

# Land Revenue Systems in British India: Zamindari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari

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For UPSC, Land Revenue Systems in British India is always a hot topic for Prelims and Mains. And as per the new syllabus 'land reforms in India' is specifically mentioned for GS Mains, and the relevance just got multiplied. Now let's have a quick look at the different methods of land revenue collection systems which existed in India.

## Land Revenue Systems Before British Rule

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Tax from the land was a major source of revenue for the kings and emperors from ancient times. But the ownership pattern of land had witnessed changes over centuries. During Kingship, land was divided into Jagirs, Jagirs were allotted to **Jagirdars**, these Jagirdars split the land they got and allocated to sub-ordinate **Zamindars**. Zamindars made **peasants** cultivate the land, in-return collected part of their revenue as tax.

## Land Revenue Systems in British India :

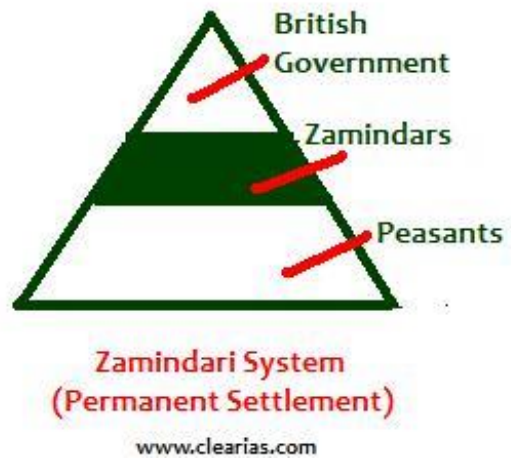
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Three major systems of land revenue collection existed in India. They were – Zaminidari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari.

### Zamindari System

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- Zamindari System was introduced by Cornwallis in 1793 through Permanent Settlement Act.
- It was introduced in provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Varanasi.
- Also known as Permanent Settlement System.
- Zamindars were recognized as owner of the lands. Zamindars were given the rights to collect the rent from the peasants.
- The realized amount would be divided into 11 parts. 1/11 of the share belongs to Zamindars and 10/11 of the share belongs to East India Company.



## Ryotwari System

- Ryotwari System was introduced by Thomas Munro in 1820.
- Major areas of introduction include Madras, Bombay, parts of Assam and Coorg provinces of British India.
- In Ryotwari System the ownership rights were handed over to the peasants. British Government collected taxes directly from the peasants.
- The revenue rates of Ryotwari System were 50% where the lands were dry and 60% in irrigated land.

Also read: Medieval India: Bhaktism, Sufism and Sikhism (NCERT)

## Mahalwari System

- Mahalwari system was introduced in 1833 during the period of William Bentick.
- It was introduced in Central Province, North-West Frontier, Agra, Punjab, Gangetic Valley, etc of British India.
- The Mahalwari system had many provisions of both the Zamindari System and Ryotwari System.
- In this system, the land was divided into Mahals. Each Mahal comprises one or more villages.
- Ownership rights were vested with the peasants.
- The villages committee was held responsible for collection of the taxes.

## Land Reforms in India After Independence

**Zamindari Abolition Act** was passed by UP, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, etc. Surplus lands were confiscated from zamindars. Later **Land Ceilings Act** was passed by different states, fixing an upper limit for private land holdings of a family. Land reforms in India is discussed in detail in the highlighted link.

For extra reading on Land Revenue Systems :

- Zamindari System – Hubpages.