the poor, he did equity with incredible agonies and unbiasedness. However, a rich man, regardless of the privilege, never got a decision from him without paying for it. (Edwards, 1851)

Cattle thieves were constantly executed. They were hanged and no request and appeal was allowed. On one event, a nearby celebrity begged for the life of a looter, Sawan Mal ordered

that the criminal must be hanged before that man's entrance. (Maclagan E. , District Gazetteer of Multan 1901-02, 1902) In 1836, to maintain a strategy to escape from sex offenses, he issued firm commands that under no circumstances the guardians ought to keep their adult little girls unmarried. (Gupta, 1991) If there should be an occurrence of insubordination they were extremely rebuffed. State officers were told to assemble marriages of adult young ladies and not to leave the matter in the hands of their parentages.

Besides this, the judicial system was also a source of income for the government. Parties to the suit (winner and loser) had to pay money to the judge in the form of *Nazrana* or *Jurmana* (fine) respectively. Owing to the extravagant delay, in any case, the plaintiff had to pay *Taihkhana* to the judge in return to wastage of his time. After the recovery of stolen property, the owner had to pay one-fourth of the property as *Shukrana* to the judge. Sometimes, in the case of robbery, the entire village had to compensate for the loss and pay one-fourth to the government too. In civil cases, if the plaintiff could not prove the blame against the defendant then he had to pay a specific fine from the perspective of the wastage of the judge's time. Besides this, a peculiar cost was received as *Muhrana* for putting a royal stamp on legal documents. Several European authors have appreciated this judicial system, though it had some drawbacks, yet it was quite right under the nature of the people. (Malik, 1990)

#### **4.2.Agrarian reforms:**

The economy of Multan based on crops and it had been enjoying as the hub of agriculture in Southern Punjab since ancient times. Sawan Mal's agrarian developments depended upon the standard of lower expenses, better services for farmers to get sufficient price for their yield, and a systematic source of water to their fields. He prepared a new revenue framework and settled the taxes on the land. It was just an extract on agrarian produce, imposed as a normal tax in cash or a settled proportion in kind, as indicated by the decision of the *Zamindars*. However, on the first-class yields as sugar, tobacco, poppy cash rates were constantly charged and no choice was permitted. (Steedman, 1882)

The income was gathered twice per year after the procuring of the two crops, called the *Rabi* (summer) and the *Khareef* (winter). The State portion from the *Rabi* yield was paid in *Jeth-Har* (May-June), and that for *Khareef* was paid during *Katik-Maghar* (October-November). It would be 25 *bighas* of wheat for the *Rabi*, whilst 5 *bighas* of cotton and 15 *bighas* of *Jawar* for the *Khareef*. All additional farming was charged by a specific rate for every *bigha*. (Govt. of the

Punjab, District Gazetteer of Multan 1883-84, 1884) Income in cash was gathered by *Kardar* in the form of installments.<sup>7</sup> *Kardar* was helped by subordinate authorities such as *Patwari* (income assessors), *Muqaddams* (foreman), and *Quangos* (genetic recorders).

The real collection was made by *Muqaddams* with the assistance of *Chaudharys*. They had the privilege to a commission on the revenue owed by them and the rate was normally five percent of the aggregate accumulation. Subsequently, the settled amount of the revenue profit of the region was dispatched to the *Khazana-i-Umra* (central treasury) at Lahore. Payments to Lahore were typically made by the method for *hundis*. (Ali S. , The Sikhs and the Afghans, 1847) The dates of the installment were, consequently, so settled that the cultivators could discover time to trade his goods or could advantageously obtain from the town *Sahukar* (broker), and were then in a state to offer his liabilities to the Government.

#### **4.3.Irrigation reforms:**

For better agrarian framework, there ought to be a decent irrigation system so that good harvests and better revenue could be got. Lands were held to be the property of the people through whose grounds the canals passed. He prepared canals in the surroundings of Multan and gave motivation to trade, business, and industry. He consolidated the population to excavate new and rehabilitate old canals. He ordered to dig up canals in the Multan region having a length of 300 miles which was covered by digging new and old canals. (James, 1851)

*Diwanwah* which was an old neglected canal of 35 miles in length, irrigating Lodhran and Mailsi was re-disclosed by Mustafa Khan under Sawan Mal. It was traversable for boats up to 40 miles from Multan. Correspondingly, *Sardarwah*, which was 38 miles in length and controllable for around 25 miles along the superhighway from Multan to Bahawalpur, watering Kahrur. Another 30 miles long canal, *Muhammadwah*, which was flooding Kahrur. The *Bahawalwah*, whose length was 30 miles, irrigated Mailsi and Kahrur. It was traversable for around 15 miles from its mouth. Other than this, *Sultanwah* having a length of 25 miles, was a part of the *Bahawalwah*, which flooded Mailsi and Kahrur and was controllable for around 3 miles. *Qabilwah*, which watered Mailsi and Kahrur, was 20 miles in length and maneuverable for 3 miles. *Jamwah*, having a length of 30 miles, flooded Mailsi and was controllable for 8 miles from its opening at Niyamat Ali. Some different canals, for example, *Jamwah* and *Qutubwah*, 30 miles in length which flooded Mailsi, and were traversable for around 10 miles. *Wali Muhammad* canal, having a length of 30 miles, inundated Multan and its surroundings, and was

controllable from *Suraj Kund*. Similarly, *Shahpur* and *Doorana* canals, which were 12 and 10 miles in length respectively, irrigated Multan and Setalmari. *Sikandarwah* was another imperative canal having a length of 30 miles, inundated Multan and its rural areas, and was traversable for 15 miles. The *Gujhala* and *Bakhtwah* canals having a length of 12 miles each, flooded Shujabad and were partially traversable for around 8 miles. Similarly, the *Dhundhu* canal which was 16 miles in length and controllable for around 8 miles, irrigated Shujabad too. (Hasrat, 1977)

Diwan Sawan Mal began another water system by method for overhauling the old canals and burrowing of a few new ones. The yearly canal clearance was completed by the entire group of canal irrigators. He presented the *Hasil Cher* framework under which the canal clearance was started by the Government in the light of the installment of a specific rate. Moreover, where the region was minimal superior to a desert and the cultivator less or more relied on an artificial water system, the State attempted to sink wells. Other than this, a *Patta* was given for a well by settling its appraisal from Rs. 12 to 20 as per the region and nature of the yield sown. (Fryer, 1876)

However, he indeed encouraged the sinking and repair of wells by providing positive leases. Usually, Rs. 100 to 150 were received from the proprietor of a well that watered thirty to fifty acres of land and this procedure added up Rs. 2 to 3 for per acre of land. For the betterment of cultivation, he, to encourage the peaceful tribes of the *Bar*, urged them to establish towns and settle down forever. He permitted them to hold land at exceptionally permissive appraisal and lastly, settled it at sixty-two rupees for each well. He reduced the amount for new wells and usually 1/2 or 1/4 of the request was dispatched over a period from ten to twenty years. In Jhang and Multan divisions, the Government dug new wells at its own cost to recover the wasteland and charged additional income usually leviable. (O'Dwyer, 1894) Consequently, we see that there was no constant rate of appraisal collected in the wells. Wells built by the Government was known as *Chahat Shahana* (imperial wells). There was another class of wells which was known as *Chahat Istamrari* whereupon an evaluation of Rs. 10 to 15 was forced in interminability.

#### **4.4.Land revenue system:**

Sawan Mal's revenue setup was unstable, regardless of whether the yield was decent or sufficiently awful which was left over to the farmer to live upon. Owing to some natural

catastrophe, he was constantly compassionate towards the cultivators. He started low and steadily raised the evaluation as conditions validated it. Under his governorship, there was a lot of individual collaboration with the cultivators and it was a fragment of the administration to guarantee that the privileges of all the people connected to the land were safeguarded. He familiarized land developments without aggravating the conciliatory privileges of the *Zamindars*. He stimulated the *Chakdars* and the *Islanders* (the genuine cultivators of the land) to recover and enhance the land and sink wells in the uncultured part of the land. (Hasrat, 1977)

The revenue, to a great extent, was gathered by the *Kardars* from the *Taaluqa* and *Munshi* helped him. (Diack, 1965) The income deposited by him in the focal treasury was almost twenty-two lakhs which had been gathered from Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Montgomery, Dera Ismail Khan and some parts of Jhang. His administrative framework was appropriate to the horticultural conditions of the Multan. In April 1837, the *Maharaja* instructed him to pay the extra income of the four *Talluqas* of Jhang, Lyallpur, Pindi Bhattian, and Chaniot. The quantity of income for these *Talluqas* was settled at 125000 rupees. (Suri, Umdat-ut-Tawarikh: Chronicle of the Reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1831-1839, 1961) He succeeded with regards to bringing profound territories of wasteland under farming because the proprietors were little in number as well as did not have the way to cultivate every part of the land.

*Diwan* endorsed the colonization of waste grounds too by offering good terms of evaluation to the people, who brought new lands under cultivation. A huge number of colonials were settled in Muzaffargarh and Jhang and he provided them land and assurance. (Govt. of the Punjab, Punjab District Gazetteer Muzaffargarh District 1908, 1910) He appears to have attempted unique efforts to colonize the *Leiah Thal* and provided them good terms to manufacture wells there. He decided to boost them and guaranteed that if they would cultivate any lands they would be perceived as *Adna Malik* (virtual proprietors) or *Aala Malik* (genuine proprietors). (Hasrat, 1977)

Every town was evaluated in the way that gave the biggest come back to the Government, however, at whatever point conceivable, the interests of the cultivators were sheltered too. If a man had no money to assemble a well or to purchase bulls, the State sharply provided money and recovered admirably well, not according to any inflexible framework but rather by taking as much from the proprietor as he could save annually without damage to the cultivation. The Hindus who needed to put cash in the land were given uncultivated land to recover and when it

had been recovered, the cultivators were made to pay full yearly revenue for it. Pointless consumption on *Jagirs* and *Muaafis* was lessened to the bottom and everything ready to yield income was profitably used.

Diwan was also a big *Ijaradar*, yet *Ijara* of Jhang and Shujabad could interchange with direct accumulation and this term was known as *Mushakhasa*<sup>8</sup>. It meant that if the income of a specific region expanded, the amount of *Ijara* was increased too. (Singh F. , 1982) Under his rule, the *Ijardari* framework was not restrained to lands. *Sairat*<sup>9</sup> tax was given in *Ijara* to vital and dependable authorities or residents of the State. The measure of *Ijara* was commonly close to the accumulative income and to spare something like a profit. The *Zamindars* could record their protests against the *Ijaradars* and the *Ijaradars* could also whine against the oppression of the prime officers, *Zamindars*, and cultivators. (Suri, *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh: Chronicle of the Reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1831-1839*, 1961) He acquainted numerous inventive procedures to boost finance. He sorted out a new revenue setup and settled the levies on the land under cultivation in keeping view the way of yields grown. (Steedman, 1882)

The first method utilized by him was the *Batai* system. As per this setup, the crop was separated into various parts and an irregular quantity was fixed for each part. It was a standard technique for a share in the product at a rate that was changed by the state based on the value or richness of the land. Its normal quantity was one-third to one-fourth of the gross yield. If the resident cultivated more than the standard region attached to one well then the settled sum was put aside and the entire harvest was separated by the *Batai* framework. (Banga, 1978)

The second method was *Naqadi-Jinsi*. It was Sawan Mal's initial measure in accomplishing money kind assessment, by which the landlord obtained the Government share at a fixed amount. To his standing instructions, the *Kardar* was to dispatch the *Nirkhnama* (timetable of rates) of all grains of the season appropriately marked by the *Panches* and the *Zamindars*. These rates differed from one area to other, however, we're usually a little higher than those predominant in the regional market. (Banga, 1978) Sometimes, another distinct strategy for evaluation was utilized for wells. Particularly on the outskirts of the present Lodhran and Multan, was to take a specific aggregate of Rs. 2 or 3 per yoke cattle being used on the wells. (Fagan, 1900)

The third step was *Zabti*. In Multan, *Diwan* enforced a money deposit on specific yields and the production of which could not stand the postponement of division or be assessed accurately. This money evaluation was known as *Zabti Jama* and such harvests were called *Zabti* crops. This



technique for appraisal of money was connected to the unpreserved crops like sugarcane, tobacco, pepper, cotton, indigo, heartbeats, oilseeds, vegetables, and the spring feed. (Purser, 1892) In the surroundings of Multan, the income was normally taken in the shape of kinds, since grain was essential for the court and the troops. In the remaining areas, the *Mahsool* was given back to the cultivators, who were gratified to get it from Government at a rate which was generally 25 percent over the market cost. (O'Brien, 1882) Under this system, the rate of land income differed for various products as well. They differed by the efficiency of the soil, nature of products, methods for the water system, and some other facilities. The most fruitful and positively arranged lands with irrigational services were measured as high as 50% of the gross produce, while the State share on fewer prolific and gloomily arranged land shifted from one-third to two-fifths. (Trevaskis, 1928) 50% of the gross product was somewhat phenomenal and intermittent in Multan, where the Government share differed frequently from one-seventh to one-third of the gross product. (Maclagan E. , 1926) According to Sita Ram Kohli:

In *Suba* Multan, *Chakdari*, a peculiar tenure system was prevailing at that time. (Kohli, Land Revenue Administration under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 1929)

Correspondingly, where the proprietor did not cultivate the land, the *Diwan* conceded licenses to the people other than the proprietor to sink wells and win the benefit for themselves paying just an ostensible lease to the proprietor through the State. The cultivators were evaluated by their ability to pay. (Douie, 1899)

Besides this, *Korari* was a kind of single amount evaluation in which the landholder had been given a method for cultivation or wells without any state cooperation. A settled appraisal in cash was assessed under a deed, which postulated the Governmental share as a rule at 12 rupees for every well. This strategy for the gathering of income was called *Korari-i-Chahat* and these wells were known as *Chahat-i-Ikrari*. During his governorship, different brick-works wells were also sunk. Under this framework, wells were made on the premise of evaluation, by which the cultivated lands were evaluated at lump sum amount, which was predominant just in some little parts of the region. (Kohli, 1919) The territory inundated by them was from time to time given, however, the region appended to these wells was indicated and the appraisal was made concerning the region connected to the well. In a few places, the demand differed by the number of bulls utilized on the well. The standard rate was Rs. 10 to 12, yet a decent well would pay Rs. 20. (Roe, Report on the Revised Land Revenue Settlement of the Montgomery District in the

Multan Division of the Punjab, 1878) The entire harvest was isolated by the *Batai* framework. However, Khurana quotes Murray's expression in these words.

The setup of land revenue under Sikh rulers was bad as ought to be. He infers that Sawan Mal's *Batai* (sharing the deliver) system was a sort of *Lotai* (loot). (Khurana, 1985)

In 1838, the land income of Multan was Rs. 3898550 and Cunningham gives an amount of 4500000 rupees for the year of 1844. Consequently, the average amount for Multan was around 41 lakhs per year. Amid the Mughal period, the aggregate income had amounted around 6000000 rupees, whilst in Sawan Mal's regime; the land income came to just 4100000 rupees. This was not because of the low generation. The distinction in the aggregate income was expected to a great extent to the lower rates of appraisals.<sup>10</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

In a nutshell, it becomes clear from the above certainties that Sawan Mal had an exceptionally developed and well-organized setup of monetary. Even though land income was the real wellspring of income, yet some different taxes such as customs and cesses, form a vital part of the system, were also helpful. Correspondingly, the State consumption was accounted for as well under numerous characterized heads. A beneficial but realistic revenue framework was presented, broad measures for agrarian setup, enhancements were completed and similar equity was provided. Because of these attempts, development, populace, and flourishing extended considerably. Though he was a Hindu, yet he valued the Muslims who provided his armed force well-recognized officers. His administration is regarded with respect. Each segment of the masses got from his organization whether it was Muslim, the Hindu, the Pathans, the laborer, or the peasant. In fewer views, he had inclinations against the Muslims. To some extent, it is true, yet is most clearly misleading. He was judicious and attempted his best to give decent rule to the masses. As a best *Nazim*, he could utilize pen and sword well and it included exceptional credit to him.

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> Kardar, at a time, was an excise or customs duty officer, supervisor, accountant, magistrate or incharge of the gathering land revenue in a *Taaluqa* (collector).
- <sup>2</sup> Fagan, p. 43, About 1830, Diwan Sawan Mal obtained charge of a considerable portion of the district except Dipalpur Tehsil.
- <sup>3</sup> According to Steedman, p.39, in 1832 the district of Jhang gave to Diwan.
- <sup>4</sup> As per Fryer, p. 37. In 1832, Diwan Sawan Mal, took the District Dera Ghazi Khan, in farm.
- <sup>5</sup> Gazetteer of the Muzaffargarh District 1883-84, p. 40, in 1837, the whole district of the present district of Muzaffargarh was united under Diwan Sawan Mal.
- <sup>6</sup> Kotwal has power like a Police Officer.
- <sup>7</sup> According to the Instructions issued to the *Kardars* of Multan by Diwan Sawan Mal. They were expected to send the revenues punctually in six installments, three each for *Khareef* and *Rabi*.
- <sup>8</sup> It was an assessed amount which was usually based on the records of previous collections.
- <sup>9</sup> It dealt with the income which had been gotten from taxes of salt mines, revenue from customs and Octroi charges.
- <sup>10</sup> As per O'Brien p. 88, Date palm trees were a source of Income to the Government in other areas also. Of all the trees in Muzaffargarh, the largest revenue was derived from the date trees.

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