

Mahalwari

The **Mahalwari** system (Hindi: महलवारी) was a system introduced by Lord William Bentinck . The other two systems were the Permanent Settlement of Bengal in 1793 and the Ryotwari system in 1820. It covered the States of Punjab, Awadh and Agra, parts of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. During the 1800s, the British tried to establish their control over the administrative machinery of India. The System of Land Revenue acted as a chief source of income of the British. Land was one of the most important source of income for the British. Thus, they used land to control the entire Revenue system, strengthening their economic condition in India.

The word Mahalwari (महलवारी) is derived from the Hindi word Mahal (महल), which means house, district, neighbourhood or quarter.^[1] This system consisted of landlords or Zamindars claiming to represent entire villages or even groups of villages. Along with the village communities, the landlords were jointly responsible for the payment of the revenues. But, individual responsibility was always there. The land included under this system consisted of all land of the villages, even the forestland, pastures etc.

This system was prevalent in the parts of Uttar Pradesh, the North Western province, parts of Central India and Punjab^[2]

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Origin of the Mahalwari System

The north-western states and Awadh (also known as Oudh) were two important territories acquired by the British in India. In 1801, the Nawab of Awadh surrendered the districts of Allahabad to the East India Company. The Jamuna and the Ganges came to the British after the Second Anglo-Maratha War. Lord Hastings conquered more territories of North India after the Third Anglo-Maratha War in the year 1820.

The village headman or Lambardar was completely responsible for all the recommendations, the survey of lands, preparation of the records of rights in lands, settlement of the land revenues, demand in the Mahals, and the collection of the land revenue. The Regulation VII of 1822 accredited the legal sanction to these recommendations. In cases where estates were not held by the landlords but by the cultivators in common tenancy, the state demand was allowed to be fixed at 95% of the rental. However, quite unfortunately, this system broke down as the state demand was excessively large and its working was quite rigid. The amount, payable by the cultivators was quite more than what they could afford.^[3]

Development of Mahalwari System

The government of William Bentinck made a thorough revision of the act of 1823, and thus the Mahalwari System was introduced. They realized that the result of the Regulation of 1822 was nothing other than widespread misery

After a prolonged consultation, the Government finally passed a new regulation in 1823. The *mahalwari* system of land revenue was introduced by Holt Mackenzie and Robert Mertins Bird. It played a large part in making the system more flexible. The process of preparing estimates of produce and rents was simplified too. It also introduced the fixation of the average rents for different classes of soil. This scheme functioned under Mertins Bird. The processes of measuring land, examining soil quality was improved further. The

State demand was fixed at 66% of the rental value and the Settlement was made for 30 years.

The Mahalwari system of land revenue worked under the scheme of 1833 was completed under the administration of James Thompson. The 66% rental demanded proved very harsh, too. In the Saharanpur Rules of 1855, it was revised to 50% by Lord Dalhousie. However, the British officers hardly cared of these rules. This created widespread discontent among the Indians.^[4]

See also

- Ryotwari
- Permanent Settlement

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Further reading

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William Bentinck