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Author by

Santu 

Dr. Pratibha Bhagat

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Impact of Land Revenue System Introduced By British East India Company on Zamindar and Moneylender Classes in India

Santu Ghorai

Ph.D Scholar (History)

Dr. Pratibha Bhagat

H.O.D-Social Science, Asst. Professor of History, Mansarovar Global University, Sehore (M.P.)

Abstract :- Cornwallis introduced Permanent Settlement in Bengal. This settlement had a great impact on the Zamindars. The old Zamindars suffered huge losses under this system. On the other hand, Ryotwari Settlement was introduced in South India in 1820 A.D. Here no agreement was made with the landlords like in Bengal. Monroe stated in his Settlement that this system would establish direct communication between the Government and the farmer. In this case, there will be no Zamindars or middlemen between farmers and the Government. But one thing needs to be clarified that in this system the existence of middlemen between farmers and Companies could not be eliminated. The extravagance of 'Mirashidar's' was palpable. They enjoyed many privileges. The regulations of 25 November 1802 A.D, established Permanent Settlements in areas such as Chingleput, Salem, Ramananda etc, in South India. Many middlemen exist here. For example - 'Poligar', 'Mattadar', etc. Their influence grew enormously. By 1822 A.D, the Mahalwari Settlement was established in the North - West Frontier Province, Gangetic Valley region and in some regions of Central India. Here too a middle class called 'Talukdar' is found to exist.

However, my topic here is to discuss the impact of the British introduced land revenue on the Zamindar class, Mirashidars, Poligars, Mattadars and Talukdars class. Besides, here we will also discuss about Moneylanders class.

IMPACT ON ZAMINDARS :- The Company could not determine the nature of the Zamindari system before introducing the Permanent Settlement in Bengal. They confused the land system of their country with the land system of this country. The Mughal Emperors did not create any title of 'Zamindar' as a tax collector. Company documents

refer to the Mughal period as the pre - Zamindari era. This clearly shows the origin and excess of the word 'Zamindars' during the Company period.

Many scholars believe that the word 'Zamindar' has been used in some literatures in the middle ages. But there is no exact answer as to why the word 'Zamindar' is used.

However, I will discuss here in detail what the impact was on the Zamindars after the Permanent Settlement. After the Permanent Settlement the Zamindars were the lords of the subjects. The peasants became the puppets of the landlords. Two Acts passed in 1799 and 1812 A. D further increased the level of exploitation of the Zamindars. This law turns farmers in to beggars. It empowers the Zamindars to expropriate the peasants property without going to court. During this time many Zamindars joined hands with European landlords to increase their share of profits. These European owners were like rabid wolves. After the Permanent Settlement, many Zamindars became supporters of the British.

Permanent Settlement led to the emergence of new land tenures. A lot of new classes developed by changing the previous conditions. Large zamindari were destroyed. Many small Zamindari were built in its place. 'Huzuri Taluk' and 'Mofswal Taluk' were in 10 years settlement. These Talukdars are given the status of Zamindars in the regulation. The large Zamindars protested against it and they rebelled. This image created panic among the big Zamindars. But The British did not heed this protest. Because they felt that the large Zamindaris could pose a threat to their empire. So they preferred small Zamindaris.

Most of the ancient Zamindars failed to collect revenue even after coercion from the peasants. So the Zamindari was auctioned as the Zamindars could not pay the revenue to the

Company on time. Thus many large old Zamindari were sold at auction.

On the other hand, the picture was reversed. When the old Zamindaris came up for auction, these were bought by some of the moneylanders and merchant classes. Who had no connection with the land. Many of them were Zamindar officials or bureaucrats.

However, the purchase of large Zamindaris created a peculiar situation. As the new Zamindars settled in the cities, the personal relationship of the cultivator with them was almost severed.

On the other hand, many old Zamindars lost their Zamindari and became thieves. Again many Zamindars lost their Zamindari and became ordinary people without being able to pay the debts of the Company.

However, the East India Company identified the Zamindar's ambitions for the destruction of large estates and they blamed the tyranny of the Zamindars. I think this is true to some extent but not entirely true. According to Narendra Krishna Singh - from 1793 to 1794 A.D. the fixed revenue of the Company was much higher. As a result the big Zamindaris could not deposit the revenue on time in accordance with the 'Sunset Law'.

RYOTWARI SETTLEMENT AND MIRASHIDARS :-

One thing needs to be clarified that the existence of middlemen between farmers and Companies could not be eliminated in the Ryotwari Settlement. The extravagance of 'Mirashidars' was palpable. They enjoyed many privileges. They occupied the lower posts of revenue administration. Some of them bought good fertile land. In 1855 A.D., the Madras Chattr Commission Report has discussed their oppression in detail. Willem Van Sandel's research in Tanjore district also highlights the persecution of Mirashidars and he also depicted how they used to spend their days happily. In the districts of Andhra Pradesh in Madras Presidency, the influence of the big Landlords was greatly increased.

However, the situation of the Mirashidars changed. Many of them indulged in business. They

welcomed new merchant groups.

The regulations of 25 November 1802 A.D., established Permanent Settlements in areas such as Chingleput, Salem, Ramananda etc, in South India. Many middlemen exist here. For example - 'Poligar', 'Mattadar' etc. Their Zamindari is hereditary. The influence of these Mattadars was very high. They used to collect rent illegally.

MAHALWARI SETTLEMENT AND TALUKDARS :-

Between 1801 A.D. and 1806 A.D., the British occupied large parts of North and North-west India. These areas were divided into many smaller groups. They were called 'Taluk dars'. Many researchers have referred to them as 'Middle Class Landlord'. Besides, there was a large section of 'Original Landlord'. However, by 1820 A.D. this Talukdari System had come to an end, but it continued to exist in some places. But they had no more power. Their lands are sold at auction. Their lands are bought by Government bureaucrats and Tahasildars. By the middle of the 19th century, about 40% of the land in the Varanasi region had changed hands.

IMPACT ON MONEYLENDERS :- People involved in usury business were called moneylenders. The word 'Mahajan' means a 'noble person'. But actually they were not good people. These lenders gave money on interest. This class of lenders existed from ancient times. Again, after the Turkish conquest of India, the name of the 'Multani' class was found as usury traders. At this time the 'shresthi', class is also known.

That is to say, it is proved that interest business was going on in India since ancient time before the British era.

However, their influence is more visible from the English period. During the British period, a class of money - dealers emerged. They were better known as Benya. They were associated with moneylending business. Even they used to help the British with money. When the English traders came to this country, many were helped by these Beniyas with money. Later they would collect the money with interest. They had that power.

After the Permanent Settlement, the moneylender business took a terrible shape in the whole area. As this business became profitable, the moneylenders continued to do so from generation to generation. During this time many wealthy people joined this profession. Many traders also got involved in this usury business. Such evidence has been found that at this time, many poor people also started this work with little capital. And within a few years they became owners of huge properties.

The British gave moneylenders legal rights to collect loans. British law gave moneylenders the right to seize peasant property and evict peasants. The British also gave the right to sue the farmers. That is, it can be said that the British directly supported the moneylender business. That is why they became so powerful. The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 A. D gave the moneylenders an extreme opportunity to grab farmers land. A large amount of cultivable land was taken over by the moneylenders. Farmers started to unite against it. Peasant rebellion started to grow.

CONCLUSION :- The introduction of the Company's land revenue system changed the whole picture of India. A terrible picture can be observed after the introduction of Permanent Settlement in Bengal. Many old estates were destroyed and his place was occupied by many urban landlords. They live a beautiful life. On the other hand, the excesses of the Mirashidar's were noticed in the Ryotwari Settlement. In 1855 AD, the Madras Chatter Commission Report has discussed their oppression in detail. Willem Van Sandel's research in Tanjore District also highlights the persecution of Mirashidars. They started making profits like the Zamindars of Bengal. Apart from this, the persecution of 'Poligar's and 'Mattadar's in South-India has also been discussed earlier. The picture of tyranny of Talukdars in Mahalwari Settlement is also clear in my discussion. Many researchers have referred to them as 'Middle class Landlord'. But once their existence was erased. They are deprived of their land rights. The Governor of Madras said in 1842 AD – " The policy of the Bard Saheb has

turned the entire community into a 'flat land'.

On the other hand, the influence of moneylenders during the English period was noticeable. Which has been discussed earlier. Dwaraka Nath Vidyabhushan has written about this – "The word 'Mahajan' is sweet to hear. But it became a cause of misery for the unfortunate Bengali people".

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