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### Administrative Reforms of Sher Shah Suri

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**Abstract:** This report examines the administrative reforms introduced by Sher Shah Suri, one of the most capable rulers of medieval India, who ruled from 1540 to 1545. Although his reign was short, his policies laid a strong foundation for an efficient and organized system of governance. The study highlights his major reforms in central administration, revenue system, military organization, judicial structure, currency, and communication network. Sher Shah Suri established a highly centralized administrative system. He divided his empire into provinces called sarkars, which were further divided into parganas and villages for better management and supervision. Efficient officers were appointed at each level to ensure accountability and reduce corruption. His land revenue reforms were particularly significant. He introduced systematic land measurement and classification based on fertility. Revenue was fixed at a reasonable rate, generally one-third of the produce, and peasants were given written agreements to prevent exploitation. In the military sphere, Sher Shah introduced branding of horses and maintained descriptive records of soldiers to eliminate fraud. He also strengthened law and order by establishing an effective police system and ensuring strict justice. His judicial system treated all subjects equally, regardless of religion or social status. Furthermore, Sher Shah improved trade and communication by constructing roads, most notably the Grand Trunk Road, connecting major regions of his empire. He built inns, wells, and planted trees along highways to facilitate travel and commerce. His introduction of a uniform silver coin, the Rupiya, stabilized the economy and promoted trade. Overall, Sher Shah Suri's administrative reforms demonstrated foresight, practicality, and fairness. His innovations greatly influenced later Mughal administration, especially under Akbar, and left a lasting impact on Indian governance.

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#### Introduction

Sher Shah Suri was one of the most remarkable rulers in medieval Indian history. Though his reign lasted only from 1540 to 1545, his administrative reforms left a deep and lasting impact on the Indian subcontinent. He established the Sur Empire after defeating the Mughal emperor Humayun and proved himself not only as a powerful military leader but also as an efficient administrator. His policies were practical, organized, and focused on the welfare of the people.



Many of his reforms were later adopted and refined by the Mughal emperor Akbar, which shows how advanced and effective his system was for that time.

Sher Shah believed that a strong administration was the foundation of a stable kingdom. He understood that the prosperity of the state depended on proper revenue collection, justice, law and order, and good communication. Instead of depending only on nobles and local chiefs, he created a centralized system where the emperor had direct control over different departments. His governance was based on discipline, fairness, and accountability. He appointed capable officers and ensured that corruption was minimized through regular inspections and strict punishments.

One of the most important features of his administration was land revenue reform. He introduced a systematic method of measuring land and fixing revenue rates according to productivity. This reduced exploitation of farmers and increased state income. He also introduced a new currency system with standard coins, which improved trade and economic stability. His efforts in building roads, especially the famous Grand Trunk Road, improved communication and trade across the empire. He also set up postal services and inns (sarais) along the roads for travellers and officials.

In addition, Sher Shah maintained a strong military system and ensured law and order throughout his empire. He emphasized justice and personally

### **1. Central Administration**

Sher Shah Suri established a strong central administration to maintain control over his vast empire. The emperor was the supreme authority, but he was assisted by ministers who handled different departments. Important officials included the Wazir (finance minister), the Ariz-i-Mamalik (military head), and the Diwan (revenue officer). Each officer had clearly defined duties. Sher Shah personally supervised their work and ensured that no official misused power. Regular audits and strict punishments prevented corruption. This organized system helped in smooth governance and quick decision-making.

### **2. Provincial Administration**

For better management, the empire was divided into provinces called "Sarkars," which were further divided into smaller units known as "Parganas." Each Sarkar was managed by officials responsible for revenue, law, and military duties. In each Pargana, there were officers like the Shiqdar (law and order), Amin (revenue collection), and Qanungo (record keeper). This division made administration easier and more efficient. Local officers were accountable to the central authority, ensuring uniform governance throughout the empire.

### **3. Land Revenue System**

One of Sher Shah's most significant reforms were in land revenue. He understood that agriculture was the backbone of the economy. He ordered the measurement of land using a standardized method and fixed revenue rates based on the type and fertility of the soil. The average produce of land was calculated, and one-third of it was taken as tax. Farmers were given written agreements called "Patta," which mentioned the land area and tax amount. In



return, they signed a document called “Qabuliat,” agreeing to pay the revenue. This transparent system protected farmers from exploitation and increased government income.

#### **4. Currency and Economic Reforms**

Sher Shah introduced a uniform currency system to strengthen trade and commerce. He issued silver coins called “Rupiya,” which later became the basis of the modern Indian rupee. He also issued copper and gold coins. The standardized currency increased trust among traders and reduced confusion in transactions. Markets were supervised, and fair prices were maintained. These economic reforms encouraged trade and brought financial stability to the empire.

#### **5. Military Reforms**

Sher Shah maintained a strong and disciplined army. He introduced the practice of branding horses (Dagh system) and maintaining descriptive records of soldiers (Chehra system). This prevented corruption and ensured that soldiers were genuine. The army was directly paid by the state, reducing dependence on feudal lords. Forts were built and strengthened for defense. His military organization ensured security and helped him maintain control over his empire.

#### **6. Judicial System and Law Enforcement**

Sher Shah was known for his sense of justice. He established courts at different levels to ensure quick and fair decisions. Both Hindus and Muslims were treated equally under the law. Strict punishments were given to criminals, which reduced theft and robbery. Highways were made safe for travellers. His efficient policing system created a sense of security among the people.

#### **7. Public Works and Communication**

Sher Shah gave special importance to public welfare. He constructed the famous Grand Trunk Road connecting Bengal to Punjab, which improved trade and communication. Trees were planted along the roads, and wells were dug for travelers. He built sarais at regular intervals, providing shelter and food. A postal system was also established, using horses for fast communication. These developments strengthened administration and promoted economic growth.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the administrative reforms of Sher Shah Suri were comprehensive and practical. His efficient land revenue system, strong military organization, fair justice system, and development of infrastructure made his rule remarkable. Although his reign was short, his reforms influenced later rulers and left a lasting legacy in Indian history.

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