



## Land management system in India with historical perspective

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on historical aspects of land management resources and evolution. Moreover, it describes land issues before & after the ice age 5000 B.C. Pre vedic literature on origin of land cutting of forest for land utilization mainly for agricultural activities has been highlighted besides it describes traditional land management and techniques, registration process. Land transfer and colour coding methods for isolation of land and its utilization for different purposes from the early days.

**Keywords:** pre vedic, land management, land evolution, land degradation

### Introduction

The early evolution of land takes place in the mid-paleozoic era, between 480 and 360 million years ago. It is an important development in history with far reaching consequences for the evolution of terrestrial organism and global environment. The name India derived from Indus, which originally from the old persian word Hindu. Hindustan was originally a persian word that meant "land of the Hindus".

Indian is known as the nation of republic. (Bharat Ganrajya) and is located in South Asia. It is seventh largest country by the geographical area, the second-most populous country with over 1.35 billion people and the most populous democracy in the world. Bounded by the Indian ocean in the South, The Arabian sea on the South west, and Bay of Bengal on the South East, It shares land borders with Pakistan to the west, China, Nepal and Bhutan to the North East and Bangladesh to the East. In the Indian ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives, in addition, India's Andman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand and Indonesia.

### History of land and its establishment in India

About 5000 B.C. the last Ice Age-ended when the ice sheet finally retreated from Scandinavia and the glaciers in Scotland disappeared. People, animals and plants invaded the emerging land after the Ice had disappeared. Around 7500 BC the melting of Ice sheet resulted in the flooding of the North sea basin and the disappearance of the land bridge connecting Britain to the continent around 8000 years ago. During 6000–2500 BC, Holocene climate optimum sea level at a slightly higher level than today coinciding with the warmest period in the past 10,000 years with temperature about 2 degrees celsius higher than today.

Greek Philosopher Pythagoras is believed to have learned in India not only his theory of transmigration but also his theory of numbers from the Indian Sankya system. In addition, Dr. Goldstucker and Mr. Bhandarkar refer to the grammarian Parini, Augustia, a Rishi, Introduced reclamation of Jungles

into arable land. It would thus appear that the Aryan migration into South India has to be referred to the period of the Sutras.

### Agricultural Revolution

During the middle age, slowly but steadily, farmers started to experiment with new agricultural methods in order to adapt to unpredictable climates and also stimulate the growth of profitable markets in growing cities.

Agricultural revolution could not have succeeded when new ships to withstand the harsh climate conditions imposed large amount of grain from the Baltic, undermining local grain production. This important made the Flemish and Dutch economy independent from climatic fluctuations which were causing famine.

Indian agriculture began 9000 BC as a result of early cultivation of plant and domestication of crops and animals, soon farmers developed agriculture and further implemented innovative techniques.

In ancient India some of the Aryan families had already begun to practice agriculture. The fertility of Indian soil was a stimulus for cultivation. In the 'Rigveda' period agriculture become the main occupation of the people though they still kept large herds of cattle drove them to pasture. Wheat and Barely were their chief grains of diet, but they did not disdain the use of animal foods and there are frequent allusions in the hymns to the killing of cattle and to the cooking of their flesh for human consumption. They even made use of an intoxicant, indulging freely in a fermented liquor made from the juice of a plant called soma.

The relationship between human kind and land will always dynamic and changes at different rates across country and regions as a result of varying economic, social and environmental pressure. The collection of revenue that necessitated the maintenance of land records came into use although in rudimentary form in ancient time. Attempts to reform the system was first made by Sher Shah were by land was categorized and measured.

Records of Right, also known as Khatauni were put in place where the names and classes of tenure of all occupants of land are recorded.

This consisted of -

1. Village map: A pictorial form showing the village and fields boundaries.
2. Fields books are Khasra: which is an index to the map in which changes in field boundaries, their area, particulars of tenure holders, methods of irrigation, cropped area, other uses of land etc. are shown.
3. Records of right to know about the name and classes of land occupants under tenure system.

Ancient records illustrated that land has been under cultivation in India for more than 5000 years. In the beginning Tribes exercised control over the areas they had taken possession. The Initial form of land rights came from such conquests. The Tribes land to individual families for their utilization who allotted practiced shifting cultivation.

In the case of villages which held land rights jointly the village community claimed the right to all land within the village boundaries and allotted it to individual families for utilization.

In order to appreciate the evolution of revenue administration during the British period, it is pertinent to know the different land revenue system introduced by the British in India such as:

1. Zamindari System
2. Ryotwari System
3. Mahalvari System

**1. Zamindari System:** Governor General lord Cornwallis in 1786 was especially directed to devise a satisfactory solution of the land revenue system which would ensure the company's interest as well as that of the cultivators. Commenting on the company's revenue policy, Cornwallis remarked in 1789 that one third of the company's territory in Hindustan is now Jungle, inhabited only by wild beats, Cornwallis held prolonged discussions on three vital questions.

- i) With whom was the settlement to be made the Zamindar's or the actual titlers of the soil?
- ii) What should be the states share in the produce of land?
- iii) Should be settlement be permanent?

Under Zamindari or permanent settlement introduced in 1793 feudal lords (Zamindaris, Jagirdaris etc.) were declared as proprietors of fixed revenue payments to the East India Company.

**2. Ryotwari System:** The other major system was the Ryotwari system introduced in Madras province in 1802 and in Bombay in 1817-18. In this case, individual cultivators i.e. ryots, were recognized as proprietors of their land with the rights to sublet, mortgage and transfer their lands by gift or sale. Their tenure of land was secure so long as revenue payments were paid directly to the collectors. This system prevailed over most of South India including present day Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andhrapradesh, Madhyapradesh and Assam. The Princely state of Jaipur and Jodhpur in Rajasthan also fall under the Ryotwari System.

**3. Mahalwari System:** This system was introduced between 1820 and 1840 in Punjab (Pakistan, India and Haryana) parts of what are now Madhyapradesh, Orissa and the princely state of Awadh and Agra in Uttar Pradesh. This tenure system was much less extensive and accounted for some 5% of the cultivated area. Under this system, the village lands were held jointly by the village communities. The members of which were jointly and severally responsible for the payment of land revenue. Land revenue was fixed for the whole village and the village headman (Lumberdar) collected it for which he received panchatra, i.e. 5% as commission.

### Land Management in Mauryan's Period

Ashoka was the most powerful king of the Indian subcontinent. A ruler of the Mauryan's Empire, Ashoka reigned of Emperor Ashoka from 273 BC to 232 BC. The reign of Emperor Ashoka covered most of India South Asia and beyond stretching from present day, Afghanistan and parts of Persia in the west, to Bengal and Assam in the East, the Mysore in the south. However the battle of Kalinga changed king Ashoka completely. The power hungry emperor became a Buddhist follower and started preaching the principles of Buddhism throughout the world.

Ashoka was a very intellectual statesman. He ruled over Magadha wisely and completely. The people of Kalinga were patriot and loved freedom. Ashoka worked hard especially for the spread of education in his land. During the period, Nalanda was famous for education and the University of Magadha.

### Land Revenue and Management System in Mughal Period

The Mughal Empire began in 1526 AD as the height of its power in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, It controlled most of the Indian subcontinent extending from Bengal in the East to Balochistan in the West, Kashmir in the North to the Kaveri basin in the South. Its population at that time has been estimated as 110 to 150 million over a territory of more than 3.2 million square per kilometers.

### Land Revenue Administration in Colonial Period

Land revenue in India during British times was primarily based upon money collection by tax farmers, who in turn would receive this money from the local land owners or Zamindars. In such intermediary process, the poor and helpless farmers remained absolutely exploited, with the moolah going to British tax farmers and Zamindars denominated by the British. The British land revenue system in India shattered and devastated the native agrarians, with practically nothing left for them to call their own.

The Revenue Department is the oldest arm of governments, existing from time immemorial in the country. The process of revenue administration was started by the Sher Shah Suri (1540-45). From very early times, land administration and revenue administration centered on collection of taxes/land revenue, which was the main source of revenue to rulers. The history of land administration dates back to the olden days of kings and kingdoms. Right from the time of Manu, land revenue has been a major source of income to the sovereign. During the Mauryan and Gupta periods, the revenue was

collected by paid officials, and resembled the present day revenue administration system. During post-Mauryan and Gupta periods, the State revenue was collected by the donees of Brahmadeya, Devadana and Agrahara Lands. The revenue administration was systematized scientifically during British rule by introducing “permanent settlement” by Cornwallis in 1793 and Ryotwari system by Sir Thomas Munro in 1802. The British inherited the institutional form of agrarian system from the Mughals. The British Revenue Department was a pivotal department in administration.

### **Conclusion**

The efforts of different ministries/departments /organizations should be integrated to harmonize the delineation, codification and classification of land. Detailed soil data (physical, biological, chemical and microbial) based on effective soil testing are pre-requisites for all lands under both rain-feed and irrigated agriculture to address the issues related to soil health vis a vis agriculture production such soil data will be vital for setting up village resource centre for the following community. Necessary financial and human resources should thus be assigned for the purpose. Central and State land use board should be re-organized and empowered to lead this work. Further, we must implement the unimplemented agenda of land reforms with particular reference to tenancy laws, land leasing distribution of surplus and waste land, and providing adequate access to common property and waste land resources.

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