

## THEME – 10

### COLONIALISM AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

#### Key concepts in nutshell

- Bengal - Establishment of colonial rule - New land revenue, Auction system under Warren Hastings – 1793, Permanent Revenue settlement in Bengal by Lord Cornwallis.
- Crises in village economy, revenue demand of the state was fixed.
- The rise of the Jotedars, Their land was cultivated through share croppers.
- Resistance of Zamindars, their land was auctioned frequently.
- The fifth report –report submitted to British parliament 1813
- The Hoe and the Ploug – Shifting agriculture, expensive of village economy.
- Paharias -hunters food gathers connected with forests, invaded settled farmers 1770
- Santhals – Settled in bangal- practiced cultivation land demarcated to them known as Daman-i-koh.
- Conflicts with unsettled paharias -1850 – they resisted the British – Santhal revolt.
- Revolt in the Bombay and Deccan - 1875
- Burning of account book of money lenders and shop keepers
- New revenue System – Ryotwari system in Bombay Deccan – Direct settlement , land assessed for 30 yrs subject to periodic revision
- Experience of injustice by peasants.

#### 2 Marks Questions-

- Q.1      What was Permanent Settlement? 2
- 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.
- Q.2      Explain the ryotwari system of revenue. 2
- 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 was estimated. The revenue-paying capacity of the ryot was assessed and a proportion of it fixed as the share of the state.
- Q.3      What was Deeds of hire? 2

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 belonged to them. He had to sign a Deed of hire stating very clearly that these animals and carts did not belong to them.

Q.4 Who were santhals? What are the two features of their lives? 2

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

Q.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.

Q.6 Who were Jotedars? 2

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.

### **5 Marks Questions-**

Q.7 Why Zamindars defaulted on payments? 5

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.

Q.8 Why did the Santhals revolted against the British rule? 5

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.
- (vi) 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.

Q.9 Discuss about the life of hill folk of Rajmahal hills, Paharia. 5

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.

### **10 Marks Questions-**

Q.10 What are the problems of using official sources in writing about the history of peasants? 10

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 form newspapers, unofficial accounts, legal records and where possible oral sources.

Q.11 What were steps taken by the British East India Company to control the Zamindars? 10

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 which 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.

## 12. Passage Based Questions.

Referring to the condition of zamindars and the auction of lands, the Fifth Report stated.

The revenue was not realized with punctuality, and lands to a considerable extent were periodically exposed to sale by auction. In the native year 1203, corresponding with 1796 - 1797, the land advertised for sale comprehended a jumma or assessment of sicca rupees 28, 70, 061, the extent of land actually sold bore a jumma or assessment of 14,18, 756 and the amount of purchase money sicca rupees 17,90, 416,. In 1204 corresponding with 1797-98 the land advertised was for sicca rupees 26, 66, 191 the quality sold was for sicca rupees 21, 47, 580. Among the defaulters were some of the oldest families or the country. Such were the rajahs of Nuddea, Rajeshaye Bishenpore (all districts of Bengal), and others, the dismemberment of whose estates at the end of each succeeding year threatened them with poverty and ruin, and in some instances presented difficulties to the revenue officer, in their efforts to preserve undiminished the amount of public assessment.

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| Q1. | Why did Zamindars default on payments?                           | 3 |
| Q2. | Name some of the oldest families who were defaulters in payment? | 2 |
| Q3. | What was fifth report?   | 3 |

Ans. (1) 1. The revenue demand was very high.

2. The high demand was imposed the 1790's, a time when the prices of agriculture produce were depressed making it difficult for the ryots to pay their dues to the zamindars.

3. The revenue was invariable regardless of the harvest and had to be paid regularly.

Ans (2) The Rajas of Nuddea, Rajeshaye, Bishenpore (all district of Bengal) were some of the defaulters could not pay revenue in time,

Ans (3) (1) Fifth report is one amongst a series of report of the administrative activities of the East India company sent to the British parliament.

(2) It content 1002 pages of which over 800 pages were appendices that reproduced petitions of zamindars and ryots, reports of collectors, statistically reports on revenue returns and notes on the revenue and judicial administration of Bengal and Madras, written by officials.