

Unit - 3

Rural Life and Society



Learning Objectives

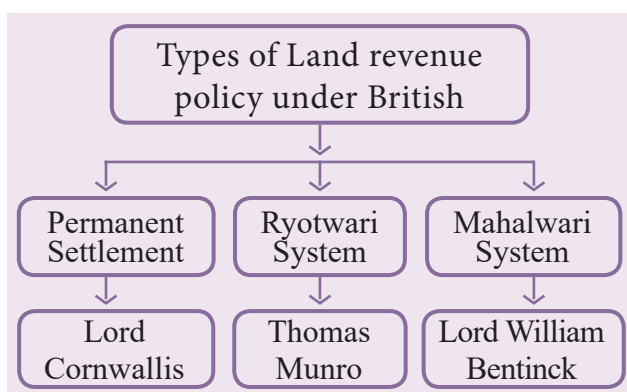
- ▶ To know the land revenue policy under the British Rule
- ▶ To understand the Merits and Demerits of the land revenue policy
- ▶ To know the agrarian crisis and revolts



Introduction

In the pre-colonial period, Indian economy was predominantly an agrarian economy. Agriculture was then the primary occupation of the people and even industries like textiles, sugar, oil, etc. were dependent on it. The British Government in India did not adopt a pro-Indian agriculture and land revenue policy. British Government introduced three major land revenue and tenurial systems in India, namely, the Permanent Settlement, the Mahalwari system and the Ryotwari system. The economic exploitation of the peasants led to the revolt in future.

The Land Revenue Policy under the British



Permanent Settlement

When Robert Clive obtained the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765, there used to be an annual settlement (of land revenue). Warren Hastings changed it from annual to quinquennial (five-yearly) and back to annual again. During the time of Cornwallis, a ten years' (decennial) settlement was introduced in 1793 and it was known Permanent Settlement.

Permanent settlement were made in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Varanasi division of U.P., and Northern Karnataka, which roughly covered 19 percent of the total area of British India. It was known by different names like Zamindari, Jagirdari, Malguzari and Biswedari.



Lord Cornwallis

Salient Features of the Permanent Settlement

- The Zamindars were recognised as the owners of land as long as they paid the revenue to the East India Company regularly.
- The Zamindars acted as the agent of the Government for the collection of revenue from the cultivators.