

Rural life and Society

- In the olden days, land was held for life. Farmers cultivated a piece of land for generations. Nobody could evict them as long as they paid a part of their produce as tax.
- During the rule of Shiv Shah Suri was measured and pattas were given for the first time. Revenue was charged depending on the fertility of the soil.

The Land Revenue Policy Under British

- The British East India Company started to take land revenue and they demanded a fixed amount in cash. To pay the amount farmers had to cultivate cash crops like cotton, poppy, Indigo which brought in more money than food crops like wheat and rice. Now the Indian villages were no longer self-sufficient.

In an effort to streamline the process the British started three forms of revenue collection in India.

- Permanent Settlement of Bengal.
- Ryotwari System.
- Mahalwari System.

The new revenue collectors were Zamindars.

The Permanent Settlement of Bengal

- In 1793 Lord Cornwallis introduced the permanent settlement of Bengal.
- The Zamindars were required to pay a fixed amount in cash on a fixed date as land revenue to the treasury, irrespective of what they could collect.
- Many zamindars benefitted more than either the company or the peasants.

The Provinces

Permanent settlement was introduced in Bengal, Bihar, Odisha and coastal Andhra Pradesh. It was abolished in 1955.

Advantages for the British

- Zamindars turned out to be firm supporters of the British.
- By fixing the land revenue the British government ensured that it received the same fixed amount on a fixed date.
- It was easier to deal with few zamindars than with hundreds of farmers.

Disadvantages for the farmers

- The zamindars ill treated the farmers to extract the revenue.
- Small farmers who either sell or mortgage their lands by the time to pay the revenue became landless labourers.
- Many landowners were evicted from their land by the British because they did not have patta to prove their ownership.
- To meet the increasing expenses the government had to increase the tax in other provinces.

Ryotwari System

- It was introduced in the Madras and Bombay Presidencies between 1792 and 1827.
- According to this settlement was made system the middlemen or the zamindars were removed and settlement was made directly between the company and the cultivator (ryot). They had to pay the government about half the value of the crop. The revenue amount was revised after 20-30 yrs depending on the fertility of the soil.

Features of Ryotwari System

- Tax was collected directly from farmers (Ryots).
- Farmers were the owners of the land.
- Excessive Tax was imposed.
- Tax was frequently increased.

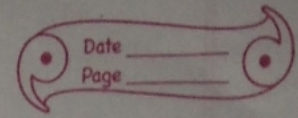
The Mahalwari System

- It was introduced in parts of Uttar Pradesh, parts of central India, the south west province and parts of Punjab.
- According to this system the settlement was made between landlords, village headman and the government. The landlords and the village headman were jointly responsible for the payment of the revenue to the company. The revenue was fixed for a period of 20-30 yrs after which it was revised.

Features of Mahalwari System

- Tax was collected by Village Headman
- Excessive tax was imposed
- Entire village (Mahal) as a unit.

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Impoverishment Of Cultivators

The revenue charged was so high, it led to the impoverishment of the cultivators.

They were driven into debt at the hands of the money lenders or became landless labourers.

Fragmentation of Land Holdings

As an increasing number of farmers found themselves unable to pay the revenue, they auctioned or sold off their land part by part. This led to the fragmentation and subdivision of land. Small land holdings are not economical to cultivate.

Rise Of Absentee Landlords

The landowners who were unable to pay the high tax was auctioned off to the highest bidder. The people who bought these lands were often rich traders from cities and towns. They rarely visited their farm land and had no interest in it. These absentee landlords were much harsher on the local farmers than the traditional zamindars.

Commercialisation Of Agriculture

Since the cash crops provided raw material for the industry the Britishers encouraged the farmers to cultivate cash crops such as cotton, jute, indigo, poppy at the cost of food grains. It resulted in food shortage.

Neglect Of Land Reforms

The British introduced private ownership of land to ensure steady revenue and to motivate the farmers to increase the output. However the landlords were either absentee landlords with no interest to improve the land or where too poor to carry out reforms. This resulted in the steady erosion in the quality of land and the life of the farmers.

11) (ans) In the ancient period in India, land was held for life. Farmers cultivated a piece of land for generation and that land was seen as belonging to their family, But during the rule of Akbar Shah Humi, land was measured and pattas were given for the first time. Revenue was charged depending on the fertility of the soil.

2) (ans) The East India Company established themselves in India by first becoming Zamindar of three villages of Calcutta, Sutan and Jonidpur.

3) (ans) Punjab was one province that actually benefited from the policies of the British. Climatically, Punjab is a dry region and any large-scale agriculture practiced here required irrigation. Several thousand kilometers of canals were built by the British, crisscrossing the land. These canals transformed previously barren land into prime agricultural land.

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iv) 4) The poverty of peasants, the high rate of land revenue, the growth of intermediaries and extreme indebtedness resulted in the decline of agriculture.

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