

The Administration of Colonel Minchin: A New Era of Development and Prosperity for the Bahawalpur State

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The sudden death of Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan IV (1852-1866) created the opportunity for some Daudpotra¹ chiefs and other servants who wanted to overwhelm the minor heir of the late Nawab. In fact, that was a very crucial situation not only for the ruling family but also for the general public. In that critical situation, the native agent, Syed Murad Shah Gardezi advised the state council to enthrone elder son of the late Nawab.² The advice was wise and right according to Daudpotra traditions. Hence Jindwadda Khan by with the title of Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV was crowned without unnecessary delay.

The minority of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV was a dare test itself because it was happening first time in the history of Bahawalpur. Therefore two subsequent requests were forwarded to British Government for political intervention. That was all done to save the rule of minor Nawab. Syed Murad Shah Gardezi, the Native Agent tried his best to control the situation but he failed in handling the turmoil. Finally, Commissioner of Multan Division, Mr. William Ford was deputed at Bahawalpur to chastise the rebels and control the situation. Mr. William Ford not only eradicated the rebellion but also exiled most of the rebels Prince Jafar Khan was one of them who was sent to Lahore as state prisoner. Mr. William Ford returned Multan after appointing Captain Charles Cherry Minchin (1829-1898) as political agent and superintended of Bahawalpur State in November 1866.³ His fortunate arrival at Bahawalpur opened new doors of prosperity and flourishing development in the state. His services as political agent for Bahawalpur State are invaluable and legendary. His laborious works and services have been neglected by the local and foreign historians. He not only supervised the state affairs but also played vital role in the progress of Bahawalpur during the minority of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV.

He was born on 10th August 1829 in Madras (present day India). His father

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Mr. James Minchin had been living in India with his family since long in the service of British East India Company. Young Minchin completed his education in Madras and later on joined army. He participated in Mutiny 1857 and also served as arbitrator between Hindu and the Muslims.⁴ He served as assistant commissions at Bannu and Dera Ghazi Khan later on he was called to Bahawalpur in 1866 to serve as Political Agent.⁵ After his retirement he spent his life in England and died in 1898.⁶

Late Colonel Minchin right after his appointment at Bahawalpur State revolutionized the administrative divisions and assembled the State departments on European manners. He focused on the increment in state income by decreasing inadequate expenditures. He organized each and every department innovatively and productively by appointing European officers as heads of those departments. The British Agency looked inflexible in its initial days but later it proved to be a blessing. He divided the state administration into two active sections which is; Judicial and Executive.⁷ Under the judicial section there was *Sadar Adalat* (صدر عدالت) or Chief Court, for the provision of justice to the people. The executive section was divided into Canal, Revenue, Police, Forest and Engineering.⁸

Before the initiation of the British Agency the state was divided into a number of administrative divisions which were called *Kardari*, (کارداری) each of which was divided into 3 to 5 *Nayabat* (نایابت). Colonel Minchin abolished *Kardari* structure by introducing a new system of *Nizamat* (نظامت). After that there were three districts or *Nizamat* (*Nizamat Minchinabad, Nizamat Bahawalpur and Nizamat Khanpur*) each was subdivided into number of *Tehsils* (تھسیل) and *Peshkaries* (پیشکاری). Head of each *Nizamat* was called *Nazim* (ناظم). Colonel Minchin appointed a European officer Mr. Campbell for the management of the department of the administrative divisions.⁹ Mr. Campbell worked for Revenue Survey in the upper portion of the state while Captain Andrews worked in the lower areas of the state.¹⁰

He also appointed native officers like Syed Murad Shah Gardezi, Meer Muhammad Khan and Laal Jee Parshad as *Nazim* (ناظم) to assist Mr. Campbell.¹¹ The administrative matters of the state came into order after these arrangements were done. The revenue system of the state was regularized. The new system increased state income notably. It also helped in controlling the civil and judicial matters.

In 1867 he appointed trained and learned “*Patwari* (پتواری) and *Girdawar* (گردوار) in the state. In 1875 he introduced *Lambardari* System (لمبرداری نظام).¹² Under that system a *Zeeldaar* (زیلدار) was appointed at a cluster of four villages to look after the canals and to collect *Abiyana*¹³ (آبیانہ). It had doubled benefits. It helped in rapid and quick clearance of canals and in collection of state revenue.

Colonel Minchin was very first person who offered barren land of the eastern areas of the state on lease to the agriculturists of Punjab, Ferozepur and Patiala. This experiment was done due to famine in Ferozepur and Bikaner, people of those areas used to migrate into Bahawalpur State to seek livelihood. Colonel Minchin virtuously leased that area on easy installments.¹⁴ The new farmers worked very hard and turned that barren and unfruitful land into green and fertile fields. He developed canal irrigation system admirably excellent. Colonel Minchin was the first person who surveyed the outskirts of River Sutlej to assess the possibility of canal excavation.¹⁵

In 1867 he organized Public Works and Canal Irrigation Departments. The department used to work as a branch of Agriculture Department. The Public Works department was divided into three heads, J. W. Barns Superintendent of Irrigation, Heenan as Executive Engineer for the construction of roads and public buildings and Captain Beckett, Assistant Political Agent.¹⁶ He constructed canal rest houses to colonize canal officers.¹⁷ He proposed excavation of Fordwah Canal (فورڈ واہ) (after the name of William Ford) and it formally flowed in 1867. The excavation of Fordwah Canal brought socio-economic and environmental changes in the region. The other canals like Minchinwah (مینچن واہ), Muradwah (مراد واہ), Greywah (گرے واہ) were also excavated. The land that was barren and unproductive for several centuries, once again became green and fertile. It increased state revenue and augmented a tendency of farming and agriculture in the natives of the state.

Colonel Minchin felt the absence of printing press in Bahawalpur State. He therefore, in July 1867 installed a printing press which used to work as a branch of *Koh-e-Noor* Press Lahore at Bahawalpur. The superintendent of the press was Malik Phraya Laal an agent of that printing press in Bahawalpur. In a short period of two months, native personnel became expert in every field of printing and editing. Sooner Colonel Minchin separated it from supervision of Malik Phraya Laal.¹⁸ Malik Phraya Laal discharged his duties on September 20, 1867, and the printing press was

renamed as *Sadiq-ul-Anwar* Printing Press. The *Sadiq-ul-Anwar* (صادق الانوار) Printing Press stepped as a pioneer in the press history of Bahawalpur. It issued *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar* (صادق الاخبار) a weekly newspaper since 12 September, 1867. The newspaper contained all orders, regulations, promotions, transfers, and reports of new appointments of the state officers, reports of the political agent, announcements and other news. It is a most valuable record, book of reference, State Gazette and general intelligencer.¹⁹ Initially its 400 issue were printed on every Thursday and was distributed inside and outside the state. This news paper made the people aware of the contemporary world. Journalism stepped in on a limited scale after the installation of *Sadiq-ul-Anwar* Press and issuance of *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar*. *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar* also worked for the promotion of literacy and promotion of Urdu language and literature. He annually published his reports on the administration of Bahawalpur. In fact those reports were just progress reports of his time which contained information about the working of the administrators of various departments of the Bahawalpur State.²⁰ Nowadays these reports provide firsthand knowledge to the researchers, historians and scholars.

There was no regular postal service of the Bahawalpur State before 1866. Colonel Minchin believed in better means of communication, hence he introduced some postal reforms. During 1866 and 1870 correspondence and letters were delivered by horsemen from Bahawalpur to McLeodganj and to the borders of Sindh. He repaired roads to facilitate the horsemen carrying the correspondence.²¹ After 1870 the postal department of the Bahawalpur State was affiliated with Post Master General of Punjab, for the postal arrangements in the state and employment of a mail cart between Multan and Bahawalpur.²² By his efforts, the postal service became more swift and reliable, the department became more advance because of railways.

He took several steps for safety and facility of the citizens. In 1871 he got iron poles erected with lamps in major towns. The lamps were illuminated after the sun had set.²³ He appointed servants in the municipal committees for that purpose. He also got civil building constructed that depicted European architecture, for instance political agent's lodge, Public Works and Canal Office, treasury, Military Inspection Bungalow, Darbar Record Office, Central jail, Post Office and Municipal Hall were constructed.

Before the establishment of British Agency, Nawab of Bahawalpur was responsible for provision of justice. The Nawab used to appoint *Qazi* (قاضي)

to decide according to Islamic jurisprudence and Brahman to decide the cases under Hindu laws while the matters of rebellion and conspiracies were settled by the ruler of the state. The matters between Hindu and Muslims, sometimes, such as religious blasphemy were not tolerated by both communities. Colonel Minchin abandoned that old system by implementing the laws which had been practiced in British India.²⁴ He appointed judges to listen the cases of all sorts. Colonel Minchin imposed court fee in 1871.²⁵

Before 1866, the royal palace and their business were run by native officers appointed by the Nawab. The department which was related to the matters of palace was known as *Mudikhana* (مدریخانه) and run by an *Adviser* (مشیر). It was in miserable condition before the arrival of Colonel Minchin. The reports of corruption and dishonesty in *Mudikhana* were reported to Nawab on regular bases. Colonel Minchin, after paying attention to that office introduced several reforms and verified the issues relating to the palaces. He prepared very first budget for *Mudikhana* and fixed the salaries of the regular staff. He dismissed dishonest, corrupt and unnecessary staff.²⁶ Colonel Minchin's plan not only supported the state affairs but also reduced daily expenses of the palaces. A regular check and balance of *Mudikhana* and standard planning decreased the issues of corruption and dishonesty. It also supported state treasury by dismounting the burden of white elephants. He also started to get advice from Dowager Queen on the issues relating to palace.

Colonel Minchin, as an army officer felt necessity to bring changes in the old army traditions. He organized the state armed forces on modern style. The old uniforms and military traditions and many other things were given up. He westernized the entire structure of the state army. Captain Beckett was made in charge of Contingent and State troops.²⁷ Before 1866 there was no police department in the state. The *Kotwals* (کوتوال) were appointed in the major towns of the state like Khairpur, Bahawalpur and Khanpur. The *Kotwal* had authority of notable status. In 1867 Colonel Minchin organized Police Department in the State by decreasing number of soldiers in state army. He established police stations in Bahawalpur, Sadiqpur, Khairpur, Bahawalgarh, Ahmadpur East, Uch Shareef, Allahabad, Khanpur, Noushehra, Sheedani, Ahmadpur West and Kot Sabzal to maintain law and order. In some remote areas, police check posts were also erected²⁸. The head of police department was Major Stephen Beckett, The Assistant Political Agent and Superintendent of Bahawalpur²⁹.

During 1866 and 1870 there were several jails in the state, like jails at Noushehra, Khanpur, Minchinaabad and Bahawalpur. Beside these jails some forts in the desert were also used as prison. In 1870 Bahawalpur Jail was entitled as Central Jail and all other jails were subjected as Sub-jails. In Central Jail Bahawalpur, the juvenile, male and female prisoners were kept separately. It was arranged to keep mentally disturbed people in the jail. The portion, in which the psychologically distressed were kept, was known as Lunatic Asylum.³⁰ Mr. J. R. Deane was superintendent of jails and lunatic asylum and also he was civil assistant surgeon in Civil Hospital Bahawalpur.

Before 1866, the educational system in the state was based on *Madarassahs* (مدرسہ) (Theological and religious schools) and *Masjid* (مسجد) for Muslims and *Dharamshala* (دھرمشالہ) and *Pathshala* (پاٹشالہ) for the Hindu students. Those institutions provided religious education which was insufficient to fight modern sciences and contemporary requirements. Colonel Minchin opened 18 primary schools for provision of modern education. In 1867 he opened Church Mission School in Bahawalpur for middle standard education. It was observed that due to regular increment of the students in schools, the capacity and competency of the teachers needed improvement. Therefore in 1871 Normal School was opened for teacher's training.³¹ He did not ignore the education of young Nawab, as he was the real future of the state. He appointed Mr. Doran and H. H. Clarke as tutors³² of Nawab Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV, later on, he sent the Nawab to Atchison College Lahore for further education.³³

There was no hospital in the state before 1866. Therefore patient used to seek *Hakeem* (حکیم), *Tabeeb* (طبيب) and *Ayurveda* (آیورویک) experts for medical treatment. This facility was quite insufficient as well as injurious to health. Sometimes those practitioners failed to handle major diseases. Midwives (*Daya*) were hired for gynecological and delivery purposes. *Hakeems* and *Ayurveda* practitioners sometimes caused death. The issues related to health were serious in the state; therefore he founded Bahawalpur Civil Hospital in 1867 for provision of better health facilities. This was very first hospital of Bahawalpur in which trained staff was employed. There was in-door wards, operation theatre, out-door and a dispensary in Civil Hospital.³⁴ In 1868 a government dispensary was opened at Ahmadpur East and in 1869 dispensaries at Khanpur and Minchinabad were also established.³⁵ The appointment of qualified and regular staff was just like blessings. The general public became more sophisticated and aware of the modern health facilities. The hospital served as a center of treatment not

only for the local public but also the patients from other regions used to come here for treatment.

He was first and foremost person in the history of Bahawalpur who started exploration and excavation of archeological sites in the Bahawalpur State on scientific basis. He personally visited several archeological sites and started excavation there. He visited and explored an ancient city (*Rai Ka Tibba* رائے کا تپہ) near present day Qaimpur. He established his theory about that site by examining the items founded at that place. He discovered a ditch filled with ashes, human and animal's bones as identified by him. He reported that place might be some kind of crematorium.³⁶ In 1867 he visited ruined monastery of Sue Vihar (سوئی وہار) near Bahawalpur. While exploration and excavation, it was discovered by him that ruins were of a Buddhist monastery which was standing on a huge mound. He found an epigraph depicting Bactrian language. The epigraph after interpretation revealed that the monastery was a part of Buddhist Empire of Maharaja Kanishka. He got measurements of Stupa and other standings of Sue Vihar.³⁷

In 1870 he visited another Buddhist site Pattan Minara (پٹن منارہ) near Noushehra (present day Rahim Yar Khan). He started exploration in some trenches but found nothing significant rather he had to stop the work right after the death of some labors bitten by venomous flies.³⁸ By his efforts exploration and excavations started in the Hakra valley. Consequently the history of Bahawalpur got relations thousands years back. The later researches proved Hakra valley as a foundation stone of the Indus Valley Civilization. The theories and assumptions ascertained by him about Hakra valley and its sites in Cholistan are still considered of primary importance.

Colonel Minchin constructed *Purani Kothi* (پُرانی کوٹی) at Bahawalpur for residence of young nawab. It is a two storey building outside Multani Gate Bahawalpur. It was constructed as a royal residence in 1870. Its structure depicts local and it is entirely constructed by sun baked brick and mud-splash. The young nawab used to live there but sooner it was felt that the building was neither splendid nor convenient for the royal residence. In 1872, Colonel Minchin started the construction of a new palace for royal family. The palace was named as Noor Mahal. The plan for the palace was designed by Muhammad Husain an architect of chief engineer office Lahore, while construction was supervised by Executive Engineer of State, Mr. Heenan. The foundation stone of the palace was laid by young Sadiq Muhammad Khan IV.³⁹ The palace stands on a raised platform and depicts Italian architecture. It is still considered one of the most splendid buildings

of the country. In 1879 the coronation ceremony of the Nawab was performed by Sir Robert Edgerton Lieutenant Governor Punjab at Noor Mahal. He delivered his sermon in Urdu, which is considered the first Urdu sermon of a European officer of that rank.⁴⁰

He established Forest Department and appointed Mr. Calthrope as administrator.⁴¹ Mr. Calthrope worked for the extension and preservation of forests. He established *Zakheera* (wood-reserve) near Samma Satta, woods of that reserve was sold to railway. It increased state income as well as put good effect on the deserted environment of the area. In 1873-74 he founded Bahawalpur Municipal Committee. He elected European and natives officers as members of the committee. The committee had to deal the issues relating to sanitation and cleanliness, lightening and illumination and drainage. Initially the expenses of the committee were met by the state treasury; later on it prepared its own budget. It was declared a separate department under supervision of Major Stephen Beckett.⁴²

Syed Murad Shah Gardezi, the Chief Judge of Bahawalpur founded a city in Kardari Bahawalgarh. The city was named Minchinabad after Colonel Minchin in 1867.⁴³ Before the city was founded, Bahawalgarh was an administrative division in eastern areas of the state. The *Kardari* of Bahawalgarh was closed down after the completion of Minchinabad city. The new city was declared as headquarter of *Nizamat* and *Tehsil* in 1870 on the instigation of Syed Murad Shah Gardezi. The city was constructed on European style with two bazaars intersecting each other on a central point. A sophisticated planning was done to urbanize the town. The streets and roads were constructed on a grid style. There were four gates for the entrance in the city. Each gate was passage to a bazaar.⁴⁴ In 1868 another city Macleodganj was founded by Colonel Minchin on the same plan.

Conclusion

The overall time of colonel Minchin was marvelous. He brought revolutionary changes in every department. By his efforts the Bahawalpur State stepped into a new era of development and prosperity. He took every possible step for the betterment of the region. He made several advancements in education and health sectors. The life style of the general public was completely changed due to provision of educational facilities. An excellent level of discipline was seen in every department of the state after the appointment of European officers. After the establishment of British Agency the chances of rebellion were remote. He controlled law and order situations throughout the state. He annually publicized a report

on his administration that was in fact his progress report. His successors like Colonel Gray and others also pursued his policies with minor changes. He was a good administrator, diplomat, archeologist, explorer, historian and a man of eminence personage. The people of Bahawalpur respected him a lot and used to remember him as “Minchin Sahib” منچن صاحب.

In Bahawalpur State, Minchinabad (منچن آباد) Minchin Band, (منچن بند) Minchin Bazaar, (منچن بازار) Minchinwah, (منچن واہ) and Minchin Bagh (منچن باغ) are his commemorative signs.

ENDNOTES

1. Daudpotra/ Daadpotra/Daadpota is a clan of the Abbasside family that ruled Sindh and the Bahawalpur State. The ruler of the state divided the country as small feuds to their tribesmen. Every Daudpotra enjoyed full authority over his territory. They had right to have forces and to hold forts. The Daudpotra feudal were strong enough to be opposed. Almost every ruler of the Bahawalpur State had to face their opposition.
2. Jan Muhammad Pirjani, *Tazkara Nawaban-e-Bahawalpur wa Khulafaye Abbasiya* تذکرہ نوابان بہاول پور و خلفائے عباسیہ *unpublished manuscript (Bindor Abbasiyan: 1938)* 230.
3. Syed Hassan Bakhsh Gardezi, *Awraq-e-Preshan Dar Halaat Khan Bahadur Syed Hassan Bakhsh Gardezi Rais-e-Shahr-e-Multan* اوراق پریشان در حالات خان بہادر سید حسن بخش گردیزی رئیس شہر *(Lahore: Khadimul Taleem Steam Press, 1907)* 16.
4. (<http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Minchin-304>, accessed on 7th March 2016)
5. Muhammad Azizur Rehman Aziz, *Subh-e-Sadiq* صبح صادق (Bahawalpur: Urdu Academy, 1988) 141.
6. (<http://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Minchin-304>, accessed on 7th March 2016)
7. Chalres Cherry Minchin, *Report on the Administration of the Bahawalpur State for the year 1872-73* (Lahore: W.E. Ball, 1873) 32.
8. Ibid, 33.
9. Muhammad Tahir, *Riyasat Bahawalpur Ka Nazm-e-Mumlikat (1947-1866)* ریاست بہاول پور کا نظم مملکت (Multan: Bazm-e-Saqafat, 2010) 278.
10. Minchin, 01.
11. Aziz, 141.
12. Malik Muhammad Din, *Gazetteer of the Bahawalpur State 1904 with Map* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2001) 297.
13. The government imposes a tax on the farmers on facility of canal water irrigation. The tax is known as *Abiyana*. The type of tax on crop field is called *Maliya*.
14. Muhammad Din, 308.
15. H. T. Lambrick, *Sind: A general Introduction Vol I* (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1975) 231.
16. Minchin, 15.
17. Tahir, 456.
18. Safiya Aziz, *Sadiq-ul-Akhbar: Bahawalpur Ka Pehla Akhbar* صادق الاخبار: بہاول پور کا پہلا اخبار *Quarterly Az-Zubair Sao Saala Sahafat Number* (Bahawalpur: Urdu Academy Bahawalpur, 1984) 45.
19. Minchin, 29.
20. Tahir, 962.
21. Aziz, 142.
22. Minchin, 32.
23. Tahir 932.
24. Muhammad Din, 285.

25. Tahir, 780.
26. Ibid, 187.
27. Minchin, 12.
28. Muhammad Din, 338.
29. Minchin, XI.
30. Ibid, 11.
31. Muhammad Din, 345.
32. Minchin, 3.
33. Ambreen Javed, *Politics of Bahawalpur: From State to Region (1947-2000)* (Lahore: Classic, 2004) 77.
34. Muhammad Din, 348.
35. Ibid.
36. Saddique Tahir, *Wadi-e-Hakra Aur uske Asaar* (Bahawalpur: Urdu Academy, 1982) 190-191.
37. Nurul Zaman Ahmad Auj, *Ancient Bahawalpur* (Multan: Caravan, 1987) 90.
38. Saddique Tahir, 97.
39. Shuja't Zamir Dar, *Sights in the Sands of Cholistan: Bahawalpur's History and Architecture* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007) 62.
40. Masood Hassan Shihab, *Bahawalpur Ki Siyasi Tareekh* (Bahawalpur: Maktaba Ilham, 1977) 31.
41. Muhammad Din, 263.
42. Ibid, 329.
43. Gardezi, 17.
44. Muhammad Din, 374.

Abstract

This article shares the contributions of historic figure Colonel Minchin for the princely state of Bahawalpur emerged in the declining years of the Mughal Empire. He was deputed as assistant in 1866 to look after the affairs of the Bahawalpur state after the demise of Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan IV. Colonel Minchin appointed European officers in various departments. He in fact brought revolutionary changes in Bahawalpur. Later on his juniors and successors followed his line and adopted his style of administration. The Bahawalpur state had strong ties with British East India Company since 1833. The rulers of the state tried best to keep the British pleased for the safety of their country. The Bahawalpur army fought beside the British in the Afghan war, Multan war and also helped them during war of independence 1857. The British on the other hand paid great attention to their loyal ally and did not allow the enemies to enter the boundaries of Bahawalpur.

Keyword: Colonel Minchin, princely state of Bahawalpur, East India Company