

WK:5

CLASS:VIII

SUB: SOCIAL SCIENCE (HISTORY)

Chapter-3: RULING FROM THE COUNTRY SIDE

Facts that Matter

- After the assumption of *Diwani* in 1765 the company began to use the vast revenue resources of Bengal. Now the revenues from India could finance company expenses. These revenues could be used to purchase cotton and silk textiles in India.
- This caused a huge loss of revenue for Bengal. The Bengal economy fell into deep crisis. Artisans began to desert villages because they were being forced to sell their goods to the Company at low prices. Peasants were also worried. Agriculture cultivation showed signs of collapse. Then in 1770 a terrible famine killed ten million people in Bengal.
- Now the Company felt the need of improvement in the field of agriculture because only then its revenue income was sure.
- Finally the Company introduced the **Permanent Settlement** in 1793. The *rajas* and *talukdars* were asked to collect rent from the peasants and pay revenue to the Company. The amount to be paid was fixed permanently.
- It was felt that this would ensure a regular flow of revenue into the Company's treasury and at the same time encourage the zamindars to invest in improving the land.
- But the zamindars were not capable of investing in the improvement of land. The revenue that had been fixed was so high that they found it difficult to pay.
- By the first decade of the 19th century, the prices in the market rose and cultivation slowly expanded. This meant an increase in the income of the zamindars but no gain for the Company since it could not increase a revenue demand that had been fixed permanently.
- The Permanent Settlement was oppressive for the cultivators. The rent they paid to the zamindars was high and their right on the land was insecure.
- Finding the permanent settlement a failure, Holt Mackenzie, an Englishman, devised a new system called *mahalwari* settlement which came into effect in 1822. The collectors were asked to visit villages, inspect the land, measure the fields and record the customs and right of different groups. The estimated revenue of each plot within a village was added up to calculate the revenue that each village or *mahal* had to pay. This demand was to be revised periodically.

- In the British territories in the south **ryotwar** (or **ryotwari**) system was devised. It was initiated by Captain Alexander Read and developed by Shomas Munro. This system was gradually extended all over South India.
- The ryotwari settlement was made directly with the cultivators (**ryots**).
- All the new systems proved to be failure. The Company had imposed these systems in order to increase the income from land, but its purpose was not solved because the revenue demand was very high.
- By the late 18th century the Company was trying to expand the cultivation of opium and indigo.
- Indian indigo was in great demand in Europe. Hence, the Company in India looked for ways to expand the area under indigo cultivation.
- From the last decades of the 18th century Bengal indigo came to dominate the world market. In 1788 only about 30% of the indigo imported into Britain was from India. By 1810 the proportion had gone up to 95%.
- As the indigo trade grew, commercial agents and officials of the company began investing in indigo production.
- Indigo cultivation was done under two systems known as **nij** and **ryoti**. Within the system of **nij** cultivation, the planter produced indigo in lands that he directly controlled.
- But it was difficult for planters to expand the area under **nij** cultivation.
- Indigo could be cultivated only on fertile lands and these were all already densely populated.
- Labour was also not easily available.
- **Nij** cultivation on a large scale also required several ploughs and bullocks. Investing on purchase and maintenance of ploughs was a big problem. Therefore, planters showed reluctance towards expanding the area under **nij** cultivation.
- Under the **ryoti** system, planters forced the **ryots** to sign a contract, an agreement, also known as **satta**. Those who signed the contract got cash advances from the planters at low rates of interest to produce indigo. But this system was not in favour of the cultivators because they were not given fair prices after the harvest was ready. Thus, indigo cultivators were highly dissatisfied.
- Several **ryots** in Bengal refused to grow indigo. Soon, they became violent. They got support of the local zamindars and village headmen in their rebellion against the planters.
- This worried the government. It brought in the military to protect the planters and set up the **Indigo Commission** to enquire into the system of indigo production.
- The Commission held the planters guilty.
- It declared that indigo production was not profitable for **ryots**. Hence, they were not needed to produce indigo in future.
- Ultimately indigo production collapsed in Bengal. The planters then shifted their operation to Bihar.

Words that Matter

- **Countryside.** Rural areas.
- **Permanent Settlement.** Under this settlement it was decided that the rates of revenues once fixed would not be changed.
- **Mahal.** In British revenue records *mahal* is a revenue estate which may be a village or a group of villages.
- **Mahalwari Settlement.** Under this system the rates of revenues were to be revised periodically, not permanently fixed.
- **Ryoti.** Cultivator.
- **Indigo.** A plant that produces rich blue colour.
- **Plantations.** A large farm operated by a planter employing various forms of forced labour. Plantations are associated with the production of coffee, sugarcane, tobacco, tea and cotton.
- **Woad.** A plant that produces violet and blue dyes.
- **Slave.** A person who is owned by someone else, i.e., the slave owner. A slave enjoys no freedom and is compelled to work for the master.
- **Bigha.** A unit of measurement of land.
- **Satta.** A contract or an agreement.
- **Vat.** A fermenting or storage vessel.
- **Lathiyalo.** The lathi-wielding strongmen maintained by the planters.
- **Gomastha.** Agents of planters.

Dateline

- **12 August 1765** — The Mughal emperor appointed the East India Company as the Diwan of Bengal.
- **1770** — A terrible famine hit Bengal
- **1793** — The company introduced Permanent Settlement
- **1822** — *Mahalwari* system was introduced
- **1859** — The indigo cultivators rebelled.

VERY SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Q. 1 Who was William Morris?

Ans. He was a famous poet and artist of 19th century Britain. He designed a floral cotton print known as Morris cotton print.

Q. 2 Who created Kalamkari print?

Ans. The weavers of Andhra Pradesh created Kalamkari print.

Q. 3 What is common in the two prints—a Kalamkari print and a Morris cotton print?

Ans. Both use a rich blue colour commonly known as indigo.

Q. 4 What is indigo?

Ans. It is a plant that produces rich blue colour used as a dye.

Q. 5 Why did cloth dyers prefer indigo to woad?

Ans. Cloth dyers preferred indigo as a dye because it produced a rich blue colour, whereas the dye from woad was pale and dull.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q. 1 What were the consequences of the economic crisis that gripped Bengal?

Ans. The consequences of the economic crisis that gripped Bengal were as given below:

- (a) Artisans began to leave villages since they were being forced to sell their goods to the Company at low prices.
- (b) Peasants were unable to pay the dues that were being demanded from them.
- (c) Artisanal production was in decline and agricultural cultivation showed signs of collapse.
- (d) The most terrible consequence came to be seen in 1770 when a terrible famine hit Bengal killing ten million people. About one-third of the population was wiped out.

Q. 2 Give a brief description of the *mahalwari* system.

Ans. The *mahalwari* system was devised by an Englishman called Holt Mackenzie which came into effect in 1822. He felt that the village was an important social institution in north Indian society that needed to be preserved. Under his directions collectors went from village to village inspecting the land, measuring the field and recording the customs and rights of different groups. The estimated revenue of each plot within a village was added up to calculate the revenue that each village, i.e., *mahal* had to pay. This demand was to be revised periodically. The village headman was given the charge of collecting the revenue and paying it to the Company.

Q. 3 What was the Munro system? or what was *ryotwari* system?

Ans. In the British territories in the south a new system was devised that came to be known as the *ryotwari* system. It was tried on a small-scale by Captain Alexander Read. Afterwards, Thomas Munro, who was the Governor of Madras, developed this system which gradually extended all over south India.

In the south there were no traditional zamindars. Hence the settlement was made directly with the cultivators or *ryots* who had tilled the land for generations. Their fields were separately surveyed before the revenue assessment was made.

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q. J Describe the main features of the permanent settlement.

Ans. The main features of the permanent settlements were:

- (i) The amount of revenue was fixed permanently, that is, it was not to be increased in ever in future.
- (ii) It was felt that this would ensure a regular flow of revenue into the Company's coffers and at the same time encourage the zamindars to invest in improving the land.
- (iii) Since the revenue demand of the state would not be increased, the *zamindar* would benefit from increased production from the land.
- (iv) Under this system revenue had been fixed so high that the *zamindars* found it difficult to pay.
- (v) Even when the income of *zamindars* increased with the expansion of cultivation, the company had no chance of gain because it could not increase a revenue demand that had been fixed permanently.
- (vi) The system proved oppressive for the cultivators.

Q. K How did indigo trade attract foreign traders?

Ans. Indigo trade flourished during the last decades of the 18th century. As a result commercial agents and officials of the Company began investing in indigo production. Over the years many Company officials left their jobs to look after their indigo business. Attracted by the prospect of high profits numerous Scotsmen and Englishmen came to India and became planters. Those who had no money to produce indigo could get loans from the Company and the banks that were coming up at that time.