

# ZAMINDARI SYSTEM IN BRITISH INDIA

COMPILED BY PRANAV SHEKHAR  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
PG SECOND SEMESTER  
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

# INTRODUCTION

- In 1773, it decided to manage the land revenues directly. Warren Hastings auctioned the right to collect revenue to the highest bidders. But his experiment did not succeed. Though the amount of land revenue was pushed high by zamindars and other speculators bidding against each other, the actual collection varied from year to year and seldom came up to official expectations.
- The bidding system had demerit that neither the ryot nor the zamindar would do anything to improve cultivation when they did not know what the next year's assessment would be or who would be the next year's revenue collector.
- It was at this stage that the idea first emerged of fixing It was at this stage that the idea first emerged of fixing the land revenue at a permanent amount
- Thus came the idea of permanent settlement with British government ,zamindars,as middle man and the cultivators

# PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

- This introduced instability in the Company's revenues at a time when the Company was hard pressed for money. Moreover, neither the ryot nor the zamindar would do anything to improve cultivation when they did not know what the next year's assessment would be or who would be the next year's revenue collector.
- It was at this stage that the idea first emerged of fixing the land revenue at a permanent amount and thus emerged a system of permanent settlement. Finally, after prolonged discussion and debate, the Permanent Settlement was introduced in Bengal and Bihar in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis. It had two special features. First, the zamindars and revenue collectors were converted into so many landlords.

# WHO WAS ZAMINDAR

- Under the Zamindari System, land was held by one person or at the most by a few joint owners who were responsible for the payment of land revenue to the state. Actual cultivation was done by tenants who held the land under landlords.
- There were two types of Zamindari tenures. In the first type, known as the Permanent Settlement, the revenue to be paid by the landlord was fixed permanently. The landlord was however, free to raise the rent to be paid by his tenant. This system prevailed in Bengal, Orissa, part of Madras, Benares and parts of South India.
- In the second type of the Zamindari System, the revenue to be paid by the landlord was revised from time to time. This system prevailed in the C.P. (Part of present Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) where Malguzars, who were merely revenue collectors under the Marathas, were recognised as Landlords.

# FEATURES OF THE SYSTEM

- For getting a fixed sum of money
- Zamindar's right over land was
  - **Alienable:** meaning British could take it away and give it to another Zamindar, if first Zamindar did not meet the Revenue collection 'targets'.
  - **Rentable:** meaning Zamindar himself could further outsource his work among more smaller zamindars
  - **Heritable:** meaning Zamindar dies, his son/brother etc would get it.
- Farmers became tenants. Two types
  - **Tenants-at-will:** farmers who cultivated on Zamindar's land. They had no rights. They could be evicted as per whims and fancies of Zamindar.
  - **Occupancy Tenants:** farmers who owned land. Their occupancy rights were heritable and transferrable and were not tampered with as long as they paid their taxes
  - These are the features of the system 1\11<sup>th</sup> kept by zamindaar 10\11<sup>th</sup> was given to British government

# OBJECTIVE OF ZAMINDARI SYSTEM

## #for British

- gave financial security for the British administration.
- Cost of running administration decreased. Because British had to collect Revenue from only a few Zamindars instead of lakhs of farmers.
- British got new political allies (Zamindars). They would keep their own militia to suppress peasant revolts, and act as 'informers' and remained loyal to British rule.

# DEMARITS OF SYSTEM

- Permanent settlement system led to many agrarian revolts.
- Government's income declined over the years, Because Revenue was permanently fixed + number of intermediaries kept increasing.
- Hence, British learned from the mistake and did not extent this permanent settlement/Zamindari system to the whole of India. Instead, they established Ryotwari and Mahalwari systems in the remaining parts.
- Farmers became landless labour and zamindars became tenants at will



THANK YOU