



Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry under Partap Singh Kairon

(1947-1949)

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Abstract

In the present research paper, an attempt has been made to highlight the efforts of the Partap Singh Kairon for the rehabilitation of the refugees and the people of Punjab after partition how he solved the problem of corruption in revenue department of Punjab. The contemporary newspapers, primary sources are used such as, East Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates and gazetteers to study his approach and planning for rehabilitation and secondary books are also taken deep to reach on understanding of the problems created by the huge number refugee migrants.

The Punjab was partitioned into two parts, East and West Punjab on August 15th, 1947.¹ While India celebrated its independence nearly ten million Punjabis were at each-other's throats. Horrible atrocities were committed on both Indian and Pakistani sides. The Muslims and non-Muslims were running for their lives from the Eastern and Western Punjab. It shook the land of five rivers to its very foundations. The administrative, economic and

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¹ J. Nanda, *Punjab Uprooted: A Survey of the Punjab Riots and Rehabilitation Problems*, Hind Kitabs Limited, Bombay, 1948, p. 44.

social life suffered a severe setback. The evacuation of the uprooted masses required the immediate attention of the authorities.²

When a ministry was formed in Punjab on October 1947, the burden of political leadership in the avalanche of partition was carried by Chief Minister, Gopi Chand Bhargava³, and Home Minister⁴, Sardar Swaran Singh.⁵ Partap Singh Kairon was given the charge of Refugees and Rehabilitation department from 1947-1949. A scheme for allotment of land to the refugees was evolved under his guidance and in a colony of tents in the campus of the erstwhile Islamia Collage Jullundur; the vast operation of land allotment was started. Under the guidance of Kairon, the land allotment operation made quick progress.⁶

During the months of October and November 1947, the newly appointed P. N. Thappar, Financial commissioner, Tarlok Singh, Director General of relief and rehabilitation, Ranjit Singh Minister for Public works⁷ and Mohinder Singh Randhawa, Additional Director General of relief and rehabilitation were appointed to tackle the problem.⁸ Rehabilitation and resettlement proved most difficult and

² S. C. Arora, *Turmoil in Punjab Politics*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1990. P.25

³ Gopi Chand Bhargava was the first Chief Minister of Punjab from August 15, 1947 to April 13, 1949, and again between October 18, 1949, to June 20, 1951, and for the third time between June 21, 1964, and July 6, 1964.

⁴ E. N. Mangat Rai, *Commitment my style*, New Delhi, 1973, p. 126.

⁵ *East Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates* 18th March 1949, p. 51. (Punjab Vidhan Sabha Chandigarh)

On 15 August 1947, the day of Indian Independence he was sworn in as Home Minister in the cabinet of the state of Punjab. He entered the cabinet of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, in 1952, and was that government's last surviving member. He remained in successive governments until he resigned in November 1975.

⁶ Mubarak Singh, *Kairon*, Delhi, 1963, p. 72.

⁷ *East Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates* 18th March 1949, p. 51. (Punjab Vidhan Sabha Chandigarh)

⁸ M.S, Randhawa, *Aapbeeti*, pp. 201-202.

complicated problem that the infant state of east Punjab had to face.⁹

At one stage as many as 8, 000 Patwaris worked at Jalandhar. It was a gigantic operation in which the governor, ministers, Financial Commissioners, two director generals of rural rehabilitation, a large number of experienced revenue officers designated as additional Deputy Commissioners, revenue assistants rehabilitation, Tehsildars and Naib-Tehsildars participated.¹⁰ The Punjab Government set up twenty one refugee camps in different districts of the state. Immediately after evacuations the refugees were put up in refugee camps. Afterwards was a gradual dispersal of the camp residence to the rural and urban areas as the case might be.

Partap Singh Kairon took keen and personal interest in providing relief to the refugees and to rehabilitate them immediately. He represented to the government of India to release the mortgaged lands in the east Punjab so that they could be given to the refugees.¹¹ He even met the United Province Chief Minister and discussed the problem of rehabilitation and relief of refugees and made certain suggestion for their early rehabilitation in United Province.¹² He toured the state of Punjab and tried to solve the problem of rehabilitation.

⁹ Satya M Rai, *Punjab Since Partition*, Delhi, 1986.p. 149

¹⁰ Om Parkash, *Social and Economic Survey of refugee Camps in East Punjab*, East Punjab Government, Simla, 1949, pp. 1-2

¹¹ *The Tribune*, March 26, 1949.

¹² *Ibid.* December 28, 1948.

During the period of resettlement of land, a sizable section of the revenue staff, *Zaildars* and *Patwaris* were engaged in proving land. As a result the incidents of bribery, corruption and nepotism increased. The rehabilitation and resettlement department was criticized. In spite of criticism, Kairon always defended the work done by his department and resized the contribution made by P.N Thappar and Tarlok Singh, financial commissioner and Director General of relief and rehabilitation respectively.¹³ He determined to do his very best for rehabilitation of refugees and never cared for who opposed them.

To solve the problem of corruption in his department, Kairon prepared a list of corrupt officers, about whom he had picked up information from the public. He told to Mangat Rai that “The A-1 problem of your department is corruption.” He defined his objective in Punjabi “*Mein Mehakmai non manj dena hai*”.¹⁴(I am going to scour the department clean). He quickly took the action against the corrupt officials in order to provide justice to the people. He believed in quick action on the spot. His policy was action first, philosophy, theory and data later. Indeed his hard work always appears in his work.

To start cultivation, refugee peasants were advanced loans for purchasing bullock carts, repairing wells, purchasing seeds and

¹³ *Ibid.* March 29, 1949.

¹⁴ E. N. Mangat Rai, *Commitment my style*, New Delhi, 1973, p. 129.

repairing their dilapidated houses. During two years – September 1947 to September 1949 – the following assistance by the way of Taccavi¹⁵ loans and grants was afforded in East Punjab to displaced persons in rural areas.¹⁶

Purpose of Loan Grant	Rupees
Taccavi for seeds	55,71,011
Taccavi for bullocks	55,77,974
Taccavi for implements	9,61,731
Loan for repair of houses	97,615
Loan for repair of wells	5,800
Food loan	79,55,966
Grants for repair of houses	3,25,334
Grants for repaid of wells	1,73,328

¹⁵ Taccavi loans were formerly extended by the Govt. of India to increase and encourage agriculture production. It was specifically granted to tackle damage of crop due to natural calamities and other forms of crisis like drought.

¹⁶ Tarlok Singh, *Land Resettlement Manual*, Shimla, 1952. P. 7



Before the rehabilitation the next step was to provide relief through the distribution of lands towards the peasants and managements for their irrigation. Loans were given to the farmers in the form of improved implements, pumping sets, and tractors. Tube wells were popularized.¹⁷ The next step which he took was the consolidation of holdings. Before this scheme, the land of the fakers was divided into small places, which was very uneconomic for the peasants and the state. There were difficulties of irrigation and to look after the small places of land at different places. It was also an important cause of litigation among the farmers.¹⁸ So in 1952 when he was the development minister of Punjab, this scheme of consolidation of holdings was started to improve the lot of the poor and ignorant peasants.¹⁹ Under this scheme the whole area of the Punjab was to consolidate in big blocks awarding only one field to every farmer. A separate department of consolidation was introduced to perform this task. He tried his best to appoint noble officers due to the fear of corruption. He also appointed public workers to check the government officials. Under this scheme the villages were linked with the cities and some land was given to every *Panchayat* for the land had been consolidated and it proved very beneficial to the peasants and as a result of it the production of the state increased for some time.

¹⁷ Mubarak Singh, *Kairon*, Delhi, 1963, p. 72.

¹⁸ *The Tribune*, March 23, 1950.

¹⁹ *The Tribune*, April 17, 1952.



Another crowning achievement of Partap Singh in the field of agriculture was the establishment of the Agriculture University at Ludhiana. This university became a model for the rest of states. This also contributed to the ignorant farmers. Many new improved seeds were discovered and production increased in Punjab. Thousands of students got education in the field of agriculture and are getting now every year. Fairs were also arranged for the peasants to tell them how to produce more corn and how to use scientific implements. At present it is serving very much the peasantry of the Punjab. For the foundation of this University the credit goes to Partap Singh a well wisher of the peasantry of the Punjab. Thus during the regime of Partap Singh Punjab made progress by leaps and bounds in the field of agriculture.

Conclusion

It is clear from above facts that the ministry of Partap Singh Kairon as Relief and Rehabilitation was successful. He was gently set a plan for the resettlement of people of the Eastern Punjab. Rehabilitation was not only the single problem, to find the solution of unemployment was also the major problem towards the migrants. Partap Singh Kairon solved these problems through the process of development. He established the factories for the welfare of people. The future was doubtless brings new problems and challenges to the Punjab, as to the nation. These were met, for, during these years of Sardar Partap Singh Kairon's stewardship, strong foundations have been laid. Moreover, the people of each area better equipped to solve more and more of their problem of their own.