



LAND REFORMS IN INDIA AND STUDY OF ZAMINDARI, RYOTWARI AND MAHALWARI SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The British East India Company developed and experimented with different land revenue settlements in colonized India as a colonial exploitation tool. Scholars have long debated this question in the context of exploitation vs. progressive purpose in British India. This article has made an effort to compare and contrast the three mainland revenue settlements (Zamindari, Ryotwari, and Mahalwari). In this article, I have also attempted to demonstrate the cause-effect connection between various tax assessments, which enabled Englishmen to give enormous economic support for the Imperial Home Country, and how it aided in changing Indian traditional culture and economic setup.

Keywords: *Diwani (revenue collection right), Mahal (estate), Patta (lease), Raiyat (peasant), Zamindar (landlord)*

INTRODUCTION

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 60% of the nation's workforce is employed in today's agriculture sector. India's manufacturing sector has long been a source of strength and income for the country. To earn as much money as possible as soon as the East India Company came into the country, they turned to agriculture to collect as much revenue as feasible. Their goal was to collect as much tax from the property as possible each year to earn the maximum money.

An agreement between the East India Company and Bengali landowners determined the revenue produced from land to achieve a permanent settlement. Initially adopted in Bengal and Bihar under Lord Cornwallis in 1793, the arrangement was subsequently expanded to Northern Madras and Varanasi under a succession of governors. Zamindars would collect the tax, which would subsequently be paid to the state. Private possession inland was a goal for Lord Cornwallis.

It used to be that the zamindars collected income under the supervision of the Mughal Diwans. Because of an ineffective revenue collection system, especially after the Bengal famine of 1770,



zamindars controlled up to 400 villages and collected taxes from the locals. However, when the business took over the Diwani, they could no longer manage zamindars [1].

1. In 1790, the court of directors granted a ten-year settlement, which was rendered permanent in 1793. (Permanent settlement Act 1793)
2. Zamindars lost their power to manage their armies and administer justice.

For example, since the revenue rate would never be raised and would be set in perpetuity, the British government would have a guaranteed quantity of money, demonstrating that the Permanent Settlement was beneficial for the British people. Zamindars were no longer village managers but rather [2] hereditary landowners who were expected to invest in their fields to enhance productivity and retain earnings. Failure to pay the levy resulted in the peasant being replaced by another peasant. The zamindars were maintained in a lucrative position with the expectation that they would grow more loyal to the British. Unlike millions of peasants, it was easier for the British to collect income from a few zamindars.

For the sake of gaining the allegiance and support of zamindars, the peasants were not granted any rights to the estates on which they had previously collected income. Sunset Law required the corporation to pay the income by the evening of a pre-determined day, or the property would be seized. The rule stated that the business could not claim more than the sum that had already been determined...

Zamindari System (Permanent Land Revenue Settlement)

1. It all started in 1793 when Cornwallis passed the Permanent Settlement Act, which created the Zamindari System.
2. It was initially introduced in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Varanasi, all in India.
3. Also known as the Permanent Settlement System (PSS).
4. In addition, zamindars were recognized as landowners. To collect rent from peasants, zamindars were given power.
5. As landowners, the zamindars were replaced by renters.
6. Despite the poor return, the tax had to be paid.
7. In order to avoid penalties, the tax had to be paid in cash. Until this option is implemented, the tax may be paid in kind.
8. Eighth, the entire amount of money obtained would be divided into eleven equal portions. In comparison, the East India Business owns ten-tenths of the company, whereas Zamindars control one-tenth of it.



Ryotwari System

1. Thomas Munro developed the Ryotwari System in 1820.
2. In South India, this was the mainland revenue system.
3. Madras, Bombay, and portions of the Assam and Coorg provinces of British India are significant regions of introduction.
4. In the Ryotwari System, the peasants were granted ownership rights. Directly from the peasants, the British government collected taxes.
5. The Ryotwari System's income rates were 50% on dry land and 60% on irrigated land.
6. Even though the farmers owned the property, they were poor due to high taxes. Tax rates were also often raised.

Mahalwari System

1. Holt Mackenzie established the Mahalwari method in 1822. Later, under the reign of William Bentick, the system was modified (1833).
2. In North-West India, this was the mainland revenue system.
3. It was introduced in British India's Central Province, North-West Frontier, Agra, Punjab, Gangetic Valley, and other areas.
4. The land was split into Mahals under this method. Each Mahal is made up of one or more villages.
5. For tax purposes, the whole hamlet (Mahal) was treated as one unit.
6. Tax collection was delegated to the local headman or village committee.
7. The peasants were given ownership rights.
8. The tax rate was also excessively high in this scheme.
9. The Mahalwari system included several features from both the Zamindari and Ryotwari systems.

MAGNITUDE OF ASSESSMENTS

This tax was put in stone in Zamindari villages. Like in northern India, the land tax in Ryotwari was set, although subject to periodic review. First-round settlements were set taxes excessively high, leading to peasant discontent and an agricultural slump. In regional histories of Bombay-Deccan and Madras, the notion of an agricultural slump in the second quarter of the nineteenth century has been put forward. [3] Decreased tax burden as a result of the second round of settlement in 1840.

There was a strange combination of old traditions and new ideas in the institutional changes. Some several elements and customs were removed. Local authorities punished tax collectors and



peasants who did not pay their taxes—taking away this privilege allowed for land to be transferred more quickly and efficiently if a bank failed. For example, in Madras and Bombay, after the permanent settlement, the new East India Company system mandated a compulsory public auction of ownership rights when tax failure occurred. After 1816, the revenue officers merged tax collection and policing responsibilities in the countryside into one job. It was inevitable that the collectors' subordinates would resort to force, bribery, and corruption, as detailed in the Madras Torture Commission Report of 1855. [4]

In the early years of the British administration, the inhabitants of Bengal and northern India were subjected to hefty land assessments. There is a permanent assessment in Bengal; it has not increased with the expansion of agriculture; it currently bears a ratio of approximately 35 percent on the rent. Even though the evaluation was not made permanent in northern India, it was lowered in 1885 to little more than 50%, including all "cesses." However, additional "cesses" were added; calculations were performed, not on the existing rental, but the future rental, until the tax reached close to 60%. An auction of Zamindari land in greater Bengal sparked by increased tax collection, agricultural crises, and the "proverbial ineptitude" of Zamindars in administering their estates occurred in the first fifteen years of the permanent settlement. [18] As a result, they were not able to satisfy the increasing demand by upgrading their farming methods. That is when things started to go sideways for distressed sales, as rental values surpassed the revenue burden set in money terms. There was a tendency for big estates to be divided into smaller portions during the auction auctions. These lots were brought in by adventurers and outsiders who were as greedy towards the peasants as some of the Zamindars were against the Zamindars. The peasants mockingly referred to these newcomers as "lotdas," or lot owners. When the Zamindari properties were sold often, poverty was a significant problem. Approximately 41 percent of Bengal and Bihar's income was sold at auction between 1794 and 1807; in Orissa, from 1804 and 1818, about 51 percent of the original Zamindars were destroyed. [5]

For those living in Madras and Bombay, the situation is much direr. There, the landowners usually pay the land tax since there are no intervening landlords in most areas of those provinces. In 1864, the British government announced its plan to collect approximately half of the economic rent as a land tax. When it comes to taxing lands in Britain, however, the amount that the government collects may often be as much as the whole economic rent, leaving farmers with nothing to work with other than the salaries of their labor and the profits of their agricultural stock. Farmers do not know why the land tax is raised every thirty years, but they have to submit to each new assessment or lose their ancestral lands. It paralyzes agriculture, impedes savings, and puts the tiller of the soil in a condition of poverty and indebtedness because of this uncertainty. [6]

On its return from inactivity, the East India Company set a rent for Zamindars to charge its tenants. There were still bitter accusations of Zamindari exploiting farmers. Many tenants' rights



were recognized and strengthened by a succession of tenancy laws (1859-1928). "Sub-infeudation" is a term coined by subsequent authors. [7] Mr. Dutt requested as much protection as possible against regular reassessments and excessive improvements for farmers all across India. This is the same policy of the Indian government. Several changes were made to the landlord-tenant relationship under Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty and the Viceroyalties that followed, including Several tenancy laws were passed in Bengal, the North-Western and Oudh provinces, as well as in Punjab and the Central Provinces, to strengthen the actual farmers' position and ensure that they get the protection that Mr. Dutt wants to see in place. [8]

On a gradual basis in all British territories, Ryotwari or Mahalwari systems were established to register land, land rights, rents and taxes. For the protection of tenants' rights and justice requirements, not tax assessments. Land income in these provinces was typically more than it should have been to meet East India Company tax demands. However, it was enforced with unbending vigor, just as it had been in the countries of permanent settlement. Over time, many farmers were forced to sell their property because of overwhelming debt, or their land was confiscated and auctioned because of tax default. [9]

However, in reality, the British land revenue policies may have been most disruptive, not because of their adjudication of property ownership but because of their basic cash demands. Over-estimation was common in many early British colonies, including the "permanent settlement" of Bengal in 1793 and the Pringles of Bombay in the 1820s and 1830s. Affluent investors tended to rely on the most optimistic inherited projections of agriculture's ability to pay, even though these promises were exorbitant in those dismal times. A last note on political implications: Stokes' recent work has challenged the idea that the 1857-58 Mutiny firestorm was just an outpouring by the victims of British agricultural policies, especially in Mahalwari areas. There were peasant uprisings in the Zamindari and Ryotwari districts throughout the nineteenth century, and several famines took place in these settlement areas. [10]

Finally, I would want to summarise the impact of different land settlements in a single sentence. Through land revenue accumulation, the "Drain of Wealth" process, which began with the arrival of British colonial authority in India, was accelerated. Trade was an essential means of transferring money from India to England, but the land tax was the primary source of wealth transfer. Since of this, Britain's rulers in India were financially stable because they maintained a continuous relationship with the local population. This led them to focus on economic changes in India, particularly land reforms. Government authorities launched several land settlements and the English population at home, updated and equipped with statistical techniques under contemporary liberal and economic ideas. According to local conditions and imperial needs, the British East India Company was the first to establish Permanent, Ryotwari, and Mahalwari, three mainland settlements in India. This was the contemporary method to take maximum income from the peasants and an absolute strategy to pillage Indian resources continuously. During 1858-59, the land tax accounted for 50.3 percent of the British government's overall income. [25]



Although the British land reform initiatives no doubt reached their pinnacle, they brought about many changes in agricultural techniques and patterns and revolutions in many rural and urban regions. The process of severing the social stratification of Indian society based on occupational status paved the way for future secondary contradictions between the rich and poor in Indian political, economic and social history, as well as impoverishing a significant portion of the Indian mass (agricultural population), leading to human inequalities.

TERRITORIAL ACQUISITION UNDER THREE SETTLEMENTS

They were settled permanently in the Banares area of Uttar Pradesh (Bengal), Bihar, Orissa and the Bihar-Bihar border region (Bihar). North-Western Provinces and Northern Carnatic Provinces were added to the settlement in 1800. (eastern U.P.). Approximately 19 percent of British India's entire land area was occupied by Uttar Pradesh, the Central Provinces, Punjab (with changes), and most of the central providences have Third-order tenure. In contrast, villages in Oudh have taluqdar or middlemen with whom the government has direct contact. This system covered the British-held area to the tune of nearly 30%. Ryotwari villages Ideas from this method settled large areas of Bombay, Madras, and Sindh Province are utilized in Assam and Burma. In Bengal and the Orissa coast strip, a few hilly regions have been briefly settled. This system covered approximately 51% of British Indian land. [11] One-fifth of British India's entire area has been permanently inhabited, including roughly 5/6 of Bengal and Bihar, 1/8 of Assam, 1/10 of U.P., and 14 of Madras, the capital of British India. As a result, the top two property categories account for 53 percent of total land revenue, whereas Ryotwari tracts account for 47 percent

For better land assessment administration, all of these significant areas were divided into several parts. In order to supervise the Land Revenue System, the three settlements were separated and put under the control of different British officials and local landowners. For example, zamindars controlled the land assessment process and local administration in Bengal, with twelve major and many lesser Zamindars. Nellore, Trichinopoly, Coimbatore, Tanjore, Arcot, and so forth were all parts of the Madras dominion. There were numerous divisions in the Mahalwari settlement region like Meerut, Agra, Rohilkhand, Allahabad, Bundelkhand, Varanasi Gorakhpur, Lucknow Faizabad, Kumaun and many more in the Central Province. [12]

There are many reasons why the landlord group is essential inland settlements: In the Permanent Settlement, Zamindars were recognized as landowners with rights of inheritance, sale, and mortgage, but they were vulnerable to losing their property if revenue was not paid by a specific date. (b) As a result of the settlement, the state's claim was limited in perpetuity to a specific amount of income and certain duties or services. To ensure that tenants' rights were protected, the Zamindar was obliged to issue pattas, which were documents that listed the acreage and rent of each holding. Zamindars were required to follow government rules to preserve tenants' rights and privileges and prevent them from being subjected to excessive or harsh treatment. There



were no longer any abwabs or fees that Zamindars added to the rent. The government took transport taxes and road and ferry tolls, but the market tools and revenues from fisheries, woods, and squatter lands were given to the Zamindars entirely. Bengal's talukdars were raised to Zamindar rank and granted the power to collect fixed income directly from the government. Many subordinate tribal leaders in Tamil Nadu and Orissa were deprived of their authority and reduced to the position of Zamindars, subject to the payment of a set levy. As a result of the Zamindari system, private property in land was created. [13]

To settle revenue, the whole inhabitants of Mahalwari (Uttar Pradesh) agreed to share in the village's income for a certain period (30 years in Uttar Pradesh and 20 years in Punjab and Chhattisgarh). Lambardar[29], a peasants' leader, makes a deal with the government to pay for the tax on their behalf. An official from the government oversees the village council's estimate of income. Village maps, as well as documents of ownership, are meticulously preserved and kept current. A comprehensive evaluation of land value, crop prices, and actual output is used for the government demand. For revenue in the Mahalwari settlement, the government only engages with the intermediaries, whether individuals or groups. Most of the land is farmed by intermediaries, with the remaining half being farmed by subordinate tenants. Government requirements had been reduced to 50% or less of net assets, except Bombay, where there was no limit. Net assets are calculated based on economic rent paid by the actual cultivators to superior owners when there is subletting. That is to say, to calculate the net assets, you remove the expected cost of production from its anticipated price, plus a little more for his luxuries. The government negotiated the revenue of a group of villages in the province of Oudh with a Talukdar or chief. These differences set the Talukdars apart from their counterpart, the Bengal Zamindars: (1) The settlement with the Talukdars is only temporary, and they do not have complete authority over their estates, unlike their counterparts in Bengal. [14]

There are no middlemen between the government and the Ryotwari settlement's farmers. In each hamlet, every cultivator's holding or piece of land has been recognized and numbered. They carefully gather and maintain village maps with exact boundary lines and inhabitant information. They also assess a tax on each resident's income. This means that even in the Ryotwari areas, there was much subletting. However, the procedure was quite similar to that of the Mahalwari Settlement. Concerning permanent settlement, cultivators' rights, which the government and Zamindars had agreed upon in 1793, had been neglected for a long time and are now guaranteed by law. Bengal's occupation tenants and Bihar's village cultivators are in the same position as European peasant owners and are receptive to the enchantment of ownership because of that. This means they get the full advantages of their labor and wealth in addition to the undeserved gain. Consequently, they want agriculture to flourish on their property. Because of corruption or a weak police force, the Zamindars continue to charge illegal cesses, not the Permanent Settlement. A wide range of obstacles prevented them from succeeding despite the settlement's pro-Zamindar sentiment. The idea of individual land ownership was a misnomer since the



imperial authority owned the land entirely. [15] Defensiveness by magistrates is also helping to curb unlawful extortion. Because the owner of a bare root cannot invest in improvements, the industry is deterred from investing in it. As a permanent owner of the property, Zamindars have a potential advantage in agricultural growth because they can recover their costs. Due to the size of the Zamindari estate, a Zamindar can enjoy the advantages of large-scale production, which is impossible on the small plots in Mahalwari and Ryotwari

As a result of the permanent settlement's creation of a wealthy and affluent class, large industries in eastern India may be made possible by the financial banking of Zamindars, who act as a middleman between the state and the farmer, who have identified themselves with British rule, and who, in the past, has always lent a hand to good administration.

As a landowner, the state enjoys all the advantages of monopoly in Mahalwari and Ryotwari settlements. It is based on Ricardo[16] idea's that tenants have to choose between competing landlords, but in this case, there is only one landlord, the government. Because the company had a monopoly, the rent should be reflected in the price of agricultural products. A business person may be prepared to engage in large-scale agriculture, but the government will only release land in tiny sections, averaging 5 acres in size, because of this policy. Raiyat's capacity to raise revenue at each periodic settlement discourages industry and land investments. Due to his lack of property rights, the Raiyat has little motivation to become a successful farmer. Capital cannot be amassed via agriculture since Raiyats are only accountable for the bare requirements, and the surplus production of the land is "washed into state coffers." If the government does not quickly declare a remission of revenue, the Raiyats are likely to be destroyed by the strict enforcement of the state dues during the years of famine.

To begin, let us examine what all kinds of modern revenue-settlement agreements have in common.

Before any construction can begin, the land must be thoroughly surveyed, including the preliminary determination of the necessary boundary lines. Taxpayers and their holdings must be registered in each municipality, along with a complete inventory of every piece of land. It is also necessary to determine how much the estate or holding is owed by valuing the property, setting revenue rates, summing and adjusting those figures.

First, there was no definition of boundaries in the permanent settlement. These people are regarded as first-class citizens in Bengal and Madras. The second-class citizens are the Oudh Talukdars. The settlement systems in Agra, Punjab and the Central Provinces are all deemed transitory, with demarcation, survey and rights record carried out. Intermediaries are frequently mentioned in literature when it comes to land settlement. Permanent and Mahalwari settlements have an intermediary between the actual farmer and the government, and this middleman is more or less the owner and administers the settlement. Under the Ryotwari system, when a person's income was dependent on his or her profession, this kind of pension was very uncommon. For Munro, this is a new direction — using the Ryotwari method without an intermediary in the



process. There is a legal claim of ownership for the landowners of Zamindari, but there is also a set duty. As a result, he is legally obliged to retain the land and pay taxes on it for as long as the settlement lasts; he is not free to leave the estate of his own choice. He and the government have an agreement. No lease and no contract with the owner bind the renter under the Ryotwari system. While his income rate assessment cannot be raised during settlement, his holdings may be surrendered after any year or before the next cultivating season begins, allowing him to be free of responsibility at any time he chooses. [17]

There was a limited period in which the real estate was assessed for permanent settlement. However, even though there was a "sub-settlement," it was set at a more significant sum to ensure the landlord's profit. In the case of talukdari or multiple tenancies, communities owned the settlement directly. The overlord did not collect this since it was paid via the treasure. Mahalwari was settled with a jointly and severally responsible unit. Each section or village was assigned a respectable sharer responsible for the primary liability and securing payments for the settlement. The section on village tenures will have clarified the form of ownership, so it only needs to be briefly stated that the entire body was settled with a jointly and severally responsible unit. "Lambardar" was used to describe this kind of individual. Co-sharers divide the revenue according to the idea of sharing and the estate's constitution, with each co-sharer receiving a certain percentage of it. There is a technique called the beach that is used for this. In contrast to permanent settlement assessments, Mahal settlement assessments are more or less directly based on the actual rental value of the lands in the village.

There is a detailed survey and a method for dealing with different holdings in Munros' Ryotwari community. There is also a tariff on the land instead of bargaining for the person. There is no need to go beyond valuing and evaluating a field when dealing with the actual tenant since the Ryotwari technique does not claim to define rights in the same way as the Mahalwari system. When it came to land classification and rent assessment, the Ryotwari region did it right like other village settlement areas. According to the theory, the assessment should be based on a maximum of 50% of net output. Firstly, the gross product is calculated and assessed at the average price, following which the cultivation expenditures are deducted, and half of what is left is collected as revenue." In contrast to Madras, the settlement is governed by a comprehensive tax system (the Bombay Act V of 1879). [18]

This resulted in different ways of collecting land tax in the three separate towns that existed. On certain days, a collector in a permanent settlement area will collect the Zamindar's pay. It was Zamindar's responsibility to pay the agreed-upon amount on time or face the immediate sale of the estate, according to the contract. Because they agreed to accept a fixed amount of money in exchange for patent rights, the middle tier tax collectors in Eastern India became the most potent tax collectors in the region. [19] As a result of Act II of 1864 in Madras, the recovery must be based on terms of the title deed rather than legislation. In provinces where village-estate settlements prevail, there is a separate procedure for collecting arrears of land revenue and other



public dues that are legally payable as if they were arrears of land revenue. Briefly, instead of being the beginning and regular procedure, the sale is only accepted as the final report, according to the report. Multiple stages were taken, beginning with a simple request notice, and the estate was only sold if they failed to achieve their goals. Default happens when certain payments are not made on time [20].

Mahalwari's village headman is personally liable for land revenue arrears as a defaulter (Patti). The Tahsildar, a government officer, supervised chiefs. In Ryotwari provinces, the new year is celebrated with a festival.

For land tax arrears in Mahalwari, the village's headman is primarily and personally liable as a defaulter (Patti). A government official called the Tahsildar ruled over these chiefs. As part of Ryotwari provinces' annual collection process, village authorities and the assistant collector prepare village-by-village accounts of the land owned and the precise amount owed. If the Rayiyats had relinquished a portion of his property or taken up more land, this was necessary. The provinces of Ryotwari also required the entry of certain remissions for damaged crops and specific water rate modifications, known as Jamabandi. Madras law provides for the attachment and sale of moveable and immovable property, as well as the imprisonment of the defaulter. Property is not auctioned without first sending a letter of demand to see if a payment arrangement can be worked out. It is also not necessary to sell the whole land, although it might be handled. Under what conditions may a person be detained?[21]

CONCLUSION

Within three to four decades after their invasion, the British changed the agricultural structure of India by establishing new land tenure systems and tax administration policies to maximize their revenues from a land without regard for the interests of Indian farmers. Warren Hastings established the Izaredari system in 1773, wherein the highest bidder was granted a 5-year land tenure. In 1777, however, this method was abandoned due to its poor effectiveness. Lord Cornwallis was urged by the Court of Directors to negotiate a long-term settlement with Zamindars after all of these measures had met with little success. Therefore, he established permanent settlements in Bengal, Bihar and Banaras, and divided the Northern Western Provinces and northern Karnataka into two separate regions. The business also developed the Ryotwari and Mahalwari systems for collecting land tax.

The British altered the traditional method of tax collection via these land revenue agreements. Now, the land is the only thing that may be sold. As a result of the new arrangements, land ownership has become inequitable, and rural poverty has risen. As a result, they could increase agricultural output in India by tying it to the global marketplace. Many cash crops became popular, increasing farmers' revenue. British planters and Indian agents, on the other hand, gained the most from it.



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