

COLONIAL EXPLOITATION : FORMS AND CONSEQUENCES

- After battle of Bauxar and consequent treaties British treated India as a colony and it was exploited blatantly in phased manner and much of its wealth was drained out from the country. The exploitation by the British can be studied in different phases of their rule.

East India Company; methods of economic exploitation

- **Direct Plunder:** In the name of trade the East India Company indulged in direct plunder. In the beginning when the company started its trade with India, they were given authorisation to export gold and silver bullion and coins of these metals worth £ 30,000 per annum to India. But after the Battle of Plassey, with the capturing of political power, the entire picture changed. The balance of exchange tilted in their favour and they managed to secure maximum goods for minimum payments. Moreover, British officers collected huge amount of wealth from Indian rulers, landlord businessmen and common men for one reason or the other, which they finally sent to England.

- **Changes in Land Revenue Administration**

- ✓ **Permanent Settlement** in Eastern India(Bengal)- As regards the Land Revenue Administration, the period between 1765-1793 is characterized by many experiments. The Company adopted the method of trial and error and in this process it attempted many experiments, most of which proved faulty. It was left to Cornwallis to evolve a system which had the stamp of permanence. Cornwallis, helped by officials like John Shore and James Grant with their divergent views finally went for land revenue settlement popularly known as Permanent Settlement.

Important points associated with Permanent Settlement

- Permanent Settlement** was made with the rajas and taluqdars of Bengal. They were now classified as zamindars, and they had to pay the revenue demand that was fixed in perpetuity. Demand of state in the nature of Nazrana or other fees were given up.
- The zamindar was not a landowner in the village, but a revenue Collector of the state.
- In Company calculations the villages within one zamindari formed one revenue estate. The Company fixed the total demand over the entire estate whose revenue the zamindar contracted to pay.
- The state demand was fixed at 89 per cent of the

rental, leaving 11per cent with the zamindars as their share for their trouble and responsibility.

- So long as the zamindars made the payment to the Government in time, they were left free in their relation with their tenants. If they did not make the payment to the state in time, their estate could be auctioned.

- Magisterial powers were taken away from the zamindars. They were left with no police work.

- **Other Important Land revenue settlements-** The extension of the British Empire in Deccan and South India necessitated a new type of administrative organisation based on different systems of land revenue settlement. Under these circumstances, the advisability of settling the lands on the model of Bengal was seriously debated.

- ✓ Munro exposed the weaknesses of the Permanent Settlement. The Select Committee appointed to review the affairs of the East India Company, preceding the renewal of Charter of 1813, favoured the introduction of the ryotwari system. The ryotwari system was introduced in the territories of Madras, Bombay and Sind.

Important points associated with Ryotwari system

- Under this system, there was no middle-men like the landlord/Zamindar//taluqudar who mediated between the ryot or cultivator and the Government. It was a direct system.
- It was a periodical settlements(to be revised after every 30 years) and was based on survey
- A thorough survey of each village was made and a descriptive register was prepared with an account of every ryot's holding.
- The rights of ownership and occupancy were acknowledged. Ryot had right to transfer his land and the right of inheritance for his progeny were maintained.
- The lands were classified by the Government according to the fertility and nature of the soil and the crops produced. The average production for a number of years formed the basis for the ascertainment of the grain-value of the land. That, in its turn was converted into money-value. Deducting the average annual cultivation cost from the said value, a net income from the land was ascertained. Approximately one-half of the said value was fixed as the maximum revenue for the land.
- The ryotwari system established the closest relation between the people and the government, for the

system required the realization of rents by the officials directly from each holding. It was necessary that each field should be measured and surveyed and its boundaries determined and boundary marks set up. It involved the preparation of field maps and the taluqa maps and a whole department of the Surveyor-General to carry out these duties.

- vii. Ryots were apprehensive of higher assessment and distrusted new settlements.
- viii. The ryot remained the master of his land so long as he paid the revenue. But when he failed to pay, the government could take over his land in its direct possession.
- ix. The government tax collectors often practised oppression on the individual ryots. Thus, the direct relation between the state and the tiller was not always an unmixed blessing.
- x. The ryotwari system was supposed to be a close approximation to the old Indian system prevalent in these regions. But actually, it created private property in land, destroyed the unity and cohesion of village life, and exposed the cultivator to the ruthless oppression of the revenue authorities who demanded and enforced payment of the land revenue even in years of drought.
- **The Mahalwari System or Village Settlement:** The Mahalwari system/ or Village Settlement was introduced in the territories of Punjab, Avadh and Nagpur . It borrowed some features from the Zamindari system of Bengal and some of the ryotwari system of the Deccan but also embodied some original elements of its own.

Important points associated with Mahalwari system

- i. The state fixed revenue for a limited period of thirty/twenty years.
- ii. The settlement was not made with the village

(Mahal). The villagers as a whole became responsible for the payment of revenue for the whole village. An arrangement on behalf of the entire village to pay the stipulated amount of revenue was signed by the village headman known as lambardar. The individual villagers contributed according to their respective holdings. Villager was the owner of the land as long as he paid his revenue for the land.

- iii. The government settlement officers were made responsible for the assessment of land revenue. They, in consultation with lambardar and the village bodies, fixed the revenue.
- iv. While fixing the land revenue, the yielding capacity of the soil, the nature of the crop it produced and the prices of such crops were taken into account. The assessment once made was continued for the full term of the settlement. The introduction of the Mahalwari system, however, did not disrupt the community's organisation as the settlement was made with the village and not with the individual.
- **Taluqdari System:** The Mahalwari system did not cover the whole of the Uttar Pradesh. In the district of Oudh, there existed another system known as Taluqdari System. Under it a number of villages were put under the taluqdari system. The government entered into an agreement with the taluqdar for a period of 30 years. The taluqdar collected the stipulated revenues from different villages put under his charge and deposited them with the government, after deducting the cost of collection of the revenues and his own remuneration for the arduous work. Unlike the Bengal Zamindars the Oudh taluqdars had no real rights over the lands under their charge. Moreover, they worked as revenue collectors for the fixed period of the settlement, and not in perpetuity.