CHAPTER II

COLONIAL AGRARIAN POLICY

British agrarian policy was not a uniform one, or even consistent, it changed both with the passage of time and according to specific region. The suppression and exploitation of the colony was, however, permanent. The first stage of suppression shifted to exploitation in the second stage. Several factors were responsible for this changing policy, for example, the very geography of the area, potentialities for agriculture, colonial needs, nature of peasantry, colonial understanding of land rights and political hold over the territory, among others.

It is generally understood that there were three broad phases of colonialism which all relate obviously, to the exploitation of Indian resources. The first stage (1757-1813) was one of the monopolies of trade. The second stage (1813-60) had the objective of controlling the state power and government revenue, while the third stage after 1860 was marked by direct investment and global competition in the trade. Colonial agrarian policy was not as significant in the first phase as in the later two. Growing interest in the revenue of the newly controlled areas from 1765, and the colonial ‘need’ to increase those revenues, brought them into action in the agrarian world of India. The present chapter focuses on the basic policy of the British towards the agrarian sphere. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first is about the British agrarian policy towards India as a whole. Second section is on the Punjab province. Agrarian policy in the south-east Punjab is taken up in the third section. The fourth section discusses the specific policy of recruitment followed in the south-eastern districts. The last section is conclusion.

British agrarian policies were molded basically by a combination of changing and some times conflicting proportions of greed for more revenues, producing recurrent tendencies towards over assessment and desire to encourage certain types of agricultural production for export. The need to win or retain political allies, administrative convenience, and changing ideological assumptions also
played a certain role at times.¹ British colonization of India constantly negotiated a difficult balance between two contradictory political-economic objectives. One objective made British administrators try to extract the maximum land revenue from Indian agriculture with the minimum transformation in agrarian production and labour systems. This aim led to the “development of economic underdevelopment in India”. The other objective required a revolutionary alteration in Indian labour and production systems through massive capital investment so that increased industrial and agricultural productivity would enrich the Raj. This goal underwrote the economic development of India.² Another objective was that India should supply raw materials to Britain and purchase British manufactured goods. In 1840 a Select Committee was well pleased to Report to Parliament that the East India Company, “has…. succeeded in converting India into a country exporting raw produce”. This conversion however, did not depend on the radical transformation of India’s agricultural production and labour.³

By 1765, the Company had established itself not only as traders with political control but as revenue collectors with responsibility of administering justice in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, through the grant of Diwani.⁴ Even after this grant no major change was seen in the agrarian sphere and the Mughal revenue system continued, with the collection now going to the East India Company. In fact, a dual system had emerged in the administration of Bengal. The East India Company had the right to the revenues while the Nawab organized the collection of revenue and discharged the responsibility. The system was called as ‘responsibilities without powers and powers without responsibilities’. As the Diwan, the Company directly collected its revenues through the right to nominate the Deputy Subahdar, and controlled the Nijamat

¹ Bipan Chandra, Modern India, NCERT, Delhi, 2005, 32.
³ Ibid., 16.
⁴ The term Diwani is derived from the word diwan. The diwan under the Mughals was a provincial officer entrusted with the duty of the collecting the revenue and administering civil justice. Hence, Dewani meant the right to collect revenue and administer justice in civil cases. See, S.L. Suri, A Constitutional History of India, S. Nagin and Co., ⁴th Edition, Delhi, 1971, 13.
or the police and judicial powers. Since the grant of Diwani, the major concern of the East India Company’s administration in India was to collect as much revenue as possible. Since agriculture was the mainstay of economy and the main source of income, the new rulers introduced many land revenue experiments in haste to maximize collection. From the total revenue, the percentage of land revenue was 72 in 1771-72 in Bengal.

In the time of Warren Hastings (1772-85), the Company consolidated its hold on the agrarian sphere by removing deputies and organizing the direct collection of revenue through their own agents and collectors. The appointments were made by the newly established the Board of Revenue. A five year settlement of revenue was introduced by Hastings. He also reintroduced the *ijara* system in which the revenue was collected through a bidding system. This reflected some change in the agrarian policy giving the East India Company more direct control over agrarian matters. The Company was now concerned with the settlement of a land revenue system on as regular basis, which was both moderate as well as permanent. They had now learnt a lot from their own experience and realized that the *ijaradar* mediator was pocketing the surplus revenue collected, and the Company was therefore, losing some of the revenues due to them. In order to extend control over the revenue system, the Company had to regulate the land tenure by the existing custom. The method of assessment was also on the traditional pattern. To tackle this problem the Company separated revenue administration from

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5 Names of Deputy, Subhdar were Reja Khan and Shitab Rai. Vincent Smith, *Oxford History of India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1958, 476-77.
6 The Land Tax levied by the British Government was not only excessive but, what was worse, it was fluctuating and uncertain in many provinces. In England, the Land Tax was between one shilling and four shillings in the pound i.e. between 5 and 20 percent of the rental during a hundred years before 1798, when it was made perpetual and redeemable by William Pitt. India at over 80 percent of the rental between 1793 and 1822. It is true that British Government only followed the precedent of the previous Mahomedan ruler, who also claimed an enormous land tax. But the difference was this, that what the Mahomedan rulers claimed they could never fully realized; what the British rulers claimed they realized with rigour. R.C.Dutt, *Economic History of India, under Early British Rule*, 5th Impression, Routledge and Kegan, London, 1956, ix.
7 Vincent Smith, *Oxford History of India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1958, 501-03.
general administration, because revenue was the chief source of income for the government and of fundamental importance to them.

In 1789, a ten year settlement of revenue was introduced by Cornwallis (1786-93). He solved the problem by introducing that it did not matter, who the revenue collector was since British concern was mainly the acquisition of the total land revenue. It was Lord Cornwallis who, created the first group of landlords in India by introducing the Permanent Land Settlement for Bengal, Bihar, Orissa in 1793. Under the terms of this settlement, they (landlords) had henceforth to make a fixed payment to the government of the East India Company. The total amount was registered as 268 lakhs. While British rule created in some parts of the country large scale landed ownership, in other parts, it sustained individual peasant proprietorship. Permanent settlement led to an absentee landlordism and a hereditary position of tax collector emerged. Tax on land was high and rigid and led to snapping of the amicable relationship between peasant proprietors and absentee land-lords. Till 1859, the zamindars were revenue collectors and peasants were considered tax payees. In this arrangement, the zamindars were pocketing more revenues and surplus than the actual land revenue as required by the government.8 This second experiment was known as Ryotwari. Under this system, the individual cultivator was made responsible for the payment of revenue of the land he tilled. It was Sir Thomas Munro who advocated this system. He initiated it when he was the Governor of Madras, in 1820 in the major part of that province. This system was subsequently extended to a number of other provinces like Bombay, Sind, Berar, Madras, Assam and some other areas.

The third experiment was the Mahalwari system, which was a modified version of the zamindari settlement introduced in the Ganga valley, the North-West Province, parts of central India, and the Punjab province. The revenue settlement was to be made village by village or estate (mahal) by agreement with the land-lords or heads of the families who collectively claimed to be the land-lords of the village or the estate. In this system, the land revenue was periodically revised and covered 30 percent of the land.9 In this form the British

preference now shifted from the taluqdar to the primary zamindars and village communities. Mackenzie’s recommendations were incorporated in the Regulations VII of 1822, which provided for a detailed file to field survey for revenue assessment. The revised system, as worked out by another civilian, R.M. Bird, provided for detailed survey to assess the revenue of an entire mahal or fiscal unit, based on the net value of potential produce of the field. The State was to appropriate two thirds of the net income of the land and settlement was to be made for thirty years. According to a rough estimate in 1928-29 about 19 percent of the cultivable land in India was under zamindari settlement, 29 percent under Mahalwari settlement and 52 percent under Ryotwari system.¹⁰

In the socio-economic sphere, the British grappled with multiple rights in land which varied region to region. In an attempt to simplify these overlapping rights, they followed a policy of social levelling in agrarian society. They created three broad categories- zamindars, peasants and tenants. British policy thus, made an attempt to standardize the existing land rights, sometimes at the cost of the rights of certain groups, in the quest of making a more homogenous society.¹¹ In the early 19th century, the State’s main target was to bring the maximum cultivable waste under cultivation. Consequently, there was a sharp decline in the fortunes of the extensive nomadic and pastoral economy of the plain in the early nineteenth century.¹²

Eric Stokes whose argues that the British in their early involvement with India ‘knew only what was good for them (selves); Gerald Barrier, Robert Frykenberg, and David Washbrook second this judgement when they show how John Company’s rule and even the later-Raj had to accommodate to indigenous power holders and production system to successfully rule the country and maintain control over resources.¹³

¹² Ibid., 142.
¹³ Quoted in Richard G. Fox, Lions of the Punjab: Culture in Making, Archives Press, New Delhi, 1987, 16.
From the second half of the Eighteenth century, the British used their control over India to promote their own interest. The objective of the colonial policy was to acquire monopoly over trade and control over resources. The consent of as many sections of Indian society as was possible was reckoned and it was also essential to maintain such control, to wean them away from the politics of mass mobilization and mass movements. The commercial policy after 1813 was guided by the needs of British industry. Its main aim was to transform India into a consumer of British manufactures and a supplier of raw material. As John Sullivan, President of Board of Revenue, admitted: “Our system acts very much like a sponge, drawing up all the good things from the bank of the Ganges, and squeezing them down the banks of the Thames.”

The British brought about a tremendous transformation in India’s agricultural economy. This effort was not with a view to improving Indian agriculture, to increase production and ensure the welfare and prosperity of the Indian agriculturist, but to obtain for themselves, in the form of land revenue, all surplus available in agriculture and to force Indian agriculture to play its assigned role in the colonial economy. Old relationships and institutions were destroyed and new ones were created. These new features did not always represent a change towards modernization or a positive direction.

The British by making land a commodity which could be freely brought and sold introduced a fundamental change in the existing land systems of the country. The stability and continuity of the Indian village was shaken. In fact, the entire structure of rural society began to break up. This had consequence for their agrarian policy as well.

Under British rule, land revenue was of outstanding importance not only because it occupied a very special position as a source of revenue to the government but also because of the part played by it in the general

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14 Bipan Chandra, et. al., Freedom Struggle, NBT, New Delhi, 1972, 3.
16 Bipan Chandra, Modern India, 2005, 73.
17 Bipan Chandra, et. al., India’s Struggle for Independence, NBT, New Delhi, 1972, 17.
18 As brought out in Bayly’s the New Cambridge History of India n First chapter.
administration of the country. For land revenue, the colonial authorities established a separate administration also. Finance Commissioner was the head of the revenue administrative structure. The Deputy Collector was head of the land revenue organization in the district. Several other specialized services existed with staff of their own, such as the establishments for irrigation, agriculture, and co-operative. Provinces were divided into districts and districts were grouped into divisions and each placed under a Commissioner. Districts were further divided into tahsils, in each of which was a Tahsildar with an assistant or Naib Tahsildar. Tahsils were formed into a sub division and put in special charge of resident Extra Assistant or Sub Divisional Officer. The unit of revenue administration was an estate, which usually identified with a village. Each estate has a separate record of rights in land and a separate register of agricultural statistics. Headman of the village was responsible for the payment of revenue. Patwari was the village accountant. Villages were grouped into Zails over each of which was appointed a Zaildars. About twenty of the zails or circles were under the charge of a Qanungo.

During the colonial period, land revenue contributed as much as nineteen and a half crore out of the total net revenue of forty seven crores in 1881-2 and almost twenty four crores out of Rupees 61 crores in 1901-02. As these figures show there was a steady increase in land revenue receipts during these years, the official explanation being that it was ‘mainly due to extension of cultivation and rise of prices’. 

Land revenue was consistently increased during the period under 1858-1947. It stood at 4.2 million pounds in 1800-01 and had risen, mainly by...

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21 The most important source of income in India, contributed as much as Rs. 19.67 crores out of the total net revenue of Rs. 46.86 crores in 1881-2 and 23.99 crores out of 60.79 crores in 1901-02. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. IV, 1908, 289.
increase of territories but also by increased assessments, to 15.3 million pounds in 1857-8, when the Crown took over. Under the Crown, the total land revenue rose to 17.5 million pounds by 1900-01 and 20 million pounds by 1911-12. In 1936-37, the figure was 23.9 million pounds. The survey of a village in the Poona area illustrates the increasing rate of revenue, which increased by 496 percent between 1698 to 1915, while the assessed area of the land revenue increased by 15 percent only. More than anything else, it was colonization, which affected the economy of India. The agricultural structure was acutely affected by the colonization, which was thrust upon the country.

The rigidity of the collection of land tax further paralyzed agriculture, prevented savings, and kept the tiller of the soil in a state of poverty and indebtedness. It appears from the facts that the land tax in India was not only heavy and uncertain, but that the very principal on which it was raised was different from the principal of taxation in all well administered countries. In such countries the state promoted the accumulation of wealth, helped the people to

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### Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Land Revenue Rs.</th>
<th>Assessed Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1698</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1727</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>1173</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>1632</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1785</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1823</td>
<td>2121</td>
<td>2089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844-74</td>
<td>1161</td>
<td>2089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1674-90</td>
<td>1467</td>
<td>2271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>1581</td>
<td>2271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

put money into their pockets, likes to see them prosperous and then demanded a small share of their earnings for the expenses of the state. In India the state virtually interfered with the accumulation of wealth from the soil, intercepted the income and gains of the tillers, and generally added to its land revenue demand at each recurring settlement, leaving the cultivators permanently poor.26

Accordingly to the Indian leaders, the following were the disastrous and depressing effects of the land revenue system on agriculture; firstly the high pitch of land assessment, by siphoning away a large part of the cultivator's possible savings drained the country side of its capital, hindered capital investment in land and in general checked expenditure on agricultural improvements. Secondly, heavy assessment increased the intensity and frequencies of famines by producing general resourcelessness in the country side. Thirdly, constant revisions of assessment, short settlements, uncertainly about the 'grounds' of enhancement, fresh appraisal of individual plots, leading to taxation of the cultivators improvements, all tended to make a tenure uncertain and combined with high assessment, took away from the cultivator all possibility to save, to exert himself to effect permanent improvement in land and to increase agriculture productivity. Fourthly, high pitch of revenue discouraged, and perhaps made possible investment of private capital in land and thus prevented agricultural improvements. Fifth, enhancement of land revenue by the government to the Zamindars and other superior holders to increased rentals to an even greater extent than the enhancement of revenue and thus to further oppress the actual tillers of the soil. Sixthly, in the absence of a large-scale increase in agriculture production the high assessment, combined with the rigidity and stringency of the revenue system, inexorably drove the harassed ryot, anxious to save his land and unable to meet land revenue demand, out of his own resources and into the clutches of the money lender, never to be a free man again.27

Equipped with great economic and political power, the company played a dual role in this respect. It played, first, a destructive role by impoverishing the people and weakening the society, destroying thereby the indigenous industries

26 R.C.Dutt, Economic History of India, xi.
27 Bipan Chandra, Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism, 405-07.
and business.\textsuperscript{28} Secondly, it played a regenerative role by bringing science and technology, improved means of transport and communications, anglicized system of education, and new social and political ideas which gave new direction to the societal fabric of India.\textsuperscript{29}

The policy of commercialization of agriculture, adversely affected the agriculturist. The agriculturists now produced for the Indian as well as world market. He became thereby subject to all the vicissitudes of the ever erratic market. He had to compete with formidable international rivals like the big agrarian trusts of America, Europe, and Australia, which produced on a mass scale and by means of tractors and other modern agricultural machinery while he himself cultivated his miserable strip of land by means of labour power of a couple of famished bullocks and the primitive plough.\textsuperscript{30} Under the new system, the peasant produced mainly for the market, which, with the steady improvement of means of transport and expanding operations of trading capital under the British rule, became available to him. He did so with a view to realizing maximum cash primarily to pay the land revenue to the state, which was fixed fairly high, and, in course of time, to meet the claim of the moneylender in whose hands he progressively fell due to numerous causes.\textsuperscript{31}

The commercialization of agriculture had progressed most in those tracts where the crops were largely grown for export out of the country.


\textsuperscript{29} Karl Marx, with his usual perception, highlighted in a series of writings the destructive and regenerative role of the British rule during the company period. For details see, Karl Marx, \textit{Articles on India}, Delhi, 1940; Karl Marx and F. Engels, \textit{on Colonialism}, Moscow, 1963; V.I.Pavlov, \textit{Historical Premises for India’s Transition to capitalism}, Moscow, 1979; V.N. Datta, Presidential Address, \textit{IHC Proceedings}, 42\textsuperscript{20} Session, Bodh Gaya, 1981; Chattar Singh, \textit{Social and Economic Change in Haryana}, X.


\textsuperscript{31} A.R. Desai, \textit{Social Background of Indian Nationalism}, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 5\textsuperscript{th} edition, 1980, 43.
particularly so in Burma rice area, the Punjab wheat area, the jute area of Eastern Bengal and the Khandesh, Gujrat and Berar cotton tracts.  

To increase the land revenue, the colonial authorities tried to bring the maximum land under cultivation. Now the common lands could be measured by the extent of the forests, and uncultivable wastes available for cultivation. Therefore, the total area in land use was 391 million acres in 1885, which increased to 521 million acres (+ 33 percent) in 1938.

In order to increase the produce from the land and consequently, the land revenue, the British also improved the irrigation facilities. In 1820, they reopened the Western Jumna Canal in North West Province. They also initiated irrigation schemes in Delhi and Tanjore. In 1842, operations were commenced between Kankhal and Hardwar, and though stopped for a time on account of various doubts that had risen with respect to the results of the canal; they were resumed shortly after, permission being given to spend 2 lakhs of rupees annually. The Godavri Works were begun in 1847, and by 1853 of Krishna Anicut. This canal was opened on 8 April 1854, and measured nearly 900 miles. This was followed by other canals like the Lower Ganga, the Agra, and the Betwa Canals in United Provinces, the Sirhind Canal in Punjab, Muthra canal in Bombay and the Periyar canal in south India. Other notable works were the weirs across the river Godawari near Rajmahendry, and across the river Krishna near Vijaiwada. Deoband Branch was completed in 1881, Ganga Canal headwork made in 1913. In 1920s, the barrage below the gorge at Sukkur was established. The Rohri Canal (bank of Indus), and Eastern Nara Canal was also started. By 1892 nearly 43800 miles of main canals and distributaries had been constructed in British India, irrigating 1304 million acres at a total capital cost of rupees 382.6 million.

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35 Dharama Kumar, Cambridge Economic History of India, 677-734.
36 Ibid., 677.
The agrarian policy of the government with regard to agricultural improvement other than irrigation remained almost non-existent for a long time, except for a few experimental farms and some paltry taccavi loans from the 1870s. The Co-operative Credit Society Act of 1904 introduced a new element in this sphere. It was generally considered that the co-operatives were a means of combating rural problems and would increased produce and create increased availability of raw material and exporting material.37 The co-operative societies increased because these were fulfilling the economic interest of the British. Consequently, the number of co-operative societies increased tremendously. Between 1914 and 1946 the numbers of societies increased by 890 percent while the membership increased only by only 9 percent and the working capital increased by 33 percent.38 The co-operative movement, though it was seen as gradually developing into a ‘powerful engine for the proper and early revival of the old corporate life of the villages and restore their vitality, and to keep, as the Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1928, said ‘the best hope of rural India.’ The co-operative however, had rather limited success.39

The effect of British agrarian policies further intensified for peasantry due to famines and the money-lending system. The small farmers went into the grip of indebtedness. The ‘greatest evil’ that arose out of the British policies with regard to Indian agricultural economy was the emergence of the money-lender as an influential economic and political force in the country. As a result of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Societies</th>
<th>No. of Members</th>
<th>Working Capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914-15</td>
<td>17327</td>
<td>824469</td>
<td>122292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>52182</td>
<td>1974290</td>
<td>311225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929-30</td>
<td>104187</td>
<td>4181904</td>
<td>895178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>122000</td>
<td>5300000.7</td>
<td>10700000.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>156000</td>
<td>7600000.9</td>
<td>14600000.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>172000</td>
<td>910000.6</td>
<td>16400000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


38 Table 2.2
39 Ibid., 239-59.
high revenue rates demanded and the rigid manner of collection, the peasant cultivator often had to borrow money to pay taxes. In addition to paying exorbitant rate of interest, he was invariably forced to sell his produce at lower rates to the money-lender, when his crops were ready. The moneylender could even manipulate the judicial system and the administrative machinery to his advantage. To the national leadership, famines were clearly responsible for India's poverty, and their ever increasing intensity, extent, and mortality, an 'infallible index' of the growing impoverishment of the country. Several unfavourable features can be seen, more important among them being the scarcity of cultivation land in the country and consequently small size holdings, backward techniques and low productivity, rack renting in the zamindari areas and high revenue charges in riyotwari, underemployment and a general state of indebtedness. Besides them, land revenue had been one of the main causes of poverty of the agriculturist and his resultant indebtedness, which was recognized as early as 1892. The family budgets and farm accounts of the cultivating classes at the time, reveals that they all lived from hand to mouth, not to speak of the scantiness of their clothes and unhygienic condition of their dwellings, a large portion of the population could not afford even two square meals a day.

In 1931, The Rural Indebtedness Committee stated that indebtedness had increased up to 900 crores. In fact, the individual peasant's indebtedness had increased considerably. The reason for this mass upsurge has to be sought

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Death Due to Famine</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800-25</td>
<td>1000000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825-50</td>
<td>400000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-75</td>
<td>5000000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-1900</td>
<td>1500000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in the nature of British rule, which adversely affected the interests of almost all sections of the agrarian society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indebted Family Percentage</th>
<th>Year : 1943</th>
<th>Year : 1944</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peasant Family</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Artisans</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Punjab was included in British dominions in the middle of the nineteenth century. With the experience of the colonial authorities in agrarian matters in different parts of the country, they introduced some reform in the agrarian system in the region. The Punjab was also significant in its potentialities due to its very geography. Colonial policy in the region, therefore, was somewhat different as well. Colonial rule in the Punjab as else where in the sub-continent was marked by economic exploitation. The Imperial government exercised control over the finances of the Punjab and shared income and expenditure in a manner that tilted the financial balance in its favour, making it a major co-sharer in the increasing wealth of the region. The annexation of the Punjab in 1849 brought two specific features together, firstly, the British reached the physical and political limits of their control and expansion in India with the addition of the fertile region of Punjab, and secondly, the British had pressed the rural social system, already under their control, to the breaking point by mid-century making revenue defaults and forced sales customary rural happenings by the late nineteenth century. This had direct bearing on the British agrarian policy in the Punjab, and the three-fourth of the population of Punjab, which was engaged in agriculture.

After the annexation, Lord Dalhousie put the Punjab province under a Board of Administration. The settlement of land, assessment of land revenue, adjudication of rights and interests and registration of tenures were conducted by the Board with admirable promptitude and efficiency. The government share

45 Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Cultural in Making,*
of the produce was fixed at 1/2, which, was to be paid in cash. The abolition of
the system of payment in kind created great resentment among the peasants.
Henry Lawrance insisted that John Lawrance should modify his policy and
permit the people to pay either in cash or in kind at least in initial stage. But
John, backed by Dalhousie, took a firm stand and refused to relax the system
even temporarily. The Board was abolished in 1853 and its power vested in a
Chief Commissioner. A revenue or financial commissioner was among his the
principal subordinates. John Lawrence, the first and only Chief Commissioner
of the Punjab became its first Lieutenant Governor of the first June 1859.46

Initially in the Punjab, the land revenue was collected from an estate as a
whole. This was called Mahalwari system, however it was changed with the
passage of time, the state authorities then went to the rayyat, in which they
collected the revenue from the cultivators directly. The British introduced a
land settlement to maximize the land revenue. This process by which the
government officials determine the land revenue payable was called the
settlement of land revenue. The land settlement consisted in the determination
of (a) the share of the produce or the rental to which the state was entitled;(b)
the person or persons who were liable to pay; (c) the record of all private rights
and interest in the land. The last item was particularly important in the landlord
areas, individual or joint, where there was a graduation of landed rights and
interests that had to be recognized.47

In the early days of the British administration, the Punjab utilized the
experience gained in the revenue administration in the North Western Province

46 Board consisting of the two Lawrences, Henry and John and Charles Mansel. Next to the
Board were the Commissioners of the seven divisions. Below these Commissioners were a
number of Deputy Commissioners, and under them were placed some Assistant Commissioner
and Extra Commissioners. The lowest grade Gazetted Officers was the Tehsildar, who was in
charge of a tehsil. All the above officers performed the diverse duties. They were judges,
revenue collectors, diplomats, conservatory officers and sometimes recruiting sergeants and
chaplains, all rolled into one. James Douie, Punjab, NWFP and Kashmir, Geeta, Delhi, 1974,
188-89 (Reprint, originally published in 1916).
47 Raghunath Rai, History and Culture of the Punjab, 12th Edition (Reprint), New Academic,
from which source, the early settlement officers in the Punjab were obtained. The cash settlement of the land revenue demand had been made in some districts of the Punjab during the pre annexation of the British Resident, and on annexation, similar summary settlements were introduced throughout Punjab. These temporary arrangements were replaced as soon as possible by regular settlements on the same system as obtained in the Delhi district, which had been placed under regular settlements by the government of the North West Province before its (Delhi district) transfer to the Punjab in 1858 A.D.

British colonialism functioned in the Punjab in accordance with the principle of maximum profit. The objective of profit maximization was achieved in two ways. Firstly, by the extraction of the maximum of agricultural surplus by the barest minimum of investment, and secondly, by making the Punjab a producer of agricultural raw materials and a purchaser of finished goods. To achieve these objectives the British opened the Punjab to the global market. With the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) it became easier for the agricultural produce of the province to reach Europe through Kaqachi. Commercialization of agriculture also facilitated the collection of cash revenues and provided the cultivator with cash to purchase British goods.

After annexation, the land revenue assessment and its collection naturally claimed the maximum attention of the government. The colonial rulers moved in this regard by introducing a system of land settlements with the twin objectives of land revenue assessment and the determination of land tenures. Settlement Officers were appointed to decide the amount of land revenue for each parcel of land.

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48 Some parts of the south-east Punjab (i.e. Panipat, Hissar, Rohtak and Gurgaon) had experience with North West Province before 1858; see K. C. Yadav, Modern Haryana, 25.
The method of collection of land revenue was so rigid. Consequently, the collection of land revenue in cash was almost hundred percent. For example, the percentage of land revenue collection in cash in 1862, 1866, and 1889 was 98, 99 and 99.1 percent respectively. In 1885, the provincial land revenue balances stated the amount to be nearly 18 lakhs of rupees.

To the young British administrators after annexation, the Punjab with its thirsty plains, unutilized rivers and willing manly population, was like a newly discovered country with great natural resources awaiting the development, which, they claimed, the English brain and organizing power alone could give. Guided by Lawrence, the business of administration went apace. Dalhousie was essentially the great road maker of India. During his eight-year of office (1848-56) crores of rupees were spent on the neglected arteries of commerce. The Board lost no time in preparing plans and estimates for diverting the rivers of the Punjab from their beds in the lowest levels between the doabs to the water shed thereof.

In a tract where the previous assessment has approximated to the standard of half of the 'net assets' the main grounds for enhancement after twenty or thirty years were increase of cultivation and the rise in the prices. The land revenue demand of the province standing 193 lacs in 1880, increased to 203 lacs in 1890, 250 lacs by 1900 and 283 lacs in 1904. The average assessment per cultivated area was Re. 1 (annas), 3 pies in 1868-69, ten years

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55 The assessment in the time of Akbar (1594), when cultivation was quite under developed, reached a sum of 282 lacs, which at the prices than current represented in wheat no less than 1700000 tons. In the rare cases where completion rents were ordinarily, but in the more usual case of kind rents the value of 'net assets' can be arrived at only after number of elaborate and same what uncertain calculations as to prices yields. Imperial Gazetteer of India Punjab, Vol. I, Superintendent of Government Printing Press, Calcutta, 1908, 112-13.
later, it was 15 (annas) 7 (pies); and in 1898-99, it was Rs. 1-2-0 pies.\textsuperscript{56}

Information in the government records clearly indicates that for India, the land revenue percentage was nearly 40 percent (for example 19.67 crores in 1881-82, out of 46.86 crores), but from Punjab this percentage was almost fifty.

Commercialization of agriculture was the outcome of the development of transportation combined with the new tariff policy. There was now shift towards cultivation for the market. Under colonial rule, due to increase in the price of agricultural produce, the peasants gradually gave up growing crops in the traditional pattern for home consumption, and took up the cultivation for cash crops like, wheat, sugarcane, oilseeds and cotton with wider currency. The opening of Suez Canal in 1869 further stimulated the export of agricultural produce from the Punjab. The new means of communications like the railways and roads, the liberalization of tariff policy after 1867 also resulted in faster movement of various agricultural commodities at cheaper rates.\textsuperscript{57} Of the total area of 5.22 crores acres in the Punjab province under which the cultivated area was 1.27 acres and cultivable area was 54 lakhs acres (nearly 10 percent of total area) in 1855,\textsuperscript{58} cultivated area increased to 2.53 crores acres in 1901-02 and to 2.72 crores acres by 1911,\textsuperscript{59} and further increased to 3.10 crores acres in 1936-37.\textsuperscript{60} The cultivable but not cultivated area was 34515 square miles in 1880-90 and decreased to 26373 square miles in 1903-04.\textsuperscript{61}


\textsuperscript{58} Himadri Banerjee, Agrarian Society of the Punjab, 1849-1901, Manohar, New Delhi, 1982, 17 (notes).

\textsuperscript{59} B.S.Saini, Social and Economic History, 191.

\textsuperscript{60} The actual figures were 52240171 total areas from which cultivated area was 12751161 in 1855, and then increased to 25363161 in 1901, which again increased to 27231422 in 1911, and shoot up to 31041660 by 1936-37. Land Revenue Administration of the Punjab for the Year ending, 1937. Statement No. ii, IV.

British policy to increase cultivated area and land revenue led to an extensive programme of canalization and colonization in the Western Punjab. Canalization brought about increased production and radical changes in the crop patterns, as well as the irrigation scheme in the sub-continent, among other things. Commercialization of agriculture was supported by a network of roads and railways, led to a shift to 'superior crops', intensive cultivation and increase in trade of agricultural products. In matters of irrigation from canals, the Punjab government took initiative and maintained it almost throughout this period. Its first fruit was the Bari Doab Canal, which was expected to irrigate, the Doab lying between the Beas and Ravi. In undertaking this project, the Provincial government was guided by certain specific political and economic considerations. One of the motives behind immediately beginning the construction work of the Bari Doab Canal was the problem of giving employment to the disbanded Sikh soldiers. It was also expected that this canal would preserve ‘from uncertainty of the season’ the Manjha whose inhabitants were the ‘flowers of the nation’. The Bari canal was completed in 1860-61, the Sirhind canal in 1887, The Lower Sohag and Para Canal in 1880s, Sidhnai Canal in 1886-87 and Swat River Canal in 1885, brought much needed water to lower Bari Doab, Multan district and north west Peshawar valley respectively. Economic considerations led to the more ambitious Shahpur Project (1892) and triple project in the early twentieth century, which revolutionized the agrarian world and created a ‘new agrarian frontier’ in the region. The success of canal colonization in this period was a lengthy process in which the success of one project led to commission of the next. The government had introduced two major categories of agriculturist capitalists and yeomen in the canal colonies expecting them to provide a lead in the

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64 Imran Ali, Punjab under Imperialism, 8, 9, 14.
application of advancement in agriculture. This experiment was not completely successful.65

Irrigational facilities and growing commercialization of agriculture were stimulating changes in the agrarian economy, British administrators also sought to redefine the proprietary right in relation to the land. The early British land revenue settlement officers mostly came from the North-West Provinces. They conducted a detailed enquiry into the rights and liabilities of all persons having proprietary rights over land in the Punjab. Accordingly, they settled land in favour of persons who held land and had paid revenue for twelve years prior to the introduction of the first land revenue settlement in the province.66

As a result of the settlement policy, revenue demands increased, as did the price of food grain; fixed assessment did not take local problems into consideration and indebtedness of cultivators steadily increased. By the late nineteenth century, zamindars were displaced from ancestral holdings in large proportions. The government passed a new Tenant Act in 1887 in an attempt to bring harmony between agrarian groups and to relieve the uncertainty of cultivation. Another Tenant Act was passed in 1893, which allocated tenancies in the canal colonies. The alienation of land increased to alarming proportions and the government was forced to take 'paternalistic' legal action in the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, 1900.67 The Act introduced agricultural and non-agricultural groups led to benami transactions, expropriation by 'agricultural tribes', emergence of agricultural money-lenders, but did not alleviate the poverty of the zamindars or indebtedness. The government, however, declared the 'success' of this Act though indebtedness increased to alarming proportions by 1930. Some other legislation like the Land improvement Act 1884, Agricultural Loans Act, 1884, Co-operative Credit Society Act, 1904, Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1909, Punjab Act of 1938, Punjab Restitution of Mortgage Act, 1909, Punjab Regulation of Accounts Act, 1930, and Punjab

Registration License of Money-lenders Act, 1938 also had partial success in meeting the specific problems of the agriculturists of the region.\(^{68}\)

The introduction of co-operative societies in the early twentieth century created a new dimension in the rural economic sphere by stimulating the growth of a move. Owing to the policy of "consolidation and rectification" adopted in consequence of the various difficulties faced by co-operative societies during the year of world economic depression.\(^{69}\) The steady development of co-operative societies made possible the utilization of hoards that had been hitherto lying unused. It also facilitated the work of the Agriculture Department\(^{70}\) in popularizing the use of improved seeds, cheap manures and implements and in general, brought within the reach of the peasant the ideal of "better farming", "better business", and "better living". Consequently, co-operative society credit increased from 136.6 crores in 1915 to 714.4 crores in 1939 i.e. 425 percent. This clearly brings out the substantial activity of the credit societies, in this respect.\(^{71}\)

British agrarian policy in the Punjab was geared to maximize revenue collection, through high, fixed and rigid land revenue. Extension and commercialization to further colonial interest, led to large – scale indebtedness met by 'half hearted' remedial measures and 'legitimization' of money-lenders and a series of serious problems in the region. It was certainly not beneficial to the farmer who was burdened by debt. In 1865 only 6 percent cultivators were in serous debt, by 1879, 80 percent were indebted, which increased up to 87 percent in 1923 as a direct consequence of British agrarian policy.

III

The experience of the south-eastern region under British rule was both qualitatively and quantitatively different from that of the Punjab province as a whole. The process of agricultural expansion, which marked the entire region


\(^{69}\) B.S. Saini, *Social and Economic History of the Punjab*, 1901-39, Ess-Ess Publication, New Delhi, 1976, 256; The Punjab Co-operative Act was passed in 1904. After this Act the co-operative credit societies increased.

\(^{70}\) This department was opened by Lord Curzon in 1904.

\(^{71}\) B.S. Saini, *Social and Economic History of the Punjab*, 256.
and had significant impact on all aspects of life, was somewhat absent in this part of the region. The continued ‘backwardness’ and ‘under development’ of the tract, despite overall ‘economic development’, brought about a situation with its own specific problems and variations peculiar to the south-eastern areas alone.

This different situation was related to a different agrarian policy decisions in the agrarian sphere were based on the diverse geographical situation of this sub-region and its earlier experience under British rule, and the fact that, the people of this sub-region ‘had participated in the rebellion of 1857 in an enthusiastic manner’. Therefore, the colonial state gave low priority to any improvement of agriculture in south-east Punjab. This region was seen primarily as suited for the supply of draught animals to the rest of the Punjab, as also to certain other parts of India. The determined efforts of the British to retain it as such are reflected in their irrigational policies, emphasis of low value food cum-fodder crops with increasing acreage under fodder cultivation and in their attempts to curb the limited efforts being made at substitution of fodder crops by other crops, which might adversely affect this sub-region’s cattle wealth. Animal husbandry emerged as a subsistence level economy. However, as encouragement was given only to drought cattle, and not to dairy cattle or to the commercialization of dairy products, animal husbandry never became a high paying proposition under the British. The upholding of this backward economy proved to be very helpful to Imperial interests, as the impoverished tract became a major recruiting area for the British Indian Army. The Army in this sub-region provided the only source of employment and sustenance under conditions of severe famine and droughts, economic stagnation, and indebtedness. The colonial policies deliberate slant went a long way in determining the character and development of this sub-region’s economy.

73 For detail see, Mahender Singh, Irrigation in the South-East Punjab, 1858-1947, 37th Session, Punjab History Conference Proceedings, Publication Bureau Patiala, 2005, 277-91 and also see the Fourth Chapter of this thesis.
Agriculture was the chief means livelihood for the people of the south-eastern Punjab and land revenue was the chief source of income of the government. As such, the British authorities directed their attention towards the peasants and the agrarian conditions as soon as they assumed the government. At the very outset, they used to say that 'from the earliest time to present period, the public assessment upon land has never been fixed and, according to established usage and custom, the rulers have exercised a discretionary and despotic authority-------- the tenants and cultivators of the soil have been exposed to rapacity and oppression. The Government had, therefore, decided, in order to induce the cultivators to feel secure and extend their efforts, to make a three years settlement with them, to be followed by a second for the same period, and then by one of four years'.

The salient features of the Settlement Policy in the south-east Punjab was a proper field survey with the results embodied in a field map and register, a full enquiry into the rights and liability of all persons having an interest in the soil, and the record of these rights and liabilities in permanent register, and a moderate assessment based more on general consideration than on an attempt to deduce the demand from an exact calculation of the landlord's net assets and the share there of claimable by Government.

The settlement in south-eastern region was 'Mahalwari', for example, the assessment unit was an 'estate' or groups of holdings owned under one title, for example, by a single owner or by a community or a proprietary body. The Act XIX of 1873 called as the Land Revenue Act was passed superseding and repealing about fifty existing regulations regarding land. The section 3 of the Act defined the 'Mahal' to be any local area held under a separate engagement for payment of land revenue, and for which a separate record of rights had been signed or redeemed, and for which a separate record – of – rights had been framed.

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75 Settlement Report of the Rohtak District, 1873-80, 101-03.
The report has mentioned half asset rates were worked out for the assessment circle—from produce estimates, and from rents. The government officials used to say that land revenue was not tax but rent payable to the State. It was levied in money or in kind, often from the actual cultivators whether proprietors or not, and was collected directly by officials or indirectly by the agency of middlemen or revenue farmers. On the other hand, “when the settlement was made the headmen were imprisoned till they agreed to the terms offered and having accepted them, till they furnished security for payment”. The poor farmers, when they could not afford to pay the revenue which the village headmen had agreed to pay under compulsion, had to visit jail 4 to 5 times ‘in a matter of few years.’ The British settlement literally ruined the peasantry in the sub-region and was not introduced with the consent of the people but superimposed upon them. An order issued, issued to the Settlement Officer of Delhi, Gurgaon and Karnal, clearly pointed out (1873) that ‘one half of the share’ of the produce of an estate ordinarily receivable by the landlords either in money or in ‘kind’ should be the basis of assessment.

Under the colonial constraints, the revenue demand and collection system was very coercive and oppressive. Due to this, the land revenue demand was increasing rather alarmingly between 1860-1932. The total land revenue

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80 In fact, rent was not affordable at that time as John Lawrance, who surveyed parganah Taoru in Gurgaon around 1837, declared; ‘These are few, if any estates pay their revenue from their rent realizations ………… In fact, land does not afford a rent.” In tahsil Ferozpur, there was a popular belief in 1830s that ‘the owner should always pay a higher role than the non-proprietor, Settlement of Pergunnahs Ferozpur and Poonahanah, No, 51 from J. Lawrance, Officiating Collector, Gurgaon to Commissioner Delhi, 1849. App. 9.
81 Report on the Revision of Settlement of the Panipat Tahsil and Karnal parganah of the Karnal District, 1872-80, Pioneer Press, Allahbad, 1853, 46.
82 Himadri Banerjee, Agrarian Society of the Punjab, 1849-1901, Manohar, New Delhi, 1982, 84; For instance, the land revenue was increased from 370895Rs. to 383304Rs. in Delhi, Karnal and Rohtak District.
83 Revenue and Agriculture (Revenue) Proceedings, No. 54-60 (B), June, 1891; Punjab Land Revenue Administration Report, 1860-61, Appendix No-I; PAR, 1901-02, Appendix iii. But the
demand during 1860-61 was 41 lakh, which increased to 53 lakh in 1900-01, and further rose to 73 lakhs 1931-32. This accounted for a 30 percent increase between 1860-61 and 1900-01 and a 37 percent increase to during 1900-01 to 1931-32. The overall increase during 1860-61 to 1931-32 was 85 percent.\textsuperscript{84} In 1860, the highest revenues were collected from Gurgaon at 11.5 lakhs, followed by Rohtak and Karnal which was around 9 and 8 lakhs, Hissar and Delhi paid around 4 lakhs and the minimum was paid by Ambala and Sirsa at around 2 lakhs. By the turn of the century there was an overall increase in the revenues of some areas, over 300 percent in Ambala, 104 in Delhi, 85 percent in Hissar, but only 11 percent in Karnal. In Rohtak, the increase was marginal at around 3 percent. In Gurgaon alone, there was a minute decline of over one percent.

Table: 2.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1900-1860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>3189853</td>
<td>795452</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurgaon</td>
<td>1148490</td>
<td>1128525</td>
<td>-1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnal</td>
<td>804543</td>
<td>893524</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hissar</td>
<td>448081</td>
<td>832749</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohtak</td>
<td>959672</td>
<td>987438</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirsa</td>
<td>188623</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambala</td>
<td>155163</td>
<td>671953</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The land demand was clearly increasing, but there were variations among the south-eastern districts, and the rate of increase was not uniform. The rigid collection of revenue, led to an imbalance in revenue demand (\textit{jama}) and collection (\textit{asal}). This mean that because of the inability of the peasants to meet the revenue demand the actual collection was less than the estimated revenues. In 1860, this deficit was maximum in Rohtak followed by Gurgaon.

\textsuperscript{84} Collected from PLRAR respective years.
and the minimum was in Karnal district. The following table shows the demand, collection and balance in 1860-61.\textsuperscript{85}

Table: 2.6

\textbf{Land Revenue Demand and Collection in South-East Punjab.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Demand Rs.</th>
<th>Collection Rs.</th>
<th>Balance Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>389853</td>
<td>326787</td>
<td>63066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurgaon</td>
<td>1148490</td>
<td>881812</td>
<td>265678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnal</td>
<td>802543</td>
<td>765476</td>
<td>37067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hissar</td>
<td>448081</td>
<td>342978</td>
<td>105103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohtak</td>
<td>959672</td>
<td>685128</td>
<td>274544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirsa</td>
<td>188623</td>
<td>103184</td>
<td>85439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambala</td>
<td>515163</td>
<td>415468</td>
<td>99695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanesar</td>
<td>414187</td>
<td>262571</td>
<td>151616</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cause of the imbalance was stated to be the deficiency of rainfall in 1859-60.\textsuperscript{86} The rains of 1860 almost completely failed in the lands between the Jamuna and Sutlej. In 1877-78, there was a partial failure of the autumn crop in the whole Punjab but the distress was great in Delhi and Hissar divisions of south-eastern region.\textsuperscript{87} Though the whole of this region faced the drought and its results, the government also aggravated the situation by its coercive method of collection. The number of warrants issued for collection of revenue overdue in 1876-77 was 48498 and in 1877-78 it rose to 49730.\textsuperscript{88} The rigidity of the government policy was reflected in the fact that the largest numbers of warrants were issued in the districts of the south-eastern region.\textsuperscript{89}

Having done away with the inbuilt safeguards that the earlier system had against bad seasons, the new system failed to evolve other alternatives to deal with these problems. Though in theory remissions could be made when production fell below the normal, officials tended to be very rigid and miserly in

\textsuperscript{85} Punjab Land Revenue Administration Report, 1861-62, I.
\textsuperscript{86} Punjab Administration of Reports, 1860-61, 19.
\textsuperscript{87} Punjab Land Revenue Administration Reports, 1877-78, I.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} PLRAR, 1877-78, 10
granting such remissions even in extreme circumstances. For instance, the Settlement Officer was very critical of the revenue mismanagement of certain circles of the Pipli and Jagadhari tehsils in Ambala district. After noting that in the famine of 1868-69, Rs. 4334 were suspended in Jagadhari and Rs. 2400 in Pipli, he comments: "Considering how wide spread the distress was, and how long it lasted, so petty a measure can have done little good in the latter tahsil". He also notes that in the famine of 1877-79 no suspensions or remissions were made. The same story was repeated in the Indri tehsil in Karnal. In Rohtak as well the revenue was collected in full in the famine of 1877-78 “despite the urgent need of relief.” In Gurgaon, during the famine of 1877-78, new “assessment were introduced with effect from kharif 1877, and as the new demand, in spite of the almost total failure of the crops of both harvests, was rigidly collected, great distress was caused.” By the twentieth century, most British officials admitted that early British revenue history was marked by a high rate of demand and rigidity in collection. Land revenue was now the chief means of net income for the colonial state.

Table: 2.7

Land Revenue as Percentage of Net Income: Settlement Officer Estimate in South-East Punjab Districts in 1925.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Tehsil or tract</th>
<th>Old assessment</th>
<th>New assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ambala</td>
<td>All Tehsils</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hissar</td>
<td>All Tehsils</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rohtak</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Karnal</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


91 Ibid.

The table suggests that the government was extremely oppressive in this area. The average old assessment was 26 percent, which increased to 38 percent in 1925 i.e. a rise of 12 percent. The provincial average was now 22 (old) to 23 (new) at this time increase by 1 percent only. If we compare the central and western Punjab, we find almost the same as the provincial average. In these areas, we find the same as of the provincial average. Hissar was at the top in the whole province with 38 (old) and 54 (new) while, Karnal was at the 2nd position in the province with 30 (old) and (39) new.93

In the extreme south-east Punjab, besides land revenue the water tax, abiana was also prevalent. If we take up the average of six crops (sugarcane, rice, cotton, wheat, rapeseed, and bajar), we find the rate was Rs.18 per acre in 1905-06, which almost doubled in 1924-25.94 There was also the system of ‘chowbacha’ of four kinds of collections. On the first count it was ‘Per house’, and every Chulha or fireplace was looked upon as a unit. This was adopted because people used to burn jungle firewood for domestic purposes.95 The 2nd count was per head of cattle because they grazed in the village pasture land. This was known as ‘Augsho Mari back’ and was collected according to the following rates.

a) Each buffalow .................... 1 share.
b) Each cow and bullock not used for the ploughs (which were excluded) ................ ½ share.
c) Each grazes calf ..................... ¼ share.

The third collection was, per pagri, or every individual above 12 years age. This was the rule, but at times when hard pressed for money those under 12 years were also included, which went by the name of ‘Pagribich’. This was collected in lieu of the grass cut. The fourth tax was, on land, which was cultivated during the harvest. There was no fixed rule, by which they were guided in

93 See for detail, Punjab Revenue (Land Revenue) Department Proceedings, October 1925, Nos. 13-14, Enclosure I and 2, and India Office Records P/11505; cited in Mridula Mukherjee, Colonizing Agriculture, 13.
94 For detail, see next chapter.
collecting the *chowbacha*; in favourable seasons when the harvest used to be plentiful the rate per land used to be increased.\(^{96}\)

The 'colonial government charged very high revenues which caused great hardship to the peasantry in this tract and the increase of land revenue still further worsened the situation.\(^{97}\) The revenue policies were evolved to ensure maximum collection and the method of collection was very stringent and cumbrous.\(^{98}\) Under such circumstances the village became 'vagrants on the face of earth', if neither of two villages could pay its revenue, the combined capacities of both might meet the demand on one of them. "The revenue reports are full of such remarks such as this; "This village is entirely abandoned; half the villagers have run away; only five families left in the village."\(^{99}\) In fact, the settlement report revealed that the people of the parganah of Sonepat belonging to the nine villages named Pabashra, Chiri, Yusufpur, Chasnali, Gyaspura, Sunvara, Panava, Patti Brahman , and Becha, which were existing in 1826, were totally abandoned by 1842.\(^{100}\)

The interesting thing was the mode of collection, which was 'vexatious' and 'extortionist' as the assessment was oppressive. The collection was made in February and September, long before the harvest; and the cultivator was thus "forced to part with his grain at a ruinous price." Guards were appointed to watch the crops in the interest of the Government, but at the cost of the owner; and whenever, the revenue was overdue, house and food was provided by in the village at its own expense. One hundred and thirty six horsemen were retained for the collection of revenue, while only 22 sufficed for police duties of the same tract."\(^{101}\)


\(^{97}\) Quoted by *Gazetteer of Karnal District, 1883-84*, Arya Press, Lahore, 1884, 222 and also see, *S.R. of Karnal District*, 32-50.


\(^{99}\) Quoted by *Gazetteer of Karnal District, 1884*, 223, and *S.R. of Karnal District*, 46.


\(^{101}\) Quoted by *Gazetteer of Karnal District, 1883-84*, 222 and also see *SR of Karnal District 1872-80*, 47 and *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab*, Vol. II, 30.
In some instances land revenue had to be suspended due to drought. For instance, in Beri, Rohtak district, revenues were suspended for 5 out of 6 harvests in the 1920s. Similarly, in Rohtak during the same period for 2 out of 4 harvests no collection could be made. There would be several other examples of non-collection of revenue due to drought or famine. The government also brought the agriculturist relief by way of additional loans in times of scarcity. In 1928, for example, 7-1/2 Lakh rupees were granted to peasant and 92.45 lakh advance was also made. This provision was made after the credit cooperative had exhausted its funds.

The recurrence of famines was the most important feature in the history of the south-eastern region. That is why this sub-region rightly called ‘famine stricken’ region and ‘famine ridden’ region. The British famine-policy to begin with was ‘no policy’ i.e., non-interference on its part. With the passage of time, however, certain steps began to be taken, although on an ad-hoc basis. Very gradually towards the close of the British rule, these evolved into a somewhat coherent policy. However, throughout the period the policy continued to be one of subservience to the interests of the British Raj and the ideology that served best England, the home country of the British people rather than India.

A cursory survey of revenue records shows that this region was the most famine-prone area of north India and there was one famine every ten years on

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102 Malcolm Darling, Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Villages, 204.
103 Ibid., 204.
104 The Commissioner of Delhi Wrote in August 1861 that “with a very limited amount of moisture, the soil of this country exceedingly prolific; all however, depends on the rainfall. When rain fails everything is lost and the soil becomes hard as iron after wards. The feature of ‘absolute drought’ and the failure of the rain is a remarkable one in this part of Punjab (i.e. south-eastern region). Every considerable town and village can point to its former site or sites, prior to such and such a famine or drought, which depopulated the country and these occurrences appear to serve as eras in the popular record of the past”. S.R. Rohtak District, 1873-74, 46.
A study shows that before the British occupation of the south-eastern areas, there were not so many famines. According to the Settlement Reports, famines visited Delhi in 1345, 1631, 1661, 1739, 1770, and 1803. Almost every District Gazetteer and Settlement Report carries the list of years in which the various districts of the south-eastern region reeled under the famines during the British period.

Soon after the Crown took over the administration, the districts namely, Ambala, Gurgaon, Rohtak, Hisar, Sirsa and Panipat were affected by famine in 1860-61. It was popularly known as Satrah Akal. Acute scarcity of food grains coupled with high prices inflicted many hardships on the various strata of society and there was a well known saying which reflected the situation:

“Parte Kal Julahe mare, aur bich me mara Teli,
Utrate Kal Baniye mare, rupiye ke rah gai dheli;
Channa chisongi ho gaya, aur gehu ho gae dakh;
Sattarah bhi aisa para, 'chalisa' ka bap”.

(In the beginning, the famine ruined the weavers, in the middle the oil men, at the end of traders; and rupee became worth only half its value, grain sold at the price of pistachio nuts, and wheat at the price of raisins, the famine of ‘seventeen’ (1917 Samvat) was more severe than that of forty i.e. of Samvat (1840).

The Punjab Famine Relief Fund Committee considered it necessary to help the agriculturist in purchasing seed-grains, and plough-cattle to insure the

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106 A.N. Aggrawal, Indian Agriculture, Problems, Progress and Prospects, 45.
108 Having occurred in Samvat 1917. DG Rohtak, 1883-84, 34-35.
109 "The Reports from every district". Wrote Colonel R.B. Smith, "then told the same tale of daily increasing crowds of starving people flocking to the relief houses or relief works and the demands from the various local committees for additional means to meet the growing pressure". DG Rohtak, 1883-84, Arya Press, Lahore, 1884, 33-34,35, and Navtej Singh, Starvation and Colonialism: Famine in the Punjab in Nineteenth Century, NBO, New Delhi, 1996, 35 and Chattar Singh, Social and Economic Change, 135-36, and also see P.A. R., 1860-61, 9.
continuation of cultivation and land revenues. The Committee, therefore, made
grants to each district according to the estimated local loss. The government
also made contributions and the advances, made both from the ‘Government
Treasury’ and the ‘Famine Fund’ amounted to 3.3 lakhs rupees and 2.2 lakhs
rupees respectively. Hence, major expenditure on relief was done by way of
private charity.110

About eight years later the south-eastern region was again in the grip of
terrible famine in 1868-70, popularly known as ‘Pachisa’,111 it ravaged the
districts of Rohtak, Hissar, Sirsa and Karnal.112 The districts of Gurgaon and
Delhi were affected a little less severely. In the scarcity and drought that
prevailed in these years, thousands of cattle perished. Not withstanding these
adverse circumstances the revenue was increased from 34 lakhs pounds to
37 lakhs pounds.113 A Central Relief Committee formed at Lahore, held its first
meeting on January, 1869. It directed the district and Local Relief Committees
in every affected area and permitted them to utilize the balance of the previous
famine fund. The Central Committee collected an amount of 4.5 lakhs
rupees.114

1877-78 saw another famine, popularly known as ‘chautisa’, which
devastated the whole of the south-eastern region, Ambala alone escaped from
the calamity.115 Consequently, grain-riots occurred and affected the people.
People looted grain-stocks at Rohtak, Ambala and Delhi. At Badli, in the
Rohtak district, forty shopkeepers were looted of grain to the value of 36
thousand rupees. During the 1877-78, as many as 409 grain-riots occurred.116

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111 Having occurred in Samvat 1925.
112 Karnal Settlement Report remarked. “Not a leaf was to be seen on the trees............
skeletons of cattle in all directions, empty huts and the lean countenances of the people in
villages indicated a state of poverty”.
113 Punjab Administration Reports, 1869-70, I.
115 Having occurred in Samvat 1934.
116 The shortage of food grains lead to a corresponding increase in number of crimes; 60 cases
of dacoity and 232 of robbery were reported in 1877-78. Navtej Singh, *Starvation and
Colonialism*, 68-69.
Though the relief measures were organized in accordance with the past pattern, yet the government asserted, "... It will spare no effort to save life". Taqavi advances distributed by the government during the year 1877-78 amounted to 3,66,240 rupees, which were raised to 5,52,142 rupees in 1878-79 i.e. 34 percent. Special advances, which were made for the purchase of cattle and seed grains, amounted to 1,84,000 rupees. The maximum of such financial aid was recorded in the district of Rohtak, Sirsa and Gurgaon.117

Yet another famine in 1883-84 was extremely severe. The Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon noted that in portions of the Gurgaon and Rewari tehsils, in parts of the Hathin and Punhana parganah, the people appeared to be badly off, and a good many Meos had left their homes in each of work. Fodder was very scarce and people had used up most of the kikar and rough lopping."118 The relief measures were taken in the way of the suspensions of land revenue demand. The largest amount was suspended in Rohtak, where 2.29 lakhs rupees of kharif demand of 1883 and 2.23 lakhs rupees for the rabi demand of 1884 were suspended. In Gurgaon, these figures stood at 1.16 lakhs rupees and 1.15 lakhs rupees respectively. In the district of Delhi and Karnal forty thousand rupees and 4500 rupees of rabi demand were suspended. In the district of Hissar, practically the entire demand was realized, but 12996 rupees were suspended for the rabi of 1884-85.119

The following table suggests that the maximum remissions were in Rohtak followed by Gurgaon, the minimum was in Delhi and Karnal, and in Hissar it was very marginal. In Rohtak, there was 4.5 lakhs suspended, Gurgaon 2.3 lakhs, while in Delhi, Karnal, and Hissar, this proportion was only an around one lakh. In 1883 the minimum revenue suspended was in Hissar whereas, in 1896 the half of the total revenue of the region was suspended only from this district. It means that all of the districts were not equally affected. Karnal and Ambala were less affected in this area.

117 Navtej Singh, Starvation and Colonialism, 68-69.
118 Ibid., 68-69.
119 Navtej, Starvation and Colonialism, 86-87.
Table: 2.8
Reliefs in the South-East Punjab Districts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Famine</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Relief/Suspensions in Rs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Rohtak</td>
<td>Kharif 229000, Rabi 223000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gurgaon</td>
<td>Kharif 116000, Rabi 115000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>Rabi 40000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karnal</td>
<td>Rabi 45000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hissar</td>
<td>Rabi 12996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Hissar</td>
<td>478147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total South-East Punjab</td>
<td></td>
<td>1154590</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The famine of 1896-97 was also terrible for the colonial south-east Punjab. In the districts of Ambala and Hissar, the famished people at jungle products large relief works formed the backbone of the system of relief. The total expenditure on the relief works turned out to be Rs.19,50,086 Advances granted under Act XII of 1884 accounted for Rs.11,54,590. Hissar district got the minimum amount for Rs.4 lakhs.120

Hardly after four years, the area under reference was in the grip of a 'terrible famine of the century' in 1899-1900. It was the “severest that India has ever known.” The most extensive failure of crops occurred in the district of Hissar, Gurgaon, Karnal and Ambala (all in the Delhi Division). Many cases of abandoning and selling of children by their parents occurred in district Hissar. There were many examples of wives and children being sold without any care to which they went, whether to a low or high caste.121 Programmes of relief work were maintained according to the famine code. The total expenditure of all

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120 Agricultural Distress in the Punjab, Proceedings, Revenue and Agriculture Department, Famine, B. July, 1884, No.-46, F.C.R. 1898, para, 12, 6.
121 The crime cases also rose from 174221 in 1898 to 181965 in 1899 and slightly decreased to 180746 in 1900 and the number of robberies also increased from 598 in 1899 to 765 in 1900.
relief works amounted to 37 lakhs one hundred and fifty nine rupees, while around four crore peoples receive the assistance in various forms.  

The policy of the government to cope with the problems of famine, specially in the south-east Punjab was quite different from the policy adopted during the later half of the nineteenth century of the Punjab province. The Government showed a grave concern towards the wealth and other requirements of this sub-region. They were always by the side of the distressed at the need of the hour. They took special care for the animals. The moment they felt that scarcity or famine was prevailing, they sought measures to face the distress from time to time; they did their best in pulling out the people from the worst of the situations, whether it was due to the political pressure or humanitarian reasons.

The first famine of the new century was in 1905-06 and was very severe in the district of Rohtak and Gurgaon. Rohtak bore the severest brunt of this famine. The district of Delhi, Hissar and Karnal generally suffered from lack of rain up to the harvesting of the rabi crops but still, it did not have to suffer much. In Gurgaon district, the rains almost completely failed, and as distress was reported in the Rewari tehsil the District Board decided to improve Rewari-Jhajjar road and provide relief work and wages.

The spring harvest of 1918 was good and though the autumn crops proved a failure any deficiency of yields was more than counterbalanced by higher prices. There was a marked and a general increase in the prices of all staple articles due to the worldwide conditions resulting from the war.

In the south-eastern region, owing to inadequacy of the monsoon of 1929, there was a general failure of crops in certain parts of Hissar and Gurgaon Districts. The area affected comprised the district of Hissar, Gurgaon and a small portion of Karnal known as Naili tract. One account of failure of rabi 1929 following that of kharif 1928. The authorities were confronted with the immediate problem of fodder. This famine was very severe in Gurgaon

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122 Navtej Singh, Starvation and Colonialism, 86-87.
124 Punjab Administration Reports, 1918-19.
district.\textsuperscript{125} South-East Punjab was again in the grip of famine in the year, 1929, which lasted for three years. The failure of 1938 monsoon brought about a state of grave distress in Ambala Division, and the government aid was confined to the grant of fodder taccavi.\textsuperscript{126} The government did not initiate any programme to counteract the vagaries of nature. The over watering, flooding and water logging were among the problems which affected the agriculture of the region.

Due to chronic famines and low agricultural potential of the area the efforts of the British were not in favour of making improvements in irrigation facilities. Clearly, therefore, this was the part of government policy that no major irrigation system be initiated in this region.\textsuperscript{127} The only fear was that cattle breeding would receive a serious setback. This was noted when Bhakra Dam Scheme was not implemented. The delay of this scheme made evident the British policy in this regard. An official report dated 1935, commenting on the proposed Bhakra Dam Project revealed:

"It is almost certain that if the Bhakra Dam Scheme matures cattle breeding will receive a serious setback and the production of draught bullocks in Haryana tract may be discontinued. This brings us to a much disputed question on which there is a sharp difference of opinion; whether the breeding of good cattle, especially the draught bullock is possible in irrigated areas. Evidence contained shows that canal irrigation ruined the Montgomery breed. In Rohtak District, where the irrigated and the unirrigated area exist side by side, we find that cattle's breeding has shifted to the unirrigated area, except for the breeding of buffaloes." \textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{125} Tejinder Kaur, Famines in the South-East Punjab, 70.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 98-99.
\textsuperscript{127} Except Western Jamuna Canal but its water was not adequate for the thirsty plain of this sub-region.
\textsuperscript{128} A Cattle Survey of Rohtak, 27. The Punjab officials involved in various surveys of the Haryana region had for a long time been declaring that any extension of irrigation to this region would prove to be injurious to cattle breeding. See H.T. Pease, Breeds of Indian cattle, Punjab, Calcutta, 1903, 47.
For this reason, they also laid emphasis on low-value food-cum-fodder crop, with an increasing acreage under fodder cultivation and in their attempts to curb the limited efforts being made at substitution of fodder crops by other crops, which might adversely affect this region’s cattle wealth. Animal husbandry was as a necessary supplement to this region’s subsistence level economy. However, as encouragement was given only to draught cattle, and not to dairy cattle or to the commercialization of dairy products, animal husbandry never became a high-paying proposition under the British.

An official report, published in 1910, on the question of cattle and dairying in the Punjab, maintained:

“The physical features of Haryana constitute an ideal breeding ground (for cattle). In the dry climate, Sandy soil has an amount of lime essential to bone formation in young stock. Few monsoon showers produce plentiful crop of excellent grasses, dry season scarcity of fodder ensures sufficient exercise, as extensive roaming of animals to find it. To supplement grazing, staple fodders are Jowar, Chari, Pala, or leaves of the Jhar, wheat and grain Bhusa, Khal or oil cakes in hot seasons and Binaula (cotton seed) in cold”. Agriculturally, therefore, the region seemed eminently suitable for cattle, and very early, the British had realized that ‘Haryana produced cattle greatly in excess of its own

\[129\] For details, also see, Chapter three of this thesis.
\[130\] Animal husbandry, the branch of agriculture concerned with the care and management of live stock. It oversees the conditions under which animals are fed, housed and protected from disease and controls their breeding. Its goal is to increase the yield of meat, milk, wool and other animal products. The other encyclopedia also defined as, the science and technique of producing live stock efficiency through careful selection of breeding, proper feeding, sound sanitation and health, adequate shelter and intelligent marketing. William D. Hasey, *Merit Students Encyclopedia*, Macmillan, New Delhi, 1980 (reprint), 578; and *The New College Encyclopedia*, Banner Press, New York, 1978, 41.
requirements”. It, therefore, quickly came to be treated as a ‘store’, from other parts of Punjab began to be supplied.\textsuperscript{133}

The south-eastern tract had a near monopoly of cattle sales in British Punjab. This area contributed 99 percent of the sale of cattle in British Punjab in 1939, and over half the total number of cattle traded in all India.\textsuperscript{134} However, by 1945 there was a decline in this regard in all districts except Hissar and Rohtak district. The government also established the cattle farm and held cattle and horses fairs and exhibitions for stimulating interests in breeding.\textsuperscript{135} Hissar Cattle Farm played an important role in cattle breeding.\textsuperscript{136} Between 1916 and 1931, the Hissar Cattle Farm supplied 4702 bulls to the various districts of the Punjab. Nearly 90 percent of the total numbers of bulls at work in the Punjab in 1931 were supplied at concessional rates from Hissar.\textsuperscript{137}

The Sirsa Bull fair and Jehajgarh fair were the important fairs in the south-eastern region. This fair was held annually at Sirsa during the month of Bhadua (Aug.-Sept.) and at this fair a large number of cattle bred in the district


\textsuperscript{134} For details see, A Cattle Survey of Rohtak, 11-12 and also see, The BEIP, Economic Aspects of Animal Husbandry in Hissar: A Famine Area of Punjab, Lahore, 1945, 11.

\textsuperscript{135} Cattle farm, cattle and horse fairs and experiments were a very valuable agency for stimulating interest in breeding and facilitating the sale of young stock, they could also be utilized for exhibitions of improved agricultural implements and produce and brighten the prevailing dullness of rural economy by proving and annual district fete. Punjab Land Administration Manual, 312.


were sold for export. Total numbers of cows, buffaloes, camels sold in 1880 were 19,149, in which 18541 were bullocks.\textsuperscript{138} Another cattle fair for the sale of cattle took place twice a year in September and March at Jehajgarh in Rohtak district; the average yearly number of cattle at both fairs since 1871-72, had been nearly 3800 of which about half were generally sold.\textsuperscript{139}

F.L. Brayne’s experiment was also considered for stimulating animal husbandry.\textsuperscript{140} As far as the bull is concerned, a 70 times increase was seen between 1921 to 1927.\textsuperscript{141} Shows and exhibitions were also the part of Brayne’s experiment.\textsuperscript{142} The ‘Palwal show’ was organized in 1922 by the District Board. Horse and Cattle shows were organized by the Army Remount Department. Medals were given to best cattle.\textsuperscript{143}

No incentives were however, given by the government to facilitate animal husbandry of this region, other than some advances during time of distress. No official encouragement to dairy farming was given either. An official report lamented ‘modern methods of husbandry have been neglected and too much attention concentrated on the profits of agriculture.\textsuperscript{144} Some kind of trading in ghee was only the local effort. No effort was made in the expansion of marketing of milk or its products even by the District Board, which drew the major part of their revenue from the numerous cattle fairs held in this region.

\textsuperscript{138} The selection of the best bullock was not easy task in this area because bullocks played an important role in rural economy. Many proverbs were maintained for the recognition of best bullock. See for detail, D.C. Verma, Haryana, NBT, 2001, 183-86 and K.S. Bedi, Agricultural Proverbs of the Punjab, Chandigarh, 1962.


\textsuperscript{140} F.L. Brayne, the Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon in 1920-21 introduced the scheme called ‘Gurgaon Scheme of Upliftment’ and also called ‘Gurgaon Experiment’. He toured the whole district.

\textsuperscript{141} Mahender Singh, Animal Husbandry as the Subsistence Level Economy for the Colonial South-East Punjab, Paper Presented in PHC, 18-20 March 2006, Patiala.

\textsuperscript{142} After 1920, the government policy has been changing and they began to start experiment in the agrarian sphere. The ploughing matches were started during this time. See for detail, appendix-C.

\textsuperscript{143} Chattar Singh, Social and Economic Change in Haryana, 230-31.

Many times the government did not want to provide loans, for example, the
commissioner of Delhi divisions requested Punjab Government for a grant to
purchase fodder to save their cattle from destruction in the time of the
famine.\textsuperscript{145} The request was turned down on the ground that, "\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots It would be
cheaper as well as in keeping with the general custom and habit of the area to
purchase cattle at the commencement of rains rather than keep them alive over
the scarcity period". Thus, Imperial requirements, which demanded that this
region retain its basic features, continued to emphasize and underline the
extreme agricultural backwardness of this region.

\textbf{IV}

The perpetuation of the backward economy proved to be very helpful to
imperial interests, as the impoverished tract became a major recruiting area for
the British Indian Army.\textsuperscript{145} The army, in this region, provided the only source of
employment and sustenance under conditions of severe famine, economic
stagnation, rising population, unemployment and prices.\textsuperscript{147} It was the part of
the government policy that recruitment would be taken from the most backward
district, for example, from Hissar and Rohtak. The recruitment from more fertile
districts of Karnal was less than the upper mentioned districts. Punjabis with
their fighting experience of regular European style armies gained in the pre
annexation period had come to form the major bulk of soldiers’ recruits in the
British Indian army. After the uprising of 1857, in which regiments drawn from
Oudh participated so conspicuously, the British embarked upon a calculated
policy of recruiting soldiers from among the Punjab peasantry. The south­
eastern region, however, shared only partially in this recruiting system upto the


\textsuperscript{146} Before 1857, the Government recruited from the Oudh and Nepal, but after 1857, they
began to recruit from the Punjab because of an essential insurance against the imperial power.

\textsuperscript{147} Similar Views are taken by Tan Tai-Yong, as the frequency of famines in the south-eastern
region of the Punjab – ‘at least once of twice in a generation’ made resources to military service
and essential insurance against poverty and starvation. Indeed, during such economically
difficult times the villages that were targeted by the army recruits regarded excess to military
service as a prized privilege. Tan Tai Yong, \textit{The Garrison State, The Military, Government, and
MAP NO 3
JATS RECRUITING DISTRICTS IN THE SOUTH-EAST PUNJAB
first World War; but the recruitments of World War Ist made the British look at this “little known area” afresh; so far it had been looked down upon as being “comparatively unimportant”. ¹⁴⁸

Table: 2.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Enlistees during the war</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambala</td>
<td>8341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnal</td>
<td>6553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohtak</td>
<td>22244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hissar</td>
<td>15561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurgaon</td>
<td>18867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 2.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of males of military age</th>
<th>Total recruitment till 30 Nov. 1918</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rohtak</td>
<td>118170</td>
<td>28245</td>
<td>23.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurgaon</td>
<td>124290</td>
<td>20181</td>
<td>16.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisar</td>
<td>134000</td>
<td>18400</td>
<td>13.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnal</td>
<td>134200</td>
<td>6819</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambala</td>
<td>120800</td>
<td>10254</td>
<td>8.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>631460</td>
<td>83899</td>
<td>13.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Total (British Territory only)</td>
<td>3367060</td>
<td>423006</td>
<td>12.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: M.S. Leigh, The Punjab and the War, 1922, 61-62.

During the First World War almost 24 percent of recruitment from Rohtak district, 13 to 16 percent from Hisar and Gurgaon while only about 5 percent from Ambala and Karnal the better cultivated parts. In the World War I, this region contributed one-fifth of the total recruitment from Punjab (Table) and

came to establish a kind of historical and family tradition of army service which continues to this day.

The region’s most important district for recruiting purposes was Rohtak, which supplied just under half of the total number of Hindu Jats recruits in 1897-98 and 1898-99.149 Men were less tempted to enter into military service from the canal irrigated tracts of the district, with their great demand for agriculture labour and the good returns they promised.150 During the First World War, Chhotu Ram, the Unionist Leader, along with Chaudhri Lal Chand, made significant contribution to the war effort of Rohtak District. It was due to their effort, the recruitment figures from Rohtak District rose from 6245 in January 1915, to 22144 in November 1918.151

This policy of recruitment had bearing on the agrarian sphere too especially where debt was concerned. As a result of the benefits of the military recruitment, the Rohtak district was fortunate enough to have the agricultural investment as well and the extent of indebtedness here was low. The best example indicating the difference that army pay and pensions made is via a comparison between Rohtak and Karnal districts in the arid south-east. The former, with its fine tradition of enlistment, had 23 percent of its cultivators free of any debt, whereas only 6 percent in neighboring Karnal were debt free.152 This is significant as Karnal had more of its cultivated area under irrigation (36 percent) than Rohtak’s 27 percent.153 Income from military pay and pension in

149 The figures were 202 out of 579 and 222 out of 476, respectively. The next most important source of recruits for the Punjab was Hissar, which supplied 37 and 39 recruits respectively for the two years in question. ‘Report on the Recruiting Operations in Delhi District, 1899-1900’, in PHP (M) ‘B’, February, 1901; Cited in Tan Tai Yong, The Garrison State, 84.
150 It can be implemented on Karnal District where irrigation system was more than in Rohtak district. Consequently, Rohtak had more recruits than the Karnal. DG Rohtak, 1910, 167; Cited in Tan Tai Yong, The Garrison State, 85
152 This is based on the survey of Darling.
153 Malcolm Darling, Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt, 95-96.
Rohtak was more than land revenue paid by the peoples in this district. In 1910, it was amounted no less than 16 lakhs rupees, more than the Rs.11,86,000, which the district had to pay as, land revenue.\footnote{E. Joseph, \textit{LSR, Rohtak District}, 1905-10, Lahore, 1910, 23. IOR: V/27/314/61; Cited in Tan Tai Yong, \textit{The Garrison State}, 85.}

The peoples of this region participated in Second World War also. During Second World War (1939-45) around ninety six thousand soldiers were recruited from this area.\footnote{K.C. Yadav, \textit{Haryana, Itihas Evam Sanskriti}, Vol. 2, Manohar, 1999, 323.} Rohtak district as a whole showed an astounding increase of recruits between two World Wars also, as can be ascertained from the number of pensioners in the district. The number of pensioners in 1910 was 866 it rose to 6238 in 1936 – an increase of 620 percent.\footnote{Prem Chowdhry, 'The Advantages of Backwardness', 279.} Besides this, the soldiers of south-eastern region were very active in the Indian National Army. In this revolution army – INA of Netaji – the tract’s share was 398 officers and 2317 other ranks.\footnote{K.C. Yadav, \textit{Modern Haryana 1803-1966}, Manohar, 2002, 199.}

In the south east Punjab, as in the province as a whole, indebtedness was a serious problem throughout the province, especially in south-eastern Punjab, where the farmers were indebted since nineteenth century. In the unfavourable circumstances,\footnote{These are, the collection of revenue was very rigid, famine, drought, poverty, unemployment, rise of prices, No irrigational facilities, and unfertile land.} the hard hit peasantry fell compelled to go to village Bania, the money lender, to borrow money to pay their land revenue. The shrewd money lends charged an exorbitant rate of interest, which despite being paid by the poor borrower at every harvest by selling him (money lender) his produce and other belongings, at times even the ornaments of his wife at throw away prices, never got cleared off.\footnote{Journal of Haryana Studies, Vol. II, No. 1-2, Dec. – Jan., 1970, 46.} The farmer borrowed the money from money lender mortgaged their land to the ‘Sahukar’. The highest debt was seen in Gurgaon district at Rs. 48 per head followed by Rohtak at Rs. 39, Hissar at Rs. 22 and Karnal had the lowest i.e. Rs. 19.
Table: 2.11

Total Debt (Proprietors and Occupancy Tenants only).\(^{160}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>In Lakhs</th>
<th>As a Multiple of Land Revenue</th>
<th>Per Cultivated acre (Rs)</th>
<th>Per head of the Rural population (Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gurgaon</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohtak</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hissar</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnal</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The cultivator seldom kept any ready money with him and when he had spent what he received from the sale of the produce, he had only one recourse left to him to meet his manifold requirements, that of borrowing. He had to borrow for daily needs, children’s toys, wife’s ornament and trinkets, solemnizing a marriage, performing a kaj\(^{161}\) (funeral ceremony), for agricultural implements, and sometimes for government dues. Apart from sheer necessity, he ‘borrowed from habit’ and felt no hesitation in applying to his family creditor on the slightest pretext. He felt of proud of his credit and boasted of his ability to get, as much he wanted.\(^{162}\) A Survey of Gurgaon village illustrates the causes of debts.\(^{163}\)


\(^{161}\) It was a ceremony which may be called a ‘death feast’ and the celebration of a big kaj was regarded as was a sign of prosperity among the peoples in Gurgaon district.


\(^{163}\) Ibid., 75.
Gurgaon was at the top where indebtedness was high than the other district. One of the main causes, in this respect, was living expenses and social observances which amounted 43 percent, land revenue amounts were only 8 percent. (See table 2.12) A part from this, illiteracy, improvidence and indebtedness, which formed a serious of interacting causes and effects, go hand in hand there, the result of which was apparent in the very low standard of living. In a village of Ambala district a somewhat different picture can be seen in this regard. The total increased debt of the village on 1\textsuperscript{st} August, 1928, as worked out by the investigators; was around Rs. 18792. This gave an average debt per family, taking only the 56 families in debt, of around Rs. 355; and an average per family, taking all the 108 families in the village, of Rs. 174 i.e. around Rs. 37 per head of the total village population. If we go by caste

background, it is noticed that Chamar group had taken the highest advances, followed by Chuhra. Jats had taken less than half of the debts incurred by the lower social groups; the lowest debt was of the Faqir and Mirasi. The following table classifies the indebtedness of various castes according to the causes of debt.

Table: 2.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Castes</th>
<th>Family Expences</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Old debts</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Advances</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>R. a. p. 308</td>
<td>12 0</td>
<td>R.a. p. 99</td>
<td>18 9</td>
<td>Rs.a. p. 70</td>
<td>5413 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faqir</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirasi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nungar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuhra</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>758-120</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>8 9</td>
<td>1584</td>
<td>12 6</td>
<td>1054</td>
<td>13 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>37.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest amount of borrowing was due to the repayment of 'old debts', 37 percent of the total amount borrowed; 'advances' come next, at 32 percent; followed by 'business' and 'professional' expenses together 18.3 percent; 'marriages' 8.5 and 'family expenses' 4.2. The 'advances' constitute money paid by the agriculturists to menials working as whole-time labourers under them, and may not be taken as ordinary debts as no interest is charged on them and the amounts are cancelled against wages paid to the menials. In a village of Rohtak district shows dissimilar picture than a village of Ambala.

165 The BEIP, Punjab Village Survey No. 5, Naggal A Village in Ambala District.
district but somewhat same picture as in a village of Gurgaon district. The debt contracted consistently for non-agricultural purposes by the agriculturist of Gijhi Village.\textsuperscript{166}

Table: 2.14

(a) Non – Agricultural Purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>1210</td>
<td>14.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neota</td>
<td>1163</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of buffaloes</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>9.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>8.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To repay old debts</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>11.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5341</strong></td>
<td><strong>65.61</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Agricultural Purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To purchase bullocks</td>
<td>1464</td>
<td>17.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pay land revenue and occupies rates</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fodder for cattle</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To purchase carts</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2799</strong></td>
<td><strong>34.39</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8140</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It will be seen from the figures given above that 65.61 percent of the total debts contracted in a year by agriculturist are for non-agricultural purposes and only 34.39 percent represent loans for agricultural purposes. Of the former, loans taken for food and clothes form 16.73 percent of the total debt. As regard loan taken for a agricultural purposes, the highest percentage is shown by purchase of bullocks, and the then payment of land revenue and occupies rates.

\textsuperscript{166} The BEIP, The Punjab Village Survey No. 5, Gijhi – A Village in Rohtak District, Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore, 1932, 100.
Why did people borrow? The answer to this question can not be answered in a single reason for all the different social strata in rural south-east Punjab. The big landlords, absentee or otherwise, may well have borrowed large sums to maintain feudal standards of grandeur. Smaller landlords and the upper strata of the peasantry might often borrow to meet the needs for large cash sums which could not be raised immediately from their own resources, but which they could comfortably expect to pay back over a period of time from their surplus incomes. \(^{167}\) For large numbers of petty landlords, tenant-at-will, agricultural labourers and rural artisans whose incomes often fell short of consumption needs, borrowing was necessary for subsistence. They took loans in kind or cash at exorbitant rates of interest which soon compounded into impossible sums. Petty landowners, once their credit was exhausted, were often forced to mortgage their small pieces of land and resort to tenancy or wage labor. The landless were often unable to secure loans at all, especially if they were just wage-earners and did not even have the crop to offer as security. Food was in these cases a major item on the list of causes of indebtedness. \(^{168}\) Among these classes, tenants and petty landowners, who cultivated on their own account, also needed loans for continuing the process of production. The most important item in this list was cattle, for no cultivation was possible without plough animals. The need to replace old animals or those lost because of drought or disease was a recurrent one and the expenditure involved considerable. All investigations revealed this to be a major cause of debt. \(^{169}\) Loans were also taken for securing seed. \(^{170}\)

To maintain the first necessary condition for agricultural production, i.e., land, the government dues had to be paid by the appointed time. Cash loans to meet land revenue and water rate payments became essential when the proceeds of the harvest left no surplus after consumption requirements had

\(^{167}\) Such large sums would require, for example, for marriages and other social ceremonies and for sinking wells. For detail, see, Mridula Mukherjee, *Colonializing Agriculture*, 39-40.


\(^{170}\) Mridula Mukherji, *Colonializing Agriculture*, 41.
been set aside or the money-lenders obligations met. Money-lenders payments could be delayed, sowing could be postponed, but not liberties could be taken with the government’s share.\textsuperscript{171} The major portion of the total debt of cultivators and non-cultivators was incurred in famine, and drought, epidemics, ravages of floods or excessive and untimely rain, hailstorms, crop disease and sudden and sharp variations to prices. The rise in the prices of agricultural products has led to the accumulation of wealth in the case of the larger landed proprietors.\textsuperscript{172}

It was often argued that the joint family system among the Hindu cultivators tended to create drones, and helped to swell the number of dependants whom the working members of family had to support. The joint family system was the rule among small cultivators in Gijhi, and experience of the working of the joint family system here appeared to lead to conclusion which was the reverse of that stated above.\textsuperscript{173}

The British agrarian policy in India both was inconsistent as well as fluctuating over time. It was consistent however, in its focus on colonial interest which was always given the highest priority. To achieve this, the colonial authorities made constant adjustments with the agrarian situations. One of the main planks of their agricultural program was the continuous increase in land revenue. Revenues from land contributed a substantial proportion to the total revenue which was 41ercent in the 1880s almost 40\% at the turn of the century. The land revenue itself increased six fold between 1800-1936. In order to increase revenue from land a policy of extending cultivation was followed. The total cultivated area consequently increased by 33 percent between 1885-1938. Land revenues also increased due to the government policy maintaining a high rate of revenue which almost 40 percent of the produce and was collected with rigidity. For the collection of the land revenue and administrative structure was separately established for this sphere. British policy was also marked by, the

\textsuperscript{171} Settlement Reports of Kama! and Ambala, 1891, 20; Lindauer and Singh, who carried out a major statistical study of the Punjab land tax system, come to the conclusion that land tax system was a major cause of indebtedness in Pre independence Punjab. They take the period 1909 to 1939, and carryout regression analysis of land taxes.

\textsuperscript{172} The BEIP, The Punjab, An Economic Survey of Gijhi Village, 105-06.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 106.
commercialization of agriculture to meet the colonial requirements. Commercialization took place largely in tracts suited to particular crops like wheat in Punjab, cotton in Maharastra, indigo and jute in Bengal, where the British pursued both extension and commercialization of agriculture much more rigorously.

Another significant element of the agrarian policy was the provision of additional water for increased production. Irrigation schemes were initiated from the early nineteenth century in Delhi and North-West Province, as well as Godawari and Krishna in South India. By the end of nineteenth century over 1300 million acres of land came under irrigation schemes. These irrigation systems were mainly the development of canal networks. There were not many efforts to introduce other improvements in land. The government policy set up some experimental farms, Cooperative Societies and made taccavi advances. Despite colonial claims of success in this field, working capital and members of credit societies did not increase by any appreciable degree, although, the numbers of these societies did increase. British agrarian policy pushed farmers to the grip of money lenders and led to an overall impoverishment of the peasant.

The Punjab province had a somewhat different experience with colonial agrarian policies because of their late inclusion in the British Empire and the exceptional potential for agriculture. The Punjab sow a rather consistent policy which focused, as expected, on colonial ‘needs’, as in the sub-continent as a whole. The policy of increase in land revenue with time was followed in the Punjab as well. In the course of the last forty years of the nineteenth century the land revenue demand increased by 17 percent.

The program of extension of cultivation was introduced on a spectacular scale in the province. The western part of the Punjab came under extensive cultivation for the first time. Cultivated area in this region between 1855-1936 had risen to 61 percent. In relation to British India, the Punjab had a tremendous growth in the area under cultivation. The policy of rigid collection of revenue was followed in this region, as in others. In the Punjab, however, the rate of revenue was higher than that of other parts of the country. Land revenue for British India was 40 percent, while this percentage in the Punjab province
was almost 50. The Punjab was an ideal for the development of the commercial crops. The crops that were cultivated for the markets were wheat, cotton and sugarcane.

The British agrarian policy towards irrigation was introduced to a much higher degree in the Punjab. An extensive system irrigation was engineered which exceptional even by world standard. This program of canalization and colonization was elaborate and increased cultivated areas 23 percent in 1849 to 53 in 1947. The British investment and extension of canal irrigated areas were to the highest degrees in the Punjab province. Almost ten millions acres brought under the programe of canalization during 1860-1920. In this respect, British agrarian policy towards the Punjab differed from that in other parts of the country. In order to bring about improvements in land Cooperative Societies added a new dimension to the agrarian policy in the region. In British India, the capital available with such societies increased by just about 33% while in the Punjab this increase was substantial, at over percent. This development however, relates to the period from 1915-1939. In the twentieth century thus, Cooperative Credit Societies were significantly active in the region. Despite the overall development in agriculture in the Punjab region and the variations in the agrarian policy towards irrigation schemes, the peasants were crushed under the burden of debt as elsewhere.

Agrarian policy towards the south eastern region of the Punjab province was significantly modified due to the lack of economical potential, low rain fall and agricultural 'backwardness'. The south eastern part was geographically distinct from the Punjab. This diverse situation accounted for the different agrarian experience of these parts. The British Government gave less priority to improvements in agriculture and its agrarian policy shifted from cultivation to animal husbandry. Consequently the extension of cultivation was considerably less than the province as a whole and was only 23 percent between 1867-1939. It may be noted that the policy of increasing the land revenue was rather exaggeratedly implemented in the south eastern part. Between 1860-1932, the land revenue was increased by a shocking 85 percent. This was in sharp contrast to the provincial increase of 61% and the all India average of 33
percent. This policy has some time been related to the enthusiastic participation of south eastern districts in the ‘rebellion’ of 1857.

The rate of land revenue was high at 50 percent which added to the peasant’s burden with the rigidity in collection. There seems to be a minor shift in the policy of revenue collection during times of famines and natural calamities. The poor agricultural output of this parched region could not meet assigned revenues demands even by coercion. In this situation the Government temporarily permitted concessions and remissions. The fixed revenue rate however, was later increased and strictly collected thus, negating the concession of ‘suspensions’. In contrast to the irrigational policy in the province, the south eastern areas saw no extension of irrigation schemes, other than partial maintenance. The alignment and water logging problems of existing canals in the tract were not addressed by the colonial authorities. The south east part of the Punjab derived no benefits from the large scale canalization of the province. There was some extension of irrigated area through wells and repaired canals. The policy of commercialization was implemented in a limited way. On the whole, the traditional crops, considered ‘inferior’ grain continued to dominant, except in Ambala and Karnal.

The shift in the agrarian policy towards the south eastern region is also related to the government interest in maintaining these parts as a cattle rearing tract to supply draught animals to the army and other provinces of British India. There was no effort to develop animal husbandry either since dairy animals and dairy products were given no importance. Government reports at several points of times referred to ‘Haryana’ as the ‘store for cattle,’ as ‘the breeding ground’ and clearly underline them concern with cattle wealth alone. There was therefore, no overall program of developing this sector of the agricultural economy. The government was perpetuating the backward economy in the region because it suited their concerns of recruitment into the British Army. The south eastern region was seen as a recruiting ground to meet colonial needs. The consequence of the colonial agrarian policy in the south east Punjab as in the province was the increase of indebtedness for the agricultural classes and the closing down of any avenues that could lead to any development of the subsistence agriculture of the sub-region.