

Ryot

Ryot (alternatives: **raiyat**, **rait** or **ravat**) was a general economic term used throughout India for peasant cultivators but with variations in different provinces. While zamindars were landlords, raiyats were tenants and cultivators, and served as hired labour^[1]

A raiyat was defined as someone who has acquired a right to hold land for the purpose of cultivating it, whether alone or by members of his family, hired servants, or partners. It also referred to succession rights.^[2]

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Etymology

Ryot originates from the Hindi word *ra`īyat* and the Arabic word *ra`īyah*, translated as "flock" or "peasants", in turn originating from the word *ra`ā*, meaning "pasture".^[3]

Classifications

Under the Mughal system of land control there were two types of raiyats: khudkasta and paikasta. The khudkasta raiyats were permanent resident cultivators of the village. Their rights in land were heritable according to Muslim and Hindu laws of succession. The other type of raiyats was called paikasta. They did not cultivate land on a permanent basis in any particular mauza (lowest revenue plus village settlement unit), but instead moved from mauza to mauza and engaged themselves for a crop season. In terms of revenue, the paikasta raiyats were generally paid a much lower rate of rent than the khudkashta raiyats. The dividend to the khudkasta, who thus became an absentee owner, came from hard bargaining.^[4] Pahikasht raiyats were a subgroup of peasants who cultivated the land away from the area where they resided.^[5]

Another subgroup included under-raiyats who was entitled to various rights of occupancy and transferable interests. An under-raiyat it was referred to as *akorfa*, though an under-raiyat paying rent in kind was eferred too as a *bargait*.^[6]

The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 was developed to regulate the rent of under-raiyats.^[7] One of the causes of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 was the Bihar Rent Committee report of 1879 which sought rights for the raiyat to resist illegal restraint and illegal enhancement, and allowing him to prove and maintain his occupancy rights.^[8]

Ryotwari system

There were two economic systems prevalent in India during the British rule: the ryotwari system and the mahalwari system. The ryotwari system was known as "severality villages and was based on the system of peasant proprietorship.^[9] The ryotwari (or ryotwary) tenure related to land revenue imposed on an individual or community owning an estate, and occupying a position analogous to that of a landlord. The assessment is known as zamindar

The land revenue is imposed on individuals who are the actual occupants, and this assessment is known as ryotwari. Under zamindari tenure, the land is held as independent property; while under ryotwari tenure it is held of the crown in a right of occupancy, which is under British rule both heritable and transferable by the ryots. The former system prevails in northern and central India, and the latter in Bombay, Madras, Assam and Burma. The Ryot's association was formed by NG Ranga

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