CHAPTER V

TRADITIONAL AGRARIAN RELATIONS
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Agrarian relations in the narrowest sense would mean the relationship among various classes and persons working on, and associated with agriculture. These relationships have roots in the past and changes with different forces of social change. There is a continuity of existing relations with the past. Therefore, to understand the present form and nature of agrarian relations, it is necessary to analyse and understand them historically. In the present chapter an effort has been made to draw the continuity and change over different periods, i.e. ancient, medieval and British period.

Ancient Period

In pre-historic times, from the evidence available, it is however, assumed that land was common property of the village communities, though cultivation was not common since the Vedic period. The owner of the land was the cultivator himself. He commanded full mastery over land which he cleared and tilled. Human idea of right in land was based on the norm that who first cleared the virgin waste land had claim to the continued enjoyment of that land (Baden-Powell, 1892). Individual holdings were segregated and private holdings under the common village ownership came into being.

Manusmriti maintains that land is the property of the person who cut away the wood or who tilled and cleared it (IX.44). But Yajanavalkya says that land belongs to the king and the tiller possessed only the usufructury right for life.
In the Arthasastra, it is maintained that 'land may be confiscated from those who do not cultivate them and given to others; or it may be cultivated by village labourers and traders, at least those owners who do not cultivate them should pay less' (Sen, 1962).

In Jaimini's view in Purva Mimamsa, vi 7,3 'the king cannot give away the earth because it is not his exclusive property but is common to all beings enjoying the fruits of their own labour on it'. This may indicate that state ownership was totally absent, but limited by or combined with common ownership of the village. This is the ancient tradition which has been described by Marx as the Asiatic system (Sen, 1962).

During Kautilya's time the authority and the power of the king increased, and new planned settlements of fallow land and forests became widespread. These developments caused an increase in the area of land owned by the king, without, however, negating the right of village communities. The individual peasant enjoyed the right of use as long as he cultivated the land. The king's share of the produce (the land revenue) was 1/4, 1/6 and 1/10 at different periods (Sen, 1962).

Right from the Vedic age, all over the recorded history scriptures and literary works, like Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharta, Kautilya's Arthashastra, we find that a high status was given to agricultural profession as well as to the agriculturist as all these sources recorded a high appreciation of the services
of the ploughman and the gift of land, to the Indian society (Bhattacharya, 1982).

In Rigveda, we find the earliest reference to land reform in which it is mentioned that land was laid out into regular fields, ploughed and sown; the crops were reaped and stored. Here the system implies individual ownership, in which wide fields, vast treasures, spacious pastures, has Indra bestowed on his friends. Measured-rodes presumably of standard lengths were used for measuring field at that time. But upto 6th century B.C., there were no landlords. In the later Vedic period, the king had a right to tax on raw-produce on yearly basis and thus king could be considered the ultimate owner of the land. The amount levied seems to have varied from 1/6 to 1/2, according to the decision of the ruling power or owing to other reasons. The land could be sold or given away as a gift or a donation at least in the Kingdom of Magadha. The landholdings called Khetta were redistributed and redivided among the family members as one generation succeeded another. The farmers paid one-fourth produce of the soil because all the land was the property of the crown and no other person was permitted to own land (Randhawa, 1980). The land-tax was collected by an official known as Agronomoi, who measured the land and superintended the irrigation.

The Mauryas made an important contribution to the development of rural economy by founding new settlements and repopulating decaying ones by drafting surplus settlements from
over-populated areas. The Sudras who were hitherto regarded as the collective property of the three Varnas were encouraged to settle down as farmers in these settlements. It is during this period that a caste-divided peasantry was also created (Irfan Habib, 1963).

During Gupta period land revenue was known as Bhag or King's share which was normally one-sixth of the produce and the land belonged to the crown. When Hiuen-Tsang came to India, he described that the cultivators paying the share of the crops to the crown appeared to him to be the tenants of the King. He paid one-sixth of the crops as the share of the state. This may imply that the rate of one-sixth was standardized in the Gupta period and continued even during the reign of Puspabhitis (Nagar, 1989).

During the reign of Harshavardhana of Thanesar (606-647 A.D.) (which was the part of this tract), it is stated that those who worked as tenant farmers on the royal estate held land in proportion to the members of the family and they paid a tax of one part in six. The tax was fixed on each plough measure on per plough unit (Devahuti, 1970). In Harsacarita it is indicated that in the region of Srikantha Janapada, the King had the owner of the land who could grant the land or the whole village to any one he liked. The farmers of Srikanth Janapada were his tenants and paid one-sixth of the produce as rent.

Analysing the agrarian system in ancient period three types of land can be recognised (i) land belong to the King,
known as royal land; the income of which was personal to the King, (ii) land belonging to the nobility and the privileged persons, who had to pay customary land revenue in kind and/or in cash to ruler, and (iii) land belonging to the hereditary watandars (village chief) who also paid revenue to king (because of protection he provided). Below the king were the cultivators (Khut-Kasht owner, cultivator-raiyats or members of joint village community), having actual ownership of land which is today broadly described as permanent and heritable occupancy right. The land revenue was collected both in kind and cash. Generally, the share of king was one-sixth, but it could be one-eighth or one-tenth of the produce depending on the various conditions such as the type of soil, nature of crops or use of irrigation. With the increase in expenditure of administration royal luxuries more land was brought under cultivation and more revenue was collected. It is pertinent to remark that ownership of land was given to some privileged castes, and it denied to some others. Rulers and the peasants had bilateral relations based on the concept of duties rather than rights, it was not much important whether the land was owned by the king or by the peasant. Peasants paid a share of their produce to the king within certain limits.

Medieval Period

Later on, the existence of the various types of landed interests were the results of a long process of evolution spread over several centuries during Medieval period. By the
close of the 12th century A.D. with the invasions and conquests of India by the Muslims, a pyramidal structure had already been established in agrarian relations. Though their were regional differences, but the nature of land rights in most part of the country were basically the same. The land revenue was about 1/2 of the produce. During Sultanate period (1206-1526 A.D.), when the present tract of Haryana was part of Delhi, significant changes in land rights did occur but essential features remained almost the same. Practically the entire country came under the jurisdiction of one or another type of intermediary known as Jagirdar in which tenant economy played an important part. All agricultural lands in the empire belonged to the Sultan but was under the control of zamindars (Robert, 1979).

It was during Mughal period that revolutionary land reforms were made by Shershah Suri who ruled this region for a short period (1540-1545 A.D.). Shershah is well known in the history for his concern for the welfare of cultivators, revenue administrative reforms and system of land revenue assessment based on the measurement of the land. The state demand was fixed at one-third of the expected produce payable in cash or kind. But when there were natural calamities like drought or flood, the help was given to the cultivators in cash or kind by the state to relieve them of distress. The state was also to compensate the cultivators for the damages caused by the marches of army or battles (Elliot and Dowson, 1964: 329-331).
In United Provinces, of which, this tract was a part the
holding of every ryot was separately measured, one-fourth of
the expected produce was assessed as the Government revenue. It
was cultivator's choice of payment, either in kind or cash. The
land was divided into several classes and the rate of each was
fixed. Land was measured at every harvest, and the revenue was
charged accordingly. In this region, the rural community was
divided into landowner and labourer with slight difference from
the economic point of view. The condition of tenant-at-will was
worst. There was sufficient land to be cultivated, but due to
adverse circumstances it could not be ploughed. There were
heavy taxes of the government on the landowners. Owner was
forced to pay full revenue to the government. So, with the
passage of time farmer became bankrupt (Jafri, 1985).

In the reign of Akbar, Raja Todar Mal divided Northern
India into administrative circles and measured all arable and
productive land in terms of standard bigha, i.e., an estimated
classification of soil according to their productivity and
other advantages. The 'Zabt' system was introduced (Sharma,
1971). Under this system it was laid down that each plot of
land shown should be charged with a cash assessment decided
according to the nature of crop (Irfan Habib, 1963). He
introduced cash assessment instead of assessment in kind. The
land was divided into three categories according to its
fertility and one-third of the produce was given to the state.
He also tried to substitute collection of land revenue by
salaried officials. It caused a great burden to the village
community when land measuring for assessment started and officials exploited the peasantry (Singh, 1983).

Traditionally, the motive of production was to meet the need of village community and the major function, i.e., production, distribution and consumption of economic institutions were limited to village community itself. Mode of production, was very simple and can be best defined as repeaping the bounty of nature. Land was not a scare commodity and large tracts were used for grazing animals. In this dry tract there used to be plenty of milk and ghee but scarcity of foodgrains. Being a drought prone and famine striken tract agriculture was a proposition of loss, therefore, the traditional agricultural castes were engaged in cultivation and tenancy was a privilege passed on from generation to generation without any questioning.

The state's share also tended to rise from about one-sixth in the period of Hindu Kings to about one-third during Akbar's reign and upto one-half of the produce during Aurangzeb's reign. As the Mughal empire weakened, there was tendency on the part of jagirdars and zamindars to misuse their power and position, indulge in illegal exactions from the peasant and oppress and torture to release the land revenue (Irfan Habib, 1963). When the peasants' rights began to be encroached upon by powerful officials and chieftains, the agrarian classes formed 'village associations' (Khap panchayats), such as Gatwal and Chaubisi which was alive till today. These associations were represented by all sections of
the peasantry, even the untouchable agricultural labourers had representation. These were formed so as to have collective force against any oppression. Agricultural labour during the Mughals were generally immobile. The poor peasant had no temptation to leave his village as long as it supplied him food. The large number of landless labourers were practically serfs tied to the land in a condition the slavery to cultivators who feed and clothed them in return for their labour (Hari Singh, 1983). Such changes in land ownership and revenue collection system deteriorated the village community. In arid tract of this region tenants fled away as they were not in position to meet the revenue demands of the king.

While examining the revenue system of the Muslims the first and very important point to be noticed is that they made no attempt to revolutionise existing arrangements. By Hindu aid they secured the payment of tribute in money without interfering with the established methods of collection and vested property right.

No real reform was made by any Muslim King till the day of Shershah of the Afghan dynasty. Of Altamash and Balban, we find they bestowed Jageers on officials, but this was nothing new. It was moreover remarked of Balban that he was considerate to all the ryots. Next come Allauddin Khiliji, famous for certain regulations which attempted, in a queer fashion, to fix the prices of grain and other commodities, with a view to mitigate the suffering of his subjects from the high cost of
living. He demanded one-half of produce, probably the first interference with the old rules concerning the share due to the Government. His successor, Mubarak also known as Qutub Uddin, adopted a mild policy towards his subjects. The exorbitant tribute demanded from the people was abolished.

During the reign of the Tuglug Kings, Ferozshah was quite considerate to the peasantry in his dominations. It is also related to the "Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi" how he introduced irrigation into the township of Fatehabad and Hisar (now these falls in this tract of Haryana) so that from 80 to 150 miles of land were brought under cultivation and not only villages but fortified towns, sprung up, such as Hansi in the later years, the chief stronghold of the renowned George Thomas (Nagar, 1989).

Next we might mention Sikandar Lodhi. He laid the foundation of some useful reforms such as his measurement of gaz of survey is well-known ((Jagir,1985).

During Medieval period particularly in Mughal India, three major tenure systems were prevailing in this tract and land revenue was appropriated by three different agencies, the Government, the Jagirdards and Madad-Maash land holders. (i) The Khalisa land owned by the imperial power and the income from this was remitted to the imperial treasury, (ii) Jagirdari lands also belonged to the imperial servants known as jagirdars who were entrusted with an authority to collect the revenue of these land and deposit the same after deducting a part of it as
his salary, in the imperial treasury, (iii) Madad-Maash lands: free land grants to men of piety and learning. The income of this land was freely bestowed on persons of great learning and charity. All these lands were cultivated by the peasants whose rights to ownership of land was doubtful but were not evicted in normal circumstances (Siddqui, 1970).

During Mughal period, the tenurial relations were very simple; only two parties were involved, the ruler and the subject. If the subject occupied land, he was required to pay a share of its gross produce to the ruler, in return for the protection he was entitled to receive. Abu-I Fazl substantiated this view and emphasized that the sovereign appropriated a part of the produce as "remuneration of sovereignty" for maintaining law and order in society, in which people could work and earn their livelihood. He further stated that the sovereign's right was not only confined to the produce of the land, he also exercised the prerogative to impose taxes on all sorts of property and sources of income or produce (Ain-a-Akbari, Part-II: 205-206). Under the Mughals, the emperor required revenue to take up new expeditions in new areas. The cultivation of sufficient land was a surety to obtain maximum revenue and whosoever failed to cultivate land (exempting the year of natural calamities) were liable to penalties (Moreland, 1962: 91).

Agrarian social structure inherited its basic characteristics from earlier periods to the Medieval period. Land was
primarily the property of king or monarch and subjects were to cultivate it. The protection provided by the kind to its subject was considered to be a very important service for which land revenue was justified. These basic relations remained the same under different kings. But a few kings made efforts to bring more and more land under cultivation to increase their revenue. Creation and propagation of jageers was accelerated, which in turn created large number of intermediaries between cultivator and the king. Royal lands were given different titles so the rate of revenue also differed from area to area under different kings. There was no dearth of land for cultivation but increased rate of revenue tempted peasant to cultivate more land than they required to enable them to pay increased revenue.

**British Period**

In the eighteenth century A.D., in the course of conquest of India, British rulers got the legacy in the Eastern and Northern India, of the three distinct groups who shared the produce of the land. They were cultivators who tilled the soil, the controller of the cultivators called zamindar and the state. These three, were in constant conflicts and negotiations over rightful claim to the produce of the soil and the results of the labour of the cultivator. Thus, in this system legal title over the land was irrelevant. When the East India Company extended political authority over a large part of India in the late 18th century, to collect land revenue became a major
function for its government. To enhance the revenue, they made different land reforms known as land settlements. Thus, Rayatwari system in South India and Mahalwari system in North India came into existence (Robert, 1971: 237-38). Robert M. Bird and James Thomson started Mahalwari system which replaced the talukdari system in several areas. It was under this system that during the 19th century A.D. under Lord Dalhousie, John Lawrance and others tried to implement the land settlements to the prevailing conditions in the then Punjab (now Haryana) after the death of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. Thus, by the middle of the 19th century, three basic land revenue systems had been introduced in the provinces of British India, the zamindari, rayatwari and mahalwari, all serving the same ends namely to conserve for British colonialist the feudal exploitation of Indian peasantry. Therefore, zamindari system in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Rayatwari system in Presidency of Madras and South India and Mahalwari system in the then Punjab (now Haryana) came into existence (Kotovsky, 1964: 1-2). The Mahalwari system is defined by the Congress reform Committee (1945) in the following words:

The principles of Mahalwari or Joint village system first adopted in Agra and Oudh and later extended to the Punjab were laid down in Regulation IX of 1833. Under this scheme the villages concerned were units by themselves, the ownership of property was joint and communal. These villages or mahals were settled with directly, though a co-sharer of standing was generally selected to undertake the primary liability of paying
the land revenue. Under this system the details regarding procedure, period of settlement and assessment of land revenue vary from place to place.

John Stuart Mill described it in the following words:

The peasant proprietors compound with the state for a fixed period. The proprietors do not engage individually with the government but by villages. The village, through its headman, undertakes to pay so much for so many years themselves assigning to each man his quota. Primarily each man cultivate and pays for himself but ultimately he is responsible for his co-villagers and they for him; they are ultimately bound together by a joint responsibility. If one of them is compelled to sell his rights to meet demand upon him, the other have right for pre-emption (Mittal, 1986).

The region of Haryana was acquired by British East India Company in 1803 from the Maratha Chief Daulat Ram Scindia (Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab Vol. II: 257) who ruled for a little period. The British authorities directed their attention towards the peasants and their agrarian conditions.

In May 1811, Charles Theophilus Metcalfe became the third resident of Delhi. He was first British administrator who studied complicated problems of the region seriously and minutely. He studied the composition, the functions and the importance of the village communities and village panchayats in the rural set up of the region. He admired very much self-sufficient character and called the village communities as
'little republics'. He made a land settlement for one year and afterward three year land settlements were made. In this way, in 1820 there were land settlements in the then Punjab (now Haryana), from three to twenty years. These settlements and assessments were too much for the peasantry as less than 50 per cent of the gross produce was left with them. The payment of revenue in kind was replaced by cash (Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab Vol. II: 257).

In November 1834, the Agra Presidency (the North-Western Provinces since February 29, 1936) was formed with agra as its headquarters. Haryana had become one of its six division namely Delhi Division (Dharam Banu, 1957: 145). The latter division included the districts of Panipat, Hisar, Delhi, Rohtak and Gurgaon consisting of 3,333 villages. It remained a part of the North-Western provinces till the end of the East India Company. The administration of the present districts of Karnal, Kurukshetra and Ambala was under the control of the Superintendent of the Political Affairs and Agent to the Government in the territory of the protected Sikhs and Hill Chiefs at Ambala (Farooqui, 1924). Later the whole of Haryana region was tagged with the Punjab administration in 1858.

The land policy adopted by the Company upset the life of peasants or petty proprietors who were already poor. The early summary assessment of land revenue was oppressive and the methods of assessment and collection were vexations and extortionate. Consequently, it created tension among the
peasantry. In the then Hisar district, the demand for the three summary settlements for ten, five and ten years respectively during 1815 and 1840 were so high that full collections were the exceptions. For example, the demand of the first settlement (1815-1825) was so high that it exceeded by 20 per cent. So this policy of heavy revenue greatly demoralised the people and shattered the peasant economy (The Imperial Gazetteers of India, 1909). The British land settlements are said to have ruined the peasantry in Haryana. The poor farmers when could not afford to pay revenue had to go to jails (SR, Rohtak 1910: 101-103). The mode of collection of land revenue was also faulty as the assessment was oppressive. The collection were made in the month of February and September long before the harvest. With the result that in the pargana of Karnal to escape the ruination, the inhabitant of many villages, nearly in mass, had abandoned their lands and homes (SR, Karnal, 1883: 46). The same painful picture of the people of the Sonepat pargana is seen when the villages of Paburea, pattibrahma, Chidi, Yusujpur, Chashali, Ghyspur, Supura, Bagh and many others were deserted completely. Similarly, in other districts it was harsh and unsympathetic. In fact this oppressive policy compelled many of the peasants to desert their lands and homes (SR, Karnal, 1883: 47).

The Government share was calculated on the basis of 10 years gross produce. The usual rate of batai was one-half in canal tracts, the owner and the tenant shared the Government
dues, the cost of seed, and the produce according to the batai rate, which was specially lowered to one-third of sugarcane was grown. Cash rent paid by occupancy tenants were almost invariably rents expressed in terms of the land revenue, but tenant-at-will mostly paid 'Chakota-rents' such 'Chakota' rents were usually fixed at a rate calculated on the area, which was often roughly estimated by the contracting parties without reference to the revenue records. Rents on unirrigated land varied largely in the different circles. In the richer circles one rupee per bigha was considered as a general average and in poorer circles the average dwindled down to ten annas, sandybhur, let only eighth annas whereas richer dakar or sailab often attained the high rental of two rupee rent on irrigated averaged double than those of local barani (SR, Hisar, 1912).

As nothing was left with the peasants, whenever monsoon failed, they experienced a terrible famine and government did not give much help and thus the people experienced terrible distress and greast loss of humand and animal life. Some of the terrible famines were in the years of 1783, 1803-4, 1812-13, 1817, 1818, 1824-25, 1832-34, 1837-38, 1841-42, 1851-52 and 1858-1859. The Chalisa famine 1783 completely ruined the Hisar district (The Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1909, Vol. XI: 230). Whatever the government did was insufficient to reduce the acute miseries of the agriculturists. Closely connected with land reforms and land revenue was the serious problem of heavy rural indebtedness.
During the Medieval period the task of revenue collection was entrusted to the jagirdars, the British also set about creating a small indigenous group which on the one hand would owe their loyalty to the colonial government and on the other hand would have considerable influence in the countryside. For this purpose, the elite of the village community who were generally also the largest owners, were picked up. They were designed as lambardars, one lambardar was made responsible for collecting land revenue from one fraction (pati) of a village. For performing this task the lambardars were allowed 5 per cent of the revenue as their commission. In addition, the lambardars received a grant upto 75 acres from village waste land (Punjab District Gazetteers, 1893-94, Lahore).

Traditionally the landowners and cultivators were from higher castes like Jat, Rajput, Ahir, Ror, Gujars and Saini, but in caste status hierarchy, Brahmin were at the top. Both from agrarian economic structure as well as caste status hierarchy sudra/untouchables were at the lowest ebb, i.e., Dhanak, Chamar, Chura, etc. Artisan castes, i.e., Khati, Lohar, Jhimar, Khumar, etc., were socially in the middle rung but economically dependent on higher caste landed category (Ibbeston, 1981).

The motive of peasant owner was to maximise the production not only to meet the family needs but also to discharge the revenue obligations. They made investment to improve their land, created infrastructure and cultivated more
valuable crops. Prices of export crops showed greater increase in relation to the prices of food crops, want for home consumption (Famine Commission, 1901).

Between 1855 to 1891, some eight to nine million acres of village common land was brought under cultivation in Punjab (Herbert Calvert, 1922). The tenant cultivated area during the same period increased by 10.85 million acres which is greater than our estimated of village common land brought under cultivation during this period (Calvert, 1922).

Tenancy land continued to increase in this tract due to growing expropriation of peasants. In 1892-93, forty per cent of the land in the province was cultivated by tenants-at-will. In 1902-03, it increased to 43 per cent, in 1931-32 to 48 per cent. Taking together both occupancy tenants and tenants at will, land under cultivation was 53 per cent in 1927. In 1932, total tenancy land of both categories had risen to 57 per cent and later in 1936-37 to 60 per cent. Stratification of peasantry had been vastly accentuated in the period of agrarian crisis (Calvert, 1922).

Present Haryana state was part of the erstwhile Punjab and certain areas like Ambala, Karnal, Jind and Narnaul were under the Sikh kings. The methods of assessment prevalent in the Sikh dominions, batai or crop sharing and kankut were the most important. The phrase 'batai' lutai or 'batai is plunder' represent the viewpoint of the rulers who regarded it as cumbersome and expensive. The government was likely to lose
some of its share through misappropriation of a part of the produce by the cultivator. However, batai as the method of assessment was popular with the cultivator because of its equity. He paid a share from the actual produce and had the satisfaction of not being cheated by either the vagaries of weather or the rise on fall of prices (Banga, 1978).

Kankut, or appraising the standing crop, was only a little less popular than batai and at places (Karnal and Ambala), it was more prominent. It brought certain definite advantages to the government without being unfair to the cultivator. It was actual crop which was estimated and assessed. The cultivator could know from his experience whether or not any proposed appraisal was close to the expected yield. However, even in those areas where batai and kankut were prominent, zabt remained in existence as a method of assessment. It involved fixed cash rates for unit areas of crops on the basis of periodic measurement. This method was applied to superior or perishable crops like cotton, indigo, sugarcane, tobacco, poppy, safflower, chillies, oilseeds, pulses and vegetables. Mixed assessment prevailed in some places, batai being adopted for the rabi, kankut for the kharif and zabt for the cash crops (Banga, 1978).

Whatever the method, there was a large variation in the rates of assessment prevalent in different parts. This variation was caused generally by the conditions of soil, the mode of irrigation, and the expense of cultivation. The rate of batai and kankut varied from one-third to one-half for the
unirrigated and from one-fourth to one-sixth for irrigated lands in much of the former Mughal province of Lahore and the territories across the Satluj (SR, Karnal 1912: 103-105; SR, Hisar, 1912).

The collection of revenue was both in cash and kind. In all those areas where the system of assessment per well or per plough was prevalent, collections were normally made in cash. Similarly, for the superior crops, the cultivators had to pay mostly in cash. Payment in cash for perishable products may also be assumed to have been the norm. The prevalence of batai and kankut, however, would imply the right of the cultivator to pay in kind. The tenacity of the proprietors to cling to grain payments was noticed by the early British settlement officers (SR, Ambala 1959: 18).

On the average, the share of the government was two-fifth of the produce, though in some areas the cultivator paid much more and in others, much less. The percentages of the officials and intermediaries were normally paid from the share of government. But the cultivators had to pay certain abwab which varied from area to area. They also paid kamiane to village servants. They were generally able to retain nearly half the produce from their lands.

In the brotherhood villages also there were a certain number of cultivators who, while admitted to most of the privileges of a member of the community, including contribution on equal terms to the village bach, were still not recognised
in full sense of the word as members of the territorial brotherhood (bhumbhai). Such tenants, however, so long as they paid the village rate, from year to year were never ejected, for, as in the case of kadim kirsans, it was to the interest of the brotherhood to get as much land cultivated as possible and so to reduce the burden on each member.

As the Settlement of 1840-41 the three classes of tenants were classified as follows: (i) boladar mukarar shara bandbold or bil mukta, i.e., tenant paying for land cultivated at fixed rate of rent, or paying for a fixed area of land at a lumpsum rent; class (ii) boladar harsala, i.e., tenants who held on agreement renewed or renewable from year to year; class (iii) boladar shamilati, i.e., tenants paying only the government demand at the general back rate for the village. The first and third classes were in practice not liable to ejectment so long as they paid the sums due from them, while the second class could be ejected, but owing to the desire to increase cultivation and the small value of land they seldom were. The distinction between the status of different classes of tenants was, however, one not based on any specified rule or law, but one observed in practice.

In the Settlement of 1863 the question of definitely fixing the status of different classes of tenants and specifying the resulting rights and liabilities came up for decision and it was then that the forms of tenant right was finally moulded. The ordinary division into tenants with and without right of occupancy was adopted, and rules were framed
by which to determine the class into which any particular tenant should fall. They were as follows:

(i) Tenants who had no continuous possession or who had not paid rent at fixed rates were declared to have no right of occupancy.

(ii) The tenants from whom proprietors had realised profits in the shape of rent were, if their possession dated from before the Settlement of 1840-41, declared to have a rights of occupancy, otherwise not.

(iii) Tenants in bhayacharah villages who had paid at the village bach rates were, if their possession dated from before 1849, declared to have rights of occupancy, otherwise not unless the proprietors agreed to confer such rights on them.

The payment of rent has of course been customary in zamindari and pattidari villages since the recolonization of the four southern tehsils, but in bhayacharah villages no rent in excess of the village bach rate was taken at the Settlement of 1840-41, nor in fact till the Settlement of 1863.

The cash rents paid in the tract with which we are dealing are very generally paid on area held whether sown or not; this is called laganbhari pari. Kind rents are taken by a fixed share of produce (batai), very commonly one-third, together with a certain number of sers per maund as serina. The fees in kind to kamins are given out of a small quantity which is left out of the division. Any balance left, after these are paid, is again divided. Another not uncommon form of rent is that taken by appraisement in cash of the landlord's fixed share of the crop; this is called kankut. In a few cases cash
rents are paid by rates on area sown, the rates sometimes varying with the crop (kasht harsala or jinsi).

The principles, upon which the individuals, who were declared proprietors in the Settlement of the Sirsa Tehsil in 1852, were selected, have already been noticed. Such persons were declared sole proprietors of their own holdings and joint proprietors of the common waste of the village. All other cultivators in the village rank to the level of tenants (asamis).

The loss of their incipient proprietary rights by many proprietors in the bhayacharah villages was to some extent compensated by a wholesale creation of occupancy tenures. Practically all tenants, except those who had settled in a village very recently or who occupied a distinctly inferior position, were made occupancy tenants in the Settlement of 1852-53, all other tenants being declared to be tenants without rights of occupancy. This was the case both in the bhayacharah and in boladari villages. The rents of occupancy tenants were also fixed so as to leave the proprietors in bhayacharah villages a profit (malikana or biswahdari) of 5 to 10 per cent. On the land revenue after paying the revenue and cesses due, and of 50 to 100 per cent, in boladari villages. In the latter case the proprietor paid cesses out of his malikana (Punjab District Gazetteer Hisar, 1915).

To improve the condition of peasantry in this tract The Punjab Tenancy Act (Act XVIII of 1868) was passed, its intention was three-fold. First, to define occupancy right;
secondly, to regulate the rate of enhancement of rent; and thirdly, to provide compensation for the eviction of tenants.

Due to this tenancy Act, the landlord-tenant relations underwent significant change in some districts of this province. Here also it mainly centered round the problem of enhancement of rent which the tenant tried to fight out by claiming the right of occupancy for themselves. In many districts these tenants were descendants of persons who had assisted the proprietary body in the foundation of new villages in the past. They were often closely related to proprietary body by ties of kinship and were allowed to hold land on condition of sharing the revenue demand of the state. Their relationship with the proprietors was generally cordial and in the recent past they had often assisted one another in repelling the attacks of common foes. But in the 1870's their relation witnessed a gradual change (SR, Sirsa 1884: 29).

During the first quarter of the 19th century Sirsa (SR, Sirsa 1884: 330) was almost entirely a waste land with very few permanent village. But shortly after the establishment of British rule, cultivators from the neighbouring region started migrating there and brought a considerable amount of land under the plough.

They were generally allowed to hold their lands on condition of sharing the government dues and the common village expenses. At the first regular settlement (1852-64) proprietary right were, however, conferred only on those handful of persons who were selected arbitrarily by the settlement officer from
among the general body of cultivators and all land brought under cultivation before 1852 was declared to be held by the cultivators with right of occupancy. It was then recorded that 27 per cent of the total cultivated area remained under the proprietors while nearly 66 per cent was held by tenants with occupancy rights (SR, Sirsa 1884: 331).

Here were the elements of a potential struggle between proprietors and their tenants. At the regular settlement, proprietors remembered that there was nearly a wholesale grant of occupancy rights to almost all the tenants in the land they then cultivated; they also feared its repetition at the revision of settlement. They were, therefore, determined to evict their tenants at will, 'thus establishing beyond doubt their true status'. On the other hand, many of these tenants did not hesitate to challenge their right of evicting them from the lands they held since the completion of regular settlement in the early 1850's. They often demanded the right of occupancy over these lands.

No one usually thought of evicting them from the lands they cultivated in the neighbouring Native States of Patiala and Bikaner, from which of these tenant had come, so long as they paid the requisite amount. Further in general feeling of the countryside, the settlement officer reported, also discouraged the eviction of a tenant, from the land he cultivated especially if he or his father had broken it up from the prairie (SR, Sirsa 1884: 342). Emboldened by all factors, they contested many of the notices of eviction served on them.
by the law courts. These numerous eviction disputes greatly unsettled the tenants throughout the district and embittered their relations with landlords. This bad feeling naturally led to many quarrels and prompted some of them to leave their lands which they had brought under the plough. In many cases again, after the eviction proceedings had been concluded in the proprietors' favour, tenants were allowed to remain in possession of the land at the higher rate (SR, Sirsa 1881-82) or at a rent in kind instead of in cash, or were given other land in place of that from which they had been evicted.

These struggles over rent between proprietors and their tenants were not only confined to Sirsa. Similar conflicts developed in Hisar and Gurgaon. In Gurgaon, for example, before the revision of the settlement (1872) the great majority of tenants paid their rent at the customary rate (this was often below the revenue rate). But with the revision of assessment in the late 1870's proprietors insisted on a higher rate of rent (SR, Gurgaon 1884: 71). They were particularly active in Palwal tehsil where the values of land rose remarkably during these years owing to the opening of Agra canal. The Deputy Commissioner remarks that landlords are in consequence attempting to evict as many old tenant paying at customary rents as they can, in order to lease their lands to new tenants at higher rent (Banerjee, 1982). Further there was also evidence that rents in kind were giving place to cash rents in all the five tehsils of the district.
This attempt on the part of the proprietors was naturally disliked by tenants holding lands at privileged customary rents. The tenants were reluctant to admit their demands. In 1875-76 they frequently challenged the eviction suits instituted by the landlords. In the succeeding years also proprietors continued to stick to this policy and it was only in the late 1870's, that the number of notices of eviction tended to decline when these tenants agreed to come to terms in conditions of paying higher rate of rent. In 1883 the settlement officer found that a general increase of average rent had had taken place in almost every circle of this district. He also found that much land entered at the settlement as paying rent in kind, was paying rent in cash and that much land which then paid rent in varying directly with the land revenue now pays in lumpsum rent or one fixed without much reference to the assessment (Gurgaon District Gazetteer, 1883-84).

Final report of the Third Regular Settlement (1903-09: 21) of the Gurgaon district revealed that if the irrigation is from a well, the share almost universally taken throughout the district is one-third and if irrigation is from canal, the landlord share is one half (except in the case of cane of which it is generally one-third), but shares with the tenant the same proportion of cost of the seed and of all the canal dues as he takes of the produce. But in case of an unirrigated crop it was prevalent one-half or one-third. Mr. O'Dwyer noted that in Gurgaon, the proper rates of batai are one-third of well and
irrigated crops, one-half of crops from on flooded or moist
land, and two-fifths of crops grown on ordinary barani land,
one-third was on very inferior barani land.

In Hisar also the conflict between proprietors and
tenants came out in the open with the revision of the
settlement in the 1880s. During this period a large number of
tenants, who had been in possession of their holdings for long
at privileged rates, considered their status to be little
inferior to that of tenants with occupancy right. Landlord
remembered the somewhat summary creation of occupancy tenures
in the Settlement of the 1860s. But with the beginning of the
revision of the regular Settlement, they feared that many of
these tenants-at-will might claim occupancy status (because of
their length of occupation) and prejudice their own interests.
They also feared a considerable enhancement of land revenue
demand in this new settlement. The result was that they thought
it best to enhance rents wherever they could, and at the same
time they sought to prove that the tenant had no occupancy
rights (Banerjee, 1982).

Taking into consideration the deteriorating state of
agriculture and cultivator the new Tenancy Act (Act XVI of
1887) was soon put into effect and these tenancy cases were
settled under the provision of this new Act.

There were usually two kinds of tenants, i.e., occupancy
tenants and tenants-at-will. The vernacular equivalents are
maurusi or hereditary and ghari-maurusi or non-hereditary. An
occupancy tenant has a right to hold his land so long as he
pays the rent fixed by authority, and to pass it on to his descendants on the same terms. A tenant-at-will is a tenant from year to year and his rent is determined by the agreement between himself and his landlord. The status of the occupancy tenant depends on law whether statute or customary, the status of the tenants-at-will depends on contract, though contain stipulations, if included in a contract of letting will be treated by the courts as invalid (Douie, 1899: 88).

This process of enhancement of rent practically continued till the end of the century. One of its striking features was the way in which cash rents were displacing kind rents in many circles. Almost simultaneously the area under kind rent steadily increased and Prof. Bhalla's Bairampur village enquiry clearly pointed out that good land were then seldom let on cash rents (Bhalla, 1930).

In Rohtak and Ambala districts, many of the tenants-at-will were in reality small land owners supplementing their income by taking extra land on lease, their condition was not always very satisfactory. Their holdings were carelessly cultivated; manure, unless abundant, was not used and yield was also below the average. Their small surplus tended to be wiped off by the rise in rent and in consequence they were driven to borrowing.

A village enquiry of the Ambala district thus described their conditions in the present century: of the twelve small owners - owning less than 5 acres cultivated, all paid the land revenue and occupiers' rates from money borrowed for the
purpose - all of them maintained that, after paying batai on the land cultivated by them as non-occupancy tenants, the grain, left with them was hardly sufficient for their own consumption. They were, as a rule, obliged to borrow for all purchases made by them requiring ready cash e.g. agricultural cattle and implements, and clothes and other articles not produced by them. They also borrowed for paying neota, the land revenue and occupiers' rates (Sher Singh and Fyson, 1933: 68).

To improve the condition of the peasantry, the Punjab Land Alienation Act, 1900 was passed. There was great resentment among the dominant communities due to the law. The Bill proposed a fifteen years limitation on all mortgages. The limitation on mortgages was supposed to prevent moneylenders from securing possession of land without purchase and keeping it indefinitely. The second object of the Bill was the cancellation of the zamindar's right to sell his land. The Bill established three categories of sale: permanent alienation of agricultural land to non-agriculturist be permitted only with the permission of the collector; sale among all agricultural tribe be permitted and the lease of land should run for a maximum period of twenty years or the life span of the lesses whichever was lesser. The Bill also suggested that the law should apply to the entire province but the local government be given the right to exempt areas and persons from its operation. From the official point of view, the object of this measure was to place restrictions on transfer of land in the Punjab with a
view to checking its alienation from agriculture to non-agricultural classes (Sharma, 1971: 26).

The legislation was to protect the zamindars who had proved themselves to be the loyal section of the community, against the moneylenders. The Act was also designed to end the possibility of the agitation in rural area and to give some relief to the peasants who were the victims of economic exploitation, famines and epidemics. The rejection of permanent settlement of land encouraged. Excessive assessment, and the short-term settlement adversely affected the family life of the peasantry, and encouraged rural indebtedness, and the moneylender became a necessary evil for them (Tara Chand, 1920). The total number of persons declared as 'agriculturist tribes' under the land Alienation of Land Act, 1901 was 12,326,000. Out of these only 3,500,000 owned land while 8,826,000 persons, thought declared as 'agriculturists' did not own any land. Out of these 500,000 were estimated to have been owner-cultivator (Calvert, 1922).

At the outset of British rule in Haryana region, the 'great mass of landed property' was held by the small peasant proprietors, cultivating all or part of their holding (George, 1893). During the colonial period, the process of differentiation among the peasantry with an increasing proportion of the peasantry being pushed into the bottom group (poor peasants, share croppers and agricultural labourers) and a growing concentration of land in the hand of landlord classes. Nawabs and zamindars, when the Unionist Government intervened in
major way by the enactment of so called 'Golden Laws' or agrarian legislation during the late 1930, the situation in rural region was alarming. Ever since 1901, when it came into force, the non-agricultural classes have been greatly restricted in the acquisition of land; they are no longer allowed to buy it from a member of an agriculturist tribe, nor may they take it in the mortgage from the latter for more than twenty years. Despite the insistent denial by the unionists of any division with in the cultivators, sharp inequalities had emerged among the peasantry.

The increase in the total marginal cultivators was 30.76 per cent in 1911 and 52.53 per cent in 1951. The agricultural labourer of Rohtak district too shared an increase of 60.77 per cent from 1911 to 1921, 56.65 per cent increase from 1921 to 1931 and 48.3 per cent increase from 1931 to 1951 (Chowdhry, 1976).

In the beginning of twentieth century, the Punjab was primarily a land of the cultivating proprietors. But a peculiar feature prevailing in the province was that the peasant proprietor was a tenant as well as a receiver of rent. An investigation conducted by the Board of Economic Inquiry, Punjab, in 1939, revealed that 80.6 per cent of the owners owned less than 10 acres while the size of holding considered cultivable by one yoke of oxen was about 14 acres (Calvert, 1922: 136). In order to make it nearly an economic holding this class of owners felt that a necessity to take some more land,
if it was available or to rent their own land to a neighbour and themselves work merely as tenants on bigger holdings. It is interesting to note in this connection, that out of about 17½ lakhs landlords paying Rs. 5 or less as land revenue no less than 6,24,835 (that is more than one-third) rented their land to others. In other words, as receivers of rent more than six lakhs of the smallest landholders stand in the same position and have the same interest as some of the owners of the biggest estates (Punjab Government 18 months of Provincial Autonomy, 1937: 2-3).

Population pressure was very low and it was Sirsa, the most insecure tehsil, there was only 135 persons to a cultivated square mile. In Hisar it was 306 and Rohtak a little lesser than 500 persons. This of course means larger holdings in sparsely populated area. In Sirsa, the average cultivated holding was sixty acres the largest in tract and the area was most uncertain of rainfall. So, the cultivators were not persuaded to settle permanently. They came and went as that suited to them (Baden-Powell, 1892).

There was a trend of (Calvert, 1922) increasing number of small holdings and decreasing larger ones over the period of fifteen years (1924-39), but the percentage increase in area (2.3) was highest in largest size group (over 50 acres), though the number of small holdings upto 1 acre increased by 2.3 per cent their area decreased by 0.3 per cent.
During the British period, there were two distinct land systems in this region. The area under Kings, Nawab and Jagirdars, was in no way different than the earlier periods. Besides the King, a large number of intermediaries were exploiting the cultivator. Large part of produce was taken away by these intermediaries so the condition of peasant was miserable. Under British crown, the peasant proprietorship flourished and agricultural development was taking place. However, British policy extracted maximum revenues and popularised the crops required for industries in England. Three basic land revenue systems were, the Zamindari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari. Zamindari system was not found in this tract (Haryana). During different settlements, Britishers did not try to affect the autonomy of village communities but tried to develop their supremacy in land revenue collection. Lambardar was their official agent not only for revenue collection but also to propogate their power. In similar fashion, other officials were recruited for this purpose.

This tract had been the victim of famines and the peasantry remained under distress. Introduction of payment of the land revenue in cash made their life harder and pushed them in the clutches of sahaukar/moneylender. Tenancy was secured to a great extent, a tenant was given his land even if he returned after 20 years. Payment of land revenue was main difficulty with peasant in late eighties.
Large majority of the ryots/peasants mortgaged their land to sahukars. This attracted the attention of rulers, who passed several legislations to improve the condition of peasantry. Jajmani system has been the basis of socio-economic relations in village communities. Their rights, duties, and obligations were socially defined. Inequalities were also socially accepted. Conflicting situations cropped up with the passing of legislations and the traditional organisation of agriculture started transforming. Agricultural labourers as a class emerged and was recognised.

With the onset of civilisation, agriculture has been the main pursuit of man and every development has brought changes in organisation of community. Whether it was the King or the East India Company, the basis of their economic power have been the land. In Ancient period, the land was cultivated by the community and the king was given a share in kind or cash, primarily because of the protection he provided. There was no rigid categorisation on the basis of possession of land rather it was the caste system which denied the ownership of land to some specific castes and privileged the others. King had the absolute power of control on land property, but rarely used it for the state. Increased expenditures of the administration and personal luxuries of king, monarch, nobles, chiefs, etc. etc., led to changes in land revenue collection system as well as in the ownership, control and use of land. Efforts were made to bring more land under plough to collect more revenue and for this different systems were devised. The peasantry has never
been prosperous. Among the Mughals, Akbar made some efforts to measure the land and brought more area under cultivation. Shershah and some other Muslim rulers also thought about the peasantry, stratified as the jagirdars, intermediaries and cultivators. Agricultural labourers and artisans were in the fabric of jajmani system. The rent was generally collected in cash or kind.

East India Company had its economic interests and tried to make development through different settlements to extract more revenue and encourage specific crops to meet the raw material demands in British. The present tract of Haryana has been a part of Oudh but the Britishers placed it under Lahore (Punjab) after 1857 revolt, for punishing the people of area for active participation in revolt. Peasant proprietorship was the main form of the landownership. Occupancy tenants and tenants-at-will were the main tenant categories. Agricultural labourers were generally from lower castes. The jajmani system was the main social organisation of agriculture. Faulty policies of the British Government and exploitative nature of Indian higher castes resulted into bankruptcy of the peasantry, on whom nature was also ruthless. In early thirties, even the peasant proprietors fled away, as they were not in a position to pay the land revenue to the British authorities.

Almost all land went into the hands of the moneylenders and other business castes. Such a distressing situation made the Unionist Party to force the Britishers to pass certain
legislations, which revived the peasant proprietorship and the development of agrarian economy in the state. The three main agrarian categories emerged the peasant proprietors, tenants and agricultural labourers. With the passage of time, self-cultivators increased in number and the legislative support motivated them to invest in farm infrastructure and adoption of innovations. Conflicts between landowners and tenants assumed significance with passing of different land tenures legislations. However, the basic social organisation of agriculture, i.e., Jajmani system remained intact.