

Chapter 10

Colonialism and the Countryside

(2 MARKS)

1. What was Permanent Settlement?

Ans. The practice of collecting land revenue introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 is known as permanent settlement. In this system the land was given to landlords (Zamindars) permanently. The amount of revenue had been fixed in permanent settlement.

2. Explain the ryotwari system of revenue.

Ans. The revenue system that was introduced in the Bombay Deccan came to be known as ryotwari. In this system, the revenue was directly settled with the ryot. The average incomes from different types of soil were estimated. The revenue- paying capacity of the ryot was assessed and a proportion of it fixed as the share of the state.

3. What was Deeds of hire?

Ans. When debts mounted the peasants were unable to pay back the loan to the moneylender. They had no option but to give over all land under their possession, carts and animals to the money lenders. But without animals they could not continue to cultivate. So they took land on rent and animals on hire. Now they had to pay for them which had originally belong ed to them. He had to sign a Deed of hire stating very clearly that these animals and carts did not belong to them.

4. Who were santhals? What are the two features of their lives?

Ans. They were the tribes living in the foothills of Rajmahal hills. They cultivated their fields by plough and much civilized than the Paharias.

5. What do you understand by Deccan riots commission?

Ans. The commission which was set up to investigate the riots of Deccan's farmer in 1875. It was set up by the government of Bombay due to immense pressure of Government of India. Its report was presented in 1878 before the British Parliament.

6. Who were Jotedars?

Ans. The group of rich farmers were known as Jotedars. They controlled local trade as well as money lending, exercising immense power over the poorer cultivator's of the region.

(4 MARKS)

1. Why Zamindars defaulted on payments?

Ans. The reasons for this failure were various-

- (i) The initial demands of tax were very high, because the company felt that if the demand was fixed for all time to come they would never be able to claim for high shares in the condition of increased income.
 - (ii) This high demand was imposed in the 1790s, a time when the prices of agricultural produce were depressed, making it difficult for the ryots to pay their dues to the zamindar. If the Zamindar could not collect the rent, how could he pay the company?
 - (iii) The revenue was invariable, regardless of the harvest, and had to be paid punctually.
 - (iv) The permanent settlement initially limited the power of the Zamindars to collect rent from the ryot and manage his zamindari.
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2. Why did the Santhals revolted against the British rule?

Ans. The Santhals were revolted against the British rule due to following reasons-

- (i) The land that Santhals had brought under cultivation was slipping away from their hands.
- (ii) The state was levying heavy taxes on the land that the Santhals had cleared, money lenders (dikus) were charging them high rates of interest.
- (iii) Moneylenders were taking over the land from Santhals when debts remained unpaid, and Zamindars were asserting control over the Damin - i - koh area.

(iv) By the 1850s, the Santhals felt that the time had come to rebel against Zamindars, money lenders and the colonial state in order to create an ideal world for themselves where they would rule. It was after the Santhal Revolt (1855-56) that the Santhal Pargana was created, carving out 5,500 sq. miles from the districts of Bhagalpur and Birbhum.

3. Discuss about the life of hill folk of Rajmahal hills, Paharia.

Ans. (i) Paharias lived around the Rajmahal hills, subsisting on forest produce and practicing shifting cultivation.

(ii) They cleared patches of forest by cutting bushes and burning the undergrowth on these patches, enriched by the potash from the ash, the Paharias grew a variety of pulses and millets for consumption.

(iii) They scratched the ground lightly with hoes, cultivated the cleared land for few years, then left it fallow so that it could recover its fertility, and moved to a new area.

(iv) From the forests they collected Mahua (a flower) for food, silk cocoons and resin for sale, and wood for charcoal production. The life of the Paharias - as hunters shifting cultivators, food gatherers, charcoal producers, silkworm rearers - was thus intimately connected to the forest.

(8 MARKS)

1. What are the problems of using official sources in writing about the history of peasants?

Ans. Following are the problems in using official sources in writing about the history of peasants.

(i) The official sources reflect only British official concerns and interpretation of all events from the outlook and angles of the English. For example, the Deccan riots commission was specifically asked to judge whether the level of Government revenue demand was the cause of the revolt.

(ii) Most of the events, revolts and happening have been presented in a biased manner.

(iii) The colonial Government and official had their own political, economic religious, cultural and social interest. They had always tried to present the picture of Indian society, people, tradition, culture and even the achievements.

(iv) The sources have been presented and recorded by such clever and naughty people who have intentionally presented things with false evidences also. For example, the Deccan Riot Commission presenting all the findings with such evidences which were utilized to give authenticity to the report of the commission. The commission has presented this fabricated fact that the Government demand was not the cause of the peasants anger. It was the moneylenders (again Indian) who were to be blame for such argument is found very frequently in British colonial records. This shows that there was a persistence on the part of the colonial government to admit that popular discontent was ever on account of Government action.

(v) Official reports, thus are invaluable sources for the reconstruction of history. But they

have to be always read carefully and compared with evidence from newspapers, unofficial accounts, legal records and where possible oral sources.

2. What were steps taken by the British East India Company to control the Zamindars?

Ans. The British East India Company took the following steps mainly to maintain its control over the Zamindars.

(i) The zamindar's troops were disbanded custom duties were abolished.

(ii) Their cutcheries (Courts) brought under the supervision of collector appointed by the company.

(iii) The power to deliver local judgment was also taken away from zamindars. In fact, zamindars held their control and leadership through local courts and other panchayats. They lost their power to organize local police. Over time, the collectorate emerged as an alternative center of authority, severely restricting what the zamindar could do.

(iv) In case a Raja (powerful zamindars) failed to pay the land revenue, a company official was speedily dispatched to his zamindari with explicit instruction "to take charge of the District and to use the most effectual means to destroy all the influence and the authority of the zamindar and his officers.

(v) Some of the scholars believe that some trouble creators were also used as tools to reduce the influence of Rajas. For example, when the zamindars dispatched their amlah (collector of revenue or representative of zamindar). Some naughty people used to create problem for zamindars. Some ryots and village headmen jotedars and mandals-were only too happy to see the Zamindar in trouble. The zamindar could therefore not easily assert his power over them.