

### Explanation of some important terms

1. **Diwani:** The term refers to the rights of revenue collection granted by the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II to the English East India Company by virtue of the treaty of Allahabad (1765) after his defeat in the battle of Buxar in 1764. As per the provisions of this treaty the English East India Company became the *Diwan* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and hence could collect the revenues from these provinces. This grant of *Diwani* marked the beginning of the long process of colonial exploitation of India by the British.
  
2. **Ryot/Raiyat/Rayat:** This is a general term used to indicate all strata of the peasantry in medieval India. The British subsequently adopted it while devising various revenue settlements.
  
3. **Ryotwari system:** This system of land revenue assessment that had been introduced in the Madras and the Bombay Presidencies respectively by Thomas Munro and Mountstuart Elphinstone in the nineteenth century was known as the *ryotwari* system. Under this system, the revenue was directly settled between the government and the ryot. The average income from different types of soil was estimated, the revenue paying capacity of the ryot was assessed and a proportion of this was fixed as the share of the state. The lands were surveyed every 30 years to reassess the revenue demands which were revised upwards or downwards instead of being fixed permanently. The system not only established a direct relationship between the government and the ryot eliminating the intermediaries like the zamindars or the taluqdars but also made the latter the proprietors of the land granting them the rights of lease, mortgage and sale. On the downside the system also increased value of land bringing in moneyed people like moneylenders and speculators to misappropriate land from the hands of the ryot under the garb of non payment of debts. This led to a change in the local agrarian social structure.
  
4. **Zamindar/Zamindari:** It is originally a Persian word which means the holder of land. In an extension of the meaning of this term, 'the right of holding land' was known as *zamindari*. In the Indian context the term came to be first used by Amir Khusro from the

14<sup>th</sup> century onwards(Sultanate period) to refer to the landed aristocracy at the rural level. Under the Mughals, especially from the time of Akbar's reign the *zamindars* came to be divided into three categories: hereditary rulers, proprietary land holders (with a legal right of ownership over land), and revenue collectors with a share in the produce of the land and other rights. During the colonial period the English East India company ushered in a system of land revenue under the act of permanent settlement in 1793 by which a new class of *zamindars* (landlords) was created in the Bengal presidency out of the highest bidders who were granted proprietary rights over land in perpetuity. From the point of view of the company administration this was done to ensure the steady inflow of revenue to its treasury at fixed rates.Perhaps there was also an idea behind it to encourage the landlords to invest in land expand agriculture and contribute to rural prosperity. However, on account of a late realisation of the failure of this policy,the system of permanent settlement was not extended to other parts of the company territory in India.Instead systems like mahalwar and ryotwari were introduced.

**Source:** NCERT (2017) *Dictionary of History for School Children (Trilingual)*, National Council of Educational Research & Training, New Delhi.