

Land Revenue Models of the British in British India

Bengal, Orissa and Bihar; North Madras (*BoB)

1. Before 1765: Land Revenue Model prior to EIC:

1. Nawabs would collect Land Revenue from Zamindars who had only land revenue collection right and had no legal ownership of land.
2. The Intermediary Zamindars collected land revenue from Primary Zamindars
3. The Primary zamindars would pay land revenue either directly to the nawab or to the Intermediary zamindars
4. Peasant would pay land revenue at customary (traditional) rates to the zamindars. These customary rates were recorded in agreements called "**pattas**". Thus pattas acted as a safety against excess extraction from peasants.
5. Peasants also used to sometimes pay **Abwabs** (tributes) to the zamindars.

2. From 1765-72: The EIC got **Diwani** (i.e. control over Revenue Administration) of Bengal, Orissa and Bihar in Treaty of Allahbad 1765. Thus EIC got Land Revenue as new source of revenue and now revenue maximisation became the focus of EIC.

1. However, LR continued to be collected by Indians with Md Reza Khan, the deputy Subadar, as diwan of EIC from 1765-1772. [*notice orientalism here]
2. To maximize LR collection some hasty experiments were done & overall EIC killed the golden egg laying goose. In 5 years, such plunder & high LR that Great Bengal famine 1770 killed 5-10 million & EIC did nothing for relief & instead doubled LR demand in 1770 + used

force for extracting LR when there was nothing to be extracted. It was now that some British

whistleblowers wrote to newspapers in London regarding atrocities of EIC.

3. After 1770, **EIC's revenue declined** as LR collection & trade revenue decreased as by now LR was important source of financing EIC trade ie buying Indian goods. EIC failed to pay good dividend to its shareholders and had to apply for a **loan** to the British State. This led to the **Regulating Act of 1773**. Reza Khan was made a scapegoat and removed as Diwan on charges of corruption.

4. **From 1772-93:** Now **Warren Hastings** (Governor of Bengal 1772, Governor General of Bengal 1773-85) brought **Farming System of Warren Hastings (1772)**

1. Similar to Ijaradari system of Mughals
2. Right to collect LR was auctioned or farmed out to highest bidder i.e. revenue farmer
3. Supervision/Incharge of LR collection was European District Collector while Revenue under him collected LR.
4. **Result** was high exploitation of peasants due to huge LR demand leading to no collection at all in many cases (demand was so high, peasants either didnt have anything to pay or chose to pay nothing). Overall, rural population was ruined. EIC trade in agrarian goods also suffered.

5. **1793 onwards:** Cornwallis (1786-93) was sent as GG(Bengal) main task of LR reforms.

After some experiments he finally brought **Permanent Settlement Act 1793 (*PS1793):**

1. Was applied in Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Benaras, North Madras (****BOB went to Banaras from north Madras & settled permanently**)

2. **Feature 1:** Zamindar was made legal owner of land from which earlier he only collected LR.

Therefore **proprietary rights in land** i.e. legal ownership of land was created for 1st time i.e. now **land = a commodity** that could be sold, purchased, leased, mortgaged etc. Land was also **hereditary** i.e. transferable within family as inheritance

3. **Reason-**

1. PS1793 was influenced by **authoritarianism** of Cornwallis8693. He believed in **landlordism** as he was from England where big landlords were championed. He himself was from a landed family. **Landlordism** = the belief that big landowner who has Security of Property would act as agrarian capitalist who makes big investments in property for maximizing profits. This would lead to food security, increase in LR & in agrarian trade.
2. Cornwallis8693 preferred Zamindars over Revenue Farmers because he believed in Landlordism i.e. in an agrarian capitalist having security of property.
3. **Political benefit** - create a loyal class of rich & socially influential zamindars. Therefore, increase stability of British rule. (**E.g. 1857 revolt Bengal zamindars stayed loyal to Br)
4. **Feature 2: Settlement** was done with zamindar (* Assessment= Determining Tax Amount; Settlement= LR is negotiated with whom & who deposits LR in govt account)
5. **Reason** was to have Ease of LR collection for EIC Administration as limited no. of big zamindars would pay all LR.
6. **Feature 3:- Assessment:** LR(new) was assessed permanently at an absolute amount (*not %). It meant that LR(new) to be paid annually was fixed forever & could not be changed by government. At time of settlement, LR(new) was calculated as **10/11 of pre-existing**

Revenue(LR-old) collected by Zamindar from - ryots or the land. But once new LR was assessed using this formula, the amount derived was fixed forever.

7. Reason-

1. To **incentivize the zamindar** so he makes investments in land's productivity as increase in his income won't lead to increase in his LR
2. Government will have **certainty of revenue income** as LR is pre decided & would get LR even if bad harvest. If EIC needed more money, it could raise the tax of trade and commerce.
3. **Corruption** & burden of administration would decrease as assessment was permanent & in form of fixed amount.
4. However, LR was assessed at absolute maximum to compensate the State as it gave up its right to increase its income from LR.

8. Feature 4:- Sunset clause -by evening of a particular date zamindar must pay LR else automatically his lands would be up for auction to anyone who agrees to pay the decided LR.

9. Feature 5 Collection- LR to be collected by EIC officials instead of intermediaries (Zamindars).

10. Impact:

1. In short term many zamindars lost their lands in auction since LR was very high therefore in short term there was growth of jotedars who bought lands in auction. They were rich ryots who also acted as merchants & moneylenders.

2. Zamindars also tried to keep land within extended family thus family members also participated in auctions.
3. However in long term system stabilized & zamindars did emerge as a loyal class to British.
4. British did get certainty & regular flow- of LR in long term
5. Failure- zamindar did not act as agrarian capitalist since LR was very high therefore nothing left for investment. Therefore, agrarian productivity lagged. Also trade in agrarian goods also did not improve.

6. Impact on Ryot –

1. now ryot became **landless & rightless** since all rights in land were given to Zamindar. Thus, Ryots now became **tenants at will** (*of Zamindar, i.e. no occupancy rights) + now there was no respect for traditional Patta system & ryots were oppressed by high rents & illegal Abwabs (**illegal after 1793).
 2. Therefore, security of property was only for zamindar and not for ryot (*khudkasht) as he did not get any occupancy rights.
 3. Cornwallis 1793 took away police powers of zamindars (*coz Z= businessman) but Wellesley 1805 restored police powers **Regulation VII of 1799** + power of imprisonment + power to seize property of ryots (** crops sown, cattle etc.) so Zamindars don't default on payment of LR.
 4. Therefore, many peasant revolts after 1793.
- 7. Regulation VII of 1799:** Wellesley 1805 (1798-1805) introduced this to assist Zamindars in extracting LR from peasants by giving draconian powers like:

1. Zamindars can seize property of tenants without permission of courts if they defaulted on payment of rents (e.g. crops, cattle etc)
2. Zamindars could hold tenants prisoners
3. Zamindars could enhance rent as they wished.

8. Rent Act 1859: Introduced because of peasant revolts

1. For Tenant Ryot who cultivated a piece of land continuously for more than 12 years:
 1. would have occupancy rights (i.e. cant be evicted without court order/govt enquiry)
 2. Zamindar cannot increase the rents without showing just cause.
2. For Tenant Ryot who had cultivated a land for less than 12 years:-
Zamindar cannot increase Rent frequently.
3. Traditional **Patta System** was re-introduced i.e. Zamindar to collect rents at rates as recorded in the Pattas/agreements.
4. Zamindar **lost power to imprison** the tenants.

5. Impact of Rent Act 1859:

1. The Zamindars violated the law and continued to oppress the tenants resulting in peasant revolts of 1870s and 1880s.
2. During Indigo revolt 1859-63- ryots fought for their occupancy rights in courts + in PABNA Agrarian Leagues 1873 the grievance was eviction before 12 years
6. Finally, British setup the **Rent Commission of 1879** which led to **Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 -**

1. Rights of all stakeholders in land, were defined i.e. rights of Zamindars and of ryots.
2. Powers of Zamindars were significantly reduced.
3. Greater protection of occupancy rights. E.g. now tenants who have cultivated different lands in the same village for more than 12 yrs would also enjoy occupancy rights.
4. Government implemented the act sincerely , hence finally relief to ryots.

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Ryotwari Settlement in Sind, Coorg, Assam, Madras, Bombay (*SCAM-B):

1. Reasons for replacing PS1793 in Madras with Ryotwari in 1801:

1. Cornwallis 1786-93 and Wellesley 1798-1805 wanted extension of PS1793 to other areas. Thus it was introduced in Madras Presidency where Poligars (landed class) were recognised as Zamindars. But then **following factors went against PS1793 in Madras:**
2. In Madras, big Zamindars were not available like in Bengal and thus Poligars had to be recognised as Zamindars.
3. No option to increase LR
4. why have zamindars eat into the income of the state if revenue can be collected directly from actual cultivator
5. Scottish officials like Thomas Munroe in Madras and Elphinstone in Bombay opposed PS1793 due to their belief in championing the actual cultivator.
6. Main reason for ending PS1793 in Madras was shortage of revenue due to constant warfares.

2. Ryotwari Settlement in Madras of 1801 by Thomas Munroe (Governor of Madras 1820-27):

1. 1st experimented by Alexander Reed in 1792 in Madras & then applied by Thomas Munroe in Madras from 1801-07 (stopped when he went to London in 1807); reapplied by Munroe as G(Ma) 1820-27.
2. **1st Feature Landownership-** Ryot was made **legal landowner** i.e. creation of proprietary rights in land in name of the Ryot. Thus big landlords lost personal lands to ryots.

3. Reason-

1. Munro was from Scotland where **Yeoman farmer** i.e. landowner cultivator was championed + Munro was **orientalist** & argued that in ancient India there were no intermediaries between State and actual cultivator.
2. He argued that PS1793 not suited for Madras as **big zamindars were unavailable**
3. Deccan had problem of **poor finances** due to low productivity & high war expenditure.
Therefore, removal of intermediaries i.e. Zamindars would **increase income of State & reduce financial burden of ryots.**
4. **Political stability** of EIC would increase with loyalty of masses & with power of powerful intermediaries i.e. Poligars & Deshmukhs demolished.
4. **2nd feature- Settlement** was done with ryot i.e. LR per field/ryot was assessed & State officials collected LR from ryots. Therefore direct interface b/w ryot & State.
5. **3rd Feature Assessment-** Periodic revision of LR was possible & LR could be in % terms.
 1. Though initially LR was assessed as a fixed amount to be paid annually.
 2. Field Assessment System- survey of all fields to assess LR demand in a fair manner i.e. based on soil productivity, irrigation, acreage etc
6. **4th Feature Collection-** LR to be collected by EIC officials instead of intermediaries (Zamindars).
7. **Impact of Ryotwari in Madras:**
 1. **Over-Assessment:** Improper field surveys led to over-assessment i.e. unjust LR demand
 2. **Landlessness:**
 1. Now ryots lost their lands in govt auctions on non-payment of LR.

2. Also Ryots became indebted to moneylenders & came under oppression of high interest rates. When they defaulted on debt, they lost their mortgaged lands to moneylenders.

3. **Mirasidars** were landowner cultivators who also joined lower bureaucracy as revenue officials under DC. In Madras, DC/DM & his officers had judicial powers; and also police powers since 1816. They were corrupt & oppressed ryots + bought best lands in auctions & gradually emerged as big landowners therefore goal of removing intermediaries failed in long term. The oppression by Mirasidars led to **Madras Torture**

Commission Report 1855 & now:

1. Assessment:

1. **Proper land surveys** were done & fair assessments were made.

2. **LR rate** was assessed at 50% for 30 years

2. Now conditions of Ryots improved.

8. Ryotwari Settlement in Bombay:

1. Earlier, Patils (Village Headmen) and Deshmukhs collected revenue for EIC.

2. a land survey was done by an officer - **R.K. Pringle** but it was faulty and replaced by

Wingate Settlement (1835):

1. also known as **Bombay Survey System** of **Wingate and Goldsmid**. It was implemented in **whole of Deccan by 1847**.

2. Assessment:

1. LR based on field surveys on basis of past trends of revenue paid, soil productivity, irrigation facilities, acreage etc

2. LR= a **fair amount p.a. for 30 years**

3. **Impact of Ryotwari in Bombay:**

1. it led to loss of status for Patils as now they were ordinary government officials.
2. there was increase in power of Marwari and Gujrati moneylenders in Central Deccan.
3. Massive indebtedness among ryots in 1850s.
4. However, Ryotwari was not solely responsible for it and crop failures played a role along with decline in prices of cotton after end of US Civil War (1861-65) as supply of raw cotton from US resumed. The result was the **Peasant Revolt of Bombay Deccan (1875).**

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Mahalwari Settlement in Central India + NorthWest Provinces and Awadh (called United Provinces 1902) + Punjab (*CUP)

1. Taluqdars (or Intermediary Zamindars) and Primary Zamindars dominated the agrarian structure.
2. **1801**- Half of Awadh was annexed in lieu of permanent payment of subsidy under Subordinate/Subsidiary Alliance. (*1836: "North West Provinces" in British India; NWP1836)
3. **Prior to Mahalwari of 1822**, in region of NWP1836, the EIC extracted **unfair LR** and when Taluqdars opposed, they were removed from their lands and thus a whole class of **landed magnets were crushed**. There was **rise in power of Amlas** (revenue officials) and **Tehsildars** as they bought the best lands in auction (*like Mirasidars in Madras). Land also passed on to **moneylenders, bankers and merchants** in region of NWP1836.
4. **Mahalwari Settlement (1822) in region of NWP1836: Mackenzie's recommendations** were implemented via Regulation VII of 1822:

1. Reason for Mahalwari in region of NWP1836:

1. oppression of Talukdars
2. need for maximising revenue by getting rid of intermediaries
3. protect the rights of actual cultivators and ensure improvement of agriculture

2. Mahalwari Settlement (1822)

1. Mahal implied estate/village community/district
2. **1st Feature: Assessment:** LR to be assessed **at per field/ryot level** on basis of proper surveys.

3. **2nd feature Settlement: with Mahal/Estate/Village Community/District or a Talukdar, if available.** Where settlement was done with mahal -Village Headman or Lambardar acted as interface between the Govt and Mahal/Village community.
 4. **Reason:** To respect village autonomy.
 5. **3rd Feature- Landownership:** Where settlement was done with mahal, ryot was made legal landowner and where settlement was done with Zamindar, he was made landowner. Therefore mahalwari =hybrid of Ryotwari + PS1793 in terms of landownership.
 6. **4th Feature Collection-** LR to be collected by EIC officials instead of intermediaries (Zamindars).
 7. **5th Feature Rights of Ryots:** Rights of occupancy tenants (**Khudkashts**) were protected. The rent to be paid by them was recorded, thus protecting them against excesses of landowners. **Pahikashts** (wandering landless laborer) though did not have any protection.
3. **Impact of Mahalwari1822:** Improper survey led to over-assessment i.e. unjust LR demand.
4. **Revised Mahalwari Settlement of 1833 in region of NWP1836 by [R.M. Bird \(1833\)](#)**
- or net result after **Mackenzie's Mahalwari Settlement via Regulation VII of 1822** AND
- R.M. Bird's Revised Mahalwari Settlement of 1833:**
1. **1st Feature- Assessment:** LR was assessed **at mahal level or estate level** on basis of proper surveys & not per field/ryot. LR to be **66% for 30 years**

2. **2nd feature- Settlement:** Settlement **with Mahal** in most cases and **with Talukdar or primary zamindar** in some cases. Where settlement was done with mahal - Village Headman or Lambardar acted as interface between the Govt and Mahal/Village community.
3. **Reason:** To respect village autonomy.
4. **3rd Feature- Landownership:** Where settlement was done with mahal, ryot was made legal landowner and where settlement was done with Zamindar, he was made landowner. Thus in most cases, legal land ownership was vested in ryots. Therefore mahalwari = hybrid of Ryotwari + PS1793 in terms of landownership.
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7. **Impact:**
 1. many talukdars lost their personal estates/milkiyats to ryots as Bird was hostile to Talukdars and hence many of them were removed from their lands and pensioned off.
 2. improper field survey led to unjust LR demand & consequently indebtedness & loss of lands for ryots either in govt auctions or to moneylenders. Hence Village communities did not prosper

3. Thus, Mackenzie's Regulation VII of 1822 & R.M. Bird's Mahalwari of 1833 laid foundations of 1857 revolt.

5. Mahalwari was **extended to Punjab & Central India by Dalhousie (1848-56)**.

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