

# Landlords & Tenants under the British & the Nizam

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## Improve your learning

**Q. 1. Compare the condition of tenant farmers before freedom and farmers of today.**

**What differences and similarities do you find?**

**Answer :** During Colonial rule the peasants were forced to work without wages (*vetti*) on the personal land of zamindars.

The Britishers introduced several challenges like permanent settlement by Lord Cornwallis, where the zamindars were given powers to collect revenue, they continuously increased the revenue and converted all the peasants into tenants. The Ryotwari system was introduced by Thomas Munro, where revenue were collected directly by the cultivators, but the land revenue were so high that ryotwari area (cultivators land) became full of landlords and again the tenants had to pay high rents.

The peasants would borrow money from the landlords to pay the rent, however if they could not pay back, the landlords would take them to court to get their land auctioned. In these ways the peasants suffered a lot.

Even today there are many tenant farmers and those who are not have very small shareholding. During droughts/floods peasants suffers and get compelled to suicide.

The difference is that, today farmers are exempted from landholdings; many initiatives are taken by the government to ease the lives of peasants and get them paid accurately.

**Q. 2. During the freedom movement the zamindars normally supported the British. Can you explain why?**

**Answer :** The zamindars supported the British as they were getting benefit from the policies of government.

When Permanent Settlement was introduced, the zamindars were given the powers to collect revenue, in which zamindars were allowed to keep 10% of the revenue. And as the revenue demand of the state would not be increased, the zamindars would benefit from the increased production.

When losses occurred i.e when zamindars were unable to pay the revenue they would loose their Zamindari. The reasons of getting profit and securing their zamindari compelled them to support the British.

**Q. 3. What role did the moneylenders play in the lives of the peasants? In what way do you think they were supported by the British government?**

**Answer :** The culture of borrowing money from the moneylenders by the peasants were common, in order to pay the revenue. The high rate of revenue forced them to borrow money, and when peasants were unable to repay the loan, the zamindars would take them to court to get their land auctioned to recover the loan money. In this way the peasants suffered a lot as they were unable to repay the loan.

They were supported by the British firstly, as they fixed too high a revenue demand, which the farmers were unable to pay hence they had to take loan. Secondly, the prices were determined by the international markets, so whenever demand would increase peasants would take more loan in the hope of getting high prices.

**Q. 4. What were the similarities and differences between the Doras and the zamindars of Awadh?**

**Answer :** The landlords of Awadh were called as Zamindars and the large landlords were called as doras( they lived in big forts).

**Similarities between Doras and Zamindars:**

1. Both had vast lands cultivated by the tenants /forced labour.
2. Both acted as moneylenders for the peasants.

**Difference:**

1. The Zamindars were given the power to collect the revenue as per the permanent settlement act. While the Doras had judicial power over the entire village
2. The doras would enforce rules such as no low caste people would wear shirts or slippers, whereas no such rule were made by the zamindars, they acted more like a tax collector.

**Q. 5. What kind of measures did the British take to improve agriculture? Did it have the desired impact? Give your reasons.**

**Answer :** 1. Permanent Settlement: Lord Cornwallis introduced permanent settlement, where the landlords were given the powers to collect the revenue from the peasants. He felt that in this way regular flow of revenue would be ensured and would also encourage the zamindars to invest more to improve the lands. But the zamindars collected rent from the tenants rather than revenue,(rent was higher than revenue) which in turn led the cultivators to leave the land and zamindars also became defaulters. Many zamindars lost their zamindari. Hence the settlement did not do much to improve the agriculture.

2. Ryotwari: Thomas Munro introduced Ryotwari system, ryots (cultivators) where the revenue were collected directly from the collectors. Necessary advances were also made to the cultivators to purchase the seeds. This proved effective and generated good revenue.

**Q. 6. How did the Ryotwari settlement also give rise to landlordism?**

**Answer :** In the ryotwari areas the land revenue was fixed at very high rate for 20 to 30 years. So as the price rose the landlords employed more tenants and received the rents from them. Soon the ryotwari areas turned into landlords. The tenants paid the rent that was 3 to 7 times more than land revenue. As a result the practices of exploiting the poor peasants rose and the landlords also lost the interest of investing in lands to improve agriculture.

In this way the ryotwari system gave rise to landlordism.

**Q. 7. Why were famines caused under British rule? Do you think it was because of failure of rains or floods?**

**Answer :** Famine is a situation when massive food shortage occur which lead to serious distress.

These famines were common feature of the British rule. The reasons were.

First, high revenue and rents forced upon the peasants and they were left with no amount to face difficult situation.

Second, the crops cultivated were exported and little were left for the people.

Third, the large traders often created artificial shortage of food by hoarding the food grains.

Most of the famines were the result of policies of British and some were due to rain/floods.

**Q. 8. In what way can a government help to prevent famines even in times of crop failure?**

**Answer :** Government can help to prevent the famine in several ways like:

1. Storing the food/food grains for the emergency situations like famines/floods.
2. Preventing the large traders from hoarding the food grains.
3. Keeping the revenue minimum, so that every peasants are able to pay.

4. Ensuring that the peasants are getting acute payment for their crops.

**Q. 9. Imagine that you are giving a representation to a British Government Enquiry committee. Write down the grievances of tenant farmers in the form of an appeal.**

**Answer :** The grievances faced by the tenant farmers are :

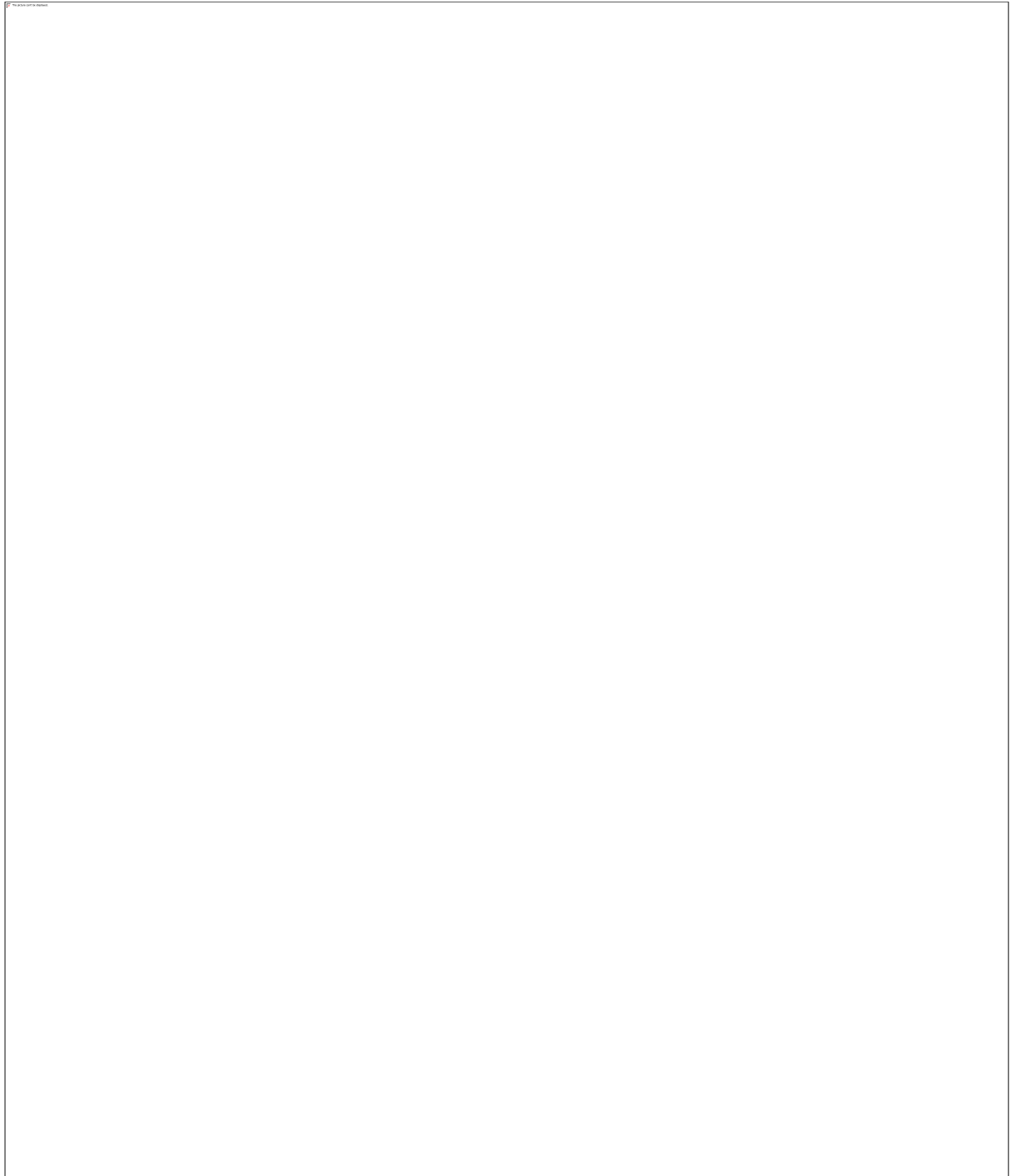
1. Zamindars collect more revenue from them as rent, which is usually 3 to 7 times higher than land revenue.
2. The rights on the lands of cultivators are made insecure by the zamindars.
3. To pay the rent the tenants have to take loan from moneylenders and when unable to repay, the tenants are taken to courts and their lands get auctioned. In this way they lose their lands.
4. The peasants are forced to work on the personal lands of landlords, if they refuse the soldiers force them to do vetti (work without wages).
5. The peasants are not allowed to work on their own field properly.
6. The peasants are also forced to supply ghee, vegetables, gur, straw, cow dung free of cost to the zamindars.

The above are problems faced by the tenants/peasants, that need to be redressed soon.

**Q. 10. Locate the following in the India map:**

**1. Ganjam 2. Awadh 3. Hyderabad 4. River Godavari**

**Answer :**



**Q. 12. Read the paragraph under the heading 'Countless Collections, Cesses and Payments' and answer the following:**

**How are we paying the taxes nowadays?**

**Answer :** During colonial era the zamindars tried to extract as much they could in the variety of pretexts, from the peasants. The peasants had to send ghee, gur, vegetables etc free of cost to the zamindars' houses.

Nowadays, the tax structure of the country is very transparent. The citizens pay taxes in two forms Indirect (extra amount added on the goods apart from its MRP is the tax that we pay). In direct taxes certain amount (as per the rules) gets deducted from the salaried account. Then rest are cess (small amount that is added on the goods price the implementation of government programmes/schemes like Beti Bachao, Beti padhao or swachh Bharat).