

Ryots

The term, 'Ryot' is usually associated with the Indian peasants as Munro had stated in his policy principles devised by him. The Ryotwari System was formulated for the Madras Presidency, thereby clearly demarcating and clearly defining the rights existing between the landlord and tenants. This system defined the state itself as the supreme zamindar and vested ryots with individual proprietary rights in land in return for annual cash payment or revenue assessments to the government. (Banerjee Dube 2014: 73)

Ryots or *raiyat* was a general economic term used throughout India for peasant cultivators but with variations in different provinces. The revenue system adopted by Read and Thomas Munro in the territories seized from Tipu Sultan were a part of the simpler adaptation of the revenue systems of the Indian rulers, 'designed to provide money to pay for armies' (Bayly 1988: 86). It was partly dependent on David Ricardo's theory of Rent. The British agrarian policies were restructured in a framework which would yield in the increased amount of revenue production. The results of commercialization were innately bound up with the structure of land relations established or consolidated by British revenue and tenancy policies. (Sarkar 1982: 32)

Often the ryots were at the mercy of the devious moneylenders. In 1859, the British had passed a legislation which stated that a Limitation Law would be in tune with the loan bonds signed between moneylenders and the ryots valid for a period of three years. This law would enable a check on the accumulation of interest over time. The ryots were enraged when the moneylenders practically denied extending the loans. The rent collection turned out to be a persistent problem as due to bad harvests and low prices, the payment of rent became difficult for the ryots. A sense of discontentment further ignited the ryots to revolt at the local level as we had seen in the Deccan villages in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Bibliography

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