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COLONIALISM AND THE COUNTRYSIDE : *Exploring Official Archives*

I. SOME IMPORTANT TERMS

- 1. **Raja.** The literal meaning of the term is king. The term was often used to designate powerful zamindars.
- 2. **Taluq.** Referred to a territorial unit.
- 3. **Taluqdar.** Literally meant one who holds a *talug* or a connection.
- 4. **Ryot (Raiyat).** Term used to designate peasants. Not all ryots in Bengal cultivated the land directly. Some leased it out to under-ryots.
- 5. **Benami.** Literally means anonymous. It is a term used in Hindi and several other Indian languages for transactions made in the name of a fictitious or relatively insignificant person, whereas the real beneficiary remains unnamed.
- 6. **Lathyal.** Literally one who wields the lathi or stick. He functioned as strongman of the zamindar.
- 7. **Aquatint.** A picture produced by cutting into a copper sheet with acid and then printing it.
- 8. **Sahukar.** Someone who acted as both a moneylender and a trader.
- 9. **Rentier.** Term used to designate people who live on rental income from property.

II. NCERT TEXTBOOK EXERCISES

er in 100–150 Words

1. Why was the Jotedar a powerful figure in many areas of rural Bengal ?
(A.I. CBSE 2008) (5 marks)
- Ans. Rich peasants were known as jotedars in North Bengal. In other places they were known as haoladars, or gantidars or mandals. They were a powerful figure in many areas of rural Bengal because :
- (i) Unlike zamindars who often lived in urban areas, and were absentee landlords, jotedars were located in villages and thereby exercised direct control over a considerable section of poor villagers.
 - (ii) A large part of their land, of which portions were 'benami' was cultivated by share-croppers. (adhiyars or bargadars).
 - (iii) Moreover jotedars not only controlled vast areas of land, they exercised immense control over poor villagers through local trade as well as money lending.
 - (iv) Often jotedars were purchasers of auctioned estates of zamindars.

- (v) While zamindars were facing crisis (after the implementation of permanent settlement) the jotedars used the opportunity to consolidate their position.
- (vi) With the help of ryots dependent on them they undermined the power of the zamindars — fiercely resisted the efforts of zamindars to increase 'Jama' of villages and also deliberately delayed payments of revenue to the zamindars e.g., jotedars of Dinjapur.

Q. 2. *How did zamindars manage to retain control over their zamindaris ?*

Ans. Faced with fear of auction of their estates, zamindars devised strategies to retain control over their zamindaris. Among the ways were :

- (i) Fictitious sale, for example, Raja of Burdwan transferred some of his zamindaris to his mother, since the company had decreed that property of women would not be taken over. 15% of the purchase of the four auctioned big zamindaris were fictitious.
- (ii) The agents of the zamindars manipulated the auctions. When the estate was auctioned, the zamindar's men purchased the property outbidding other purchasers.
- (iii) When people from outside the zamindari bought an estate they were attacked by 'lathiyals' of the former zamindar. This prevented new people from taking possession.
- (iv) At other times ryots bound to their zamindar by sense of loyalty, identity pride and viewing him as a figure of authority and themselves as his 'praja' resisted entry of outsiders.

Thus the zamindars who managed to survive the troubles in prices of 1790's managed to retain control. Overtime with the relaxation of rules of revenue payment, though believed otherwise the zamindars consolidated their power, and in some case their power was strengthened.

- (iv) It was only during the Great Depression of the 1930's that they finally collapsed and the Jotedars consolidated their power in the countryside.

Q. 3. *How did Paharias respond to the coming of outsiders ?*

Ans. Paharias were hill folk who lived around Rajmahal hills subsisting on forest produce and practising shifting agriculture.

Buchanan corroborates, Paharias were apprehensive of officials and unwilling to talk to them.

With their base in the hills they undertook raids asserting power over settled communities. The zamindars on the plains had often to purchase peace by paying regular tribute to the chiefs.

Traders likewise had to pay small amounts to ensure safe passage of their goods through passes and routes controlled by them.

With the extension of frontiers of settled agriculture, British encouragement to Santhal settlements and failure of British attempts to tame curb and persuade Paharias to give up their savage, primitive 'jangali' way of life, policy of 'brutal extermination' in the 1770's and 'policy of pacification' contributed to deepening and sharpening of the conflict between the Paharias with outsiders. They regarded all outsiders with suspicion. Every white man appeared to represent a power that was destroying their way of life means of survival, control over their lands and forests. Paharias responded by withdrawing deep into the mountains getting confined to dry interiors, barely subsisting, insulating themselves from hostile forces and carrying on war with the outsiders.

Write a Short Essay (About 250–300 Words) on the following :

Q. 6. Why were many zamindaris auctioned after the Permanent Settlement ?

Ans. The British colonial rule was first established in Bengal and in 1793, the Permanent Settlement came into operation. By the end of the 18th century over 75% of the zamindaris changed lands after the permanent settlement.

Among the reasons why zamindaris came up for auction in areas of the Permanent Settlement were :

- (i) In areas of Permanent Settlement the revenue demand was fixed in perpetuity, therefore the initial demand was very high as the company wanted to minimize loss in case of increased income from land. Therefore in the early years the zamindars regularly failed to pay the revenue demand leading to mounting of unpaid balances.
- (ii) Moreover this high demand was imposed in the 1790s, a time when prices of agricultural produce were depressed making it difficult for ryots to pay their dues to the zamindars. If the zamindar could not collect rent how could he pay the company.
- (iii) In Permanent Settlement areas the revenue was unvariable, regardless of harvest, it had to be paid punctually. As per the "Sunset law" failure meant the zamindari was liable to be auctioned.
- (iv) The Settlement limited the power of the zamindar, it subdued his authority and restricted their autonomy by disbanding their troops, by abolishing custom duties and bringing their "cutcheries" under the supervision of a collector appointed by the company.
The authority of collectorate, emerged as an alternate centre of authority. All this adversely restricted the zamindar to assert authority in case of defaults and deliberate delays by rich ryots like "jotedars" and "mandals" who were happy to see the zamindar in trouble.
- (v) The jotedars too played a role in making matters worse for the zamindars. Unlike zamindars, they were located in the villages. They controlled local trade as well as money lending, whereby they exercised immense power over the poorer cultivators of the region. They fiercely resisted efforts of zamindars to increase "jama" of the villages, prevented zamindari officials from executing their duties, mobilised ryots dependent on them and deliberately delayed payments of revenue to the zamindar. In fact when estates of zamindars were auctioned, jotedars were often amongst the purchases. Their rise weakened zamindari authority.

However it need be noted the authority of the zamindars in rural areas did not collapse for they devised ways of surviving pressures and manipulating auctions. Moreover those who survived the troubles of 1790's consolidated their power as rules were also made somewhat flexible.

Q. 7. In what way was the livelihood of the Paharias different from that of the Santhals ?

Ans. Among the ways in which the livelihood of the Paharias was different from that of the Santhals was :

Paharias :

- (i) The Paharias were original forest dwellers/tribals of the Rajmahal hills. Their life was marked by constant mobility.

- (ii) Their livelihood was symbolised by the hoe and intimately connected to the forest. They earned their livelihood as hunters, shifting cultivators, food gatherers, charcoal producers, resin collectors, silk worm and cattle rearers.
- (iii) They lived in hutments within tamarind groves and rested in the shade of mango trees. They considered the entire region as their land, basis of their identity as well as survival and resisted the intrusion of outsiders.
- (iv) The Paharias regularly raided the plains where settled agriculturalists lived asserting power over settled communities and negotiating political relations.
- (v) Their chiefs regularly received tribute from zamindars in exchange for peace. Traders also gave small amounts to ensure safe passage of their goods through passes controlled by them.
- (vi) They fiercely resisted any attempts by the British to persuade them to give up hunting, encourage settled agriculture, tame and civilise them.
- (vii) They were averse to the idea of settled agriculture and use of plough, refused to cut forests continued to be turbulent and suspicious of outsiders. They insulated themselves from hostile forces, carrying on war with outsiders.

Santhals :

- (i) Compared to the Paharias the Santhals livelihood was symbolised by the plough. They gave up their earlier life of mobility and settled down. They were ideal settlers, cleared forests and ploughed land with vigour.
- (ii) The Santhals were encouraged by the British officers to counter Paharia resistance, and by zamindars to reclaim land and undertake settled cultivation. After demarcation of the Daman-i-Koli they undertook cultivation of a range of commercial crops for the market e.g., tobacco and mustard.
- (iii) Unlike the Paharias who were suspicious of outsiders, Santhals dealt with traders and moneylenders.
- (iv) Not only did Santhal settlements expand rapidly, over time their population increased and as cultivation expanded, an increased volume of revenue flowed into the Company coffers.
- (v) The Santhals resisted attempts by the British, the moneylenders and zamindars to dislodge them from ideal world Daman-i-Koli by armed rebellion in the 1850's. To appease the Santhals the British carved the Santhal pargana from districts of Bhagalpur and Birbhum.

Q. 8. How did the American Civil War affect the lives of ryots in India ?

Ans. Before the American Civil War (1861) three-fourths of raw cotton imports into Britain came from America. The outbreak of the Civil War led to drying up of these supplies and increase in raw cotton exports to Britain from India. By 1862 over 90% cotton imports into Britain were coming from India.

The effects of American Civil War on the lives of ryots in India were :

- (i) Increased advances to urban cotton sahu-kars, through them to the rural moneylenders, to encourage ryots to undertake and extend cotton cultivation.
- (ii) Ryots suddenly found access to limitless credit, an advance of Rs. 100/- for every acre planted with cotton, and long term loans.
- (iii) Between 1860-1864 cotton acreage doubled. But the profits did not percolate to the ryot. By and large cotton expansion meant heavier debt for the ryot.
- (iv) By 1865 the boom ended with the end of Civil War. Indian cotton exports to Britain declined. The ryot was the hardest hit.

by district collectors. They are in that sense invaluable sources for reconstruction of history. But they have to be always read with care and juxtaposed with evidence culled from other sources. For example, newspapers, unofficial accounts, legal records and where possible, oral sources.

Map Work

Q. 10. On an outline map of the subcontinent, mark out the areas described in this chapter. Find out whether there were other areas where the Permanent Settlement and the Ryotwari System were prevalent and plot these on the map as well.

Ans. Do it yourself.

III. ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

(a) Very Short Answer Type Questions (2 Marks—30 Words)

Q. 1. When did East India Company acquire the Diwani of Bengal ?

Ans. East India Company acquired the Diwani of Bengal in 1765.

Q. 2. What was the Regulating Act ?

Ans. It was an act passed by the British Parliament in 1773 to regulate the activities of the East India Company.

Q. 3. Which land revenue settlement was introduced by the British in Bengal ? When did it become operational ?

Ans. Permanent Settlement was introduced by the British in Bengal, in 1793.

Q. 4. Who were classified as zamindars in Bengal ?

Ans. Rajas and taluqdars of Bengal.

Q. 5. What was the twist in the auction in Burdwan ?

Ans. Over 95% of the sale in the auction in Burdwan was fictitious.

Q. 6. What were the rich peasants of Dinajpur district known as ?

Ans. The rich peasants of Dinajpur district was known as Jotedars.

Q. 7. What was meant by the Sunset law ?

Ans. The Sunset law was related to the land revenue. According to it, if the payment did not come in by sunset of the specified date, the zamindari was liable to be auctioned.

Q. 8. What is meant by the term Fifth Report ? Why is it significant ?

Ans. As per acts enacted by British Parliament in the late 18th century committees were appointed to enquire into the affairs and administration of the company. The Fifth Report was the fifth of a series of such reports.

It is significant because it became a basis of intense parliamentary debates in Britain, on the nature of East India Company's rule in India.

Q. 9. Define what was implied by the term Hoe and the Plough.

Ans. The term Hoe and the Plough implied the difference between Pahariya and the Santhal mode of cultivation. The Hoe symbolised subsistence farming and shifting agriculture as practised by Pahariyas, and the plough, the Santhals who practised settled cultivation of commercial crops.

Q. 10. What is meant by Damin-i-Koli ?

Ans. Damin-i-koli relates to :

- (i) A large area of land, declared to be land of the Santhals. The Santhals were to live within it, practise plough agriculture and become settled peasants.
- (ii) This territory was separated from both the world of settled agriculturists of the plains and Pahariyas of the hills by enclosed boundary pillars.

Q. 11. How did the Santhals begin to come into Bengal around the 1780's ?

Give two reasons.

Ans. Santhals began to come into Bengal around the 1780s because :

- (i) Zamindars hired them to reclaim land and expand cultivation.
- (ii) British officials encouraged Santhal settlements to settle in '*Jangal Mahals*' to counter and subdue the Paharia resistance and subsequently clear forests and expand cultivation.

Q. 12. Where and how was the colonial rule first established ?

Ans. Colonial rule was first established in Bengal after the East India Company acquired the Diwani in 1765. It was established by reordering of rural society :

- (i) By establishing a new regime of land rights and
- (ii) A new revenue settlement, the Permanent Settlement.

Q. 13. What historical purpose do revolts serve ? Give two points.

Ans. (i) In the premises of the resentment, anger and fury, perception of injustice and suffering, historians get a glimpse of the life and experience of rebels.
(ii) Revolts also produce records, actions of state to repress them, enquiry into its causes and remedial policies to formulate peace. They thus produce evidence that historians can explore and look at e.g., Deccan revolt of 1875.

Q. 14. Give two important reactions of the British to peasant revolts of 1875 in the Deccan.

Ans. Reminded of the spectre of 1857 the British reacted to the peasant revolts of 1875 which began at suba and spread to more than 30 villages by :

- (i) Establishing police posts in villages to frighten rebellious peasants into submission.
- (ii) Troops were immediately called, 951 people were arrested and many were convicted.

Q. 15. Who was David Ricardo ?

Ans. David Ricardo was a celebrated economist in 1820's in England.

Q. 16. State two features of Ricardian ideas.

Ans. According to Ricardian ideas :

- (i) Landowner had only claim to 'average rent', and state needed to tax the surplus.
- (ii) If surplus of landowner was not taxed, landowners were unlikely to invest in improvement of the land, but were likely to turn into rentiers.

Q. 17. How did the British try to tame the tribals/hill folks ?

Ans. The British tried to tame the hill folks/Pahariyas by :

- (i) Persuading them to give up life of constant mobility and take to settled agriculture.

(ii) By embarking on a brutal policy of extermination, hunting down and killing Pahariyas.

Q. 18. When and who proposed the policy of pacification ?

Ans. In 1780, Augustus Cleveland, the Collector of Bhagalpur proposed the policy of pacification.

Q. 19. What was the policy of pacification ? Give two points.

Ans. Under the policy of pacification, Pahariya chiefs were given an annual allowance and made responsible for the proper conduct of their men.

- (i) The chiefs were expected to maintain order in their localities and discipline their own people.
- (ii) Many Pahariya chiefs refused the allowance. Those who accepted lost authority within the community as they came to be perceived as stipendary chiefs or subordinate employees.

Q. 20. Give two important results of the pacification campaigns.

Ans. The two prominent results of the pacification campaigns were :

- (i) Pahariyas withdrew deep into the mountains, insulating themselves from hostile forces and carrying on war with the outsiders.
- (ii) Viewed all white men with suspicion and distrust.

Q. 21. How did Pahariyas react to Santhal settlements on the peripheries of the Rajmahal hills ?

Ans. The Reaction of Pahariyas to Santhal settlements on the peripheries of the Rajmahal hills were :

- (i) The Pahariyas resisted but were forced to withdraw deeper into the hills.
- (ii) They got confined to the dry interiors, which in the long-term severely affected their lives, impoverishing them.
- (iii) With most fertile soils not being accessible to them, they could not sustain their mode of cultivation (shifting).

Q. 22. The coming of the railways displaced old modes of transport. Give two points in support or against the statement.

Ans. (i) Once railways came up, the use of inland waterways for cotton supplies declined over time.

(ii) Predominance of carts and boats too declined. Bullock carts were mostly used to carry cotton bales from the railway station to the port.

Q. 23. How did the coming of railways affect the old cotton collection centres ?

Ans. With the coming of railways old cotton collections centres declined e.g., Mirzapur.

Q. 24. Who were the Jotedars ? What were the various names they were known by ?

Ans. (i) Jotedars were a class of rich peasants who were most powerful in North Bengal.

(ii) They were known in different areas as haoladars, gentidars and mandals.

Q. 25. Give any two shortcomings of the Fifth Report ?

Ans. (i) The Fifth Report exaggerated the collapse of traditional Zamindari power and the rate at which zamindars were losing their lands. For even when zamindaris were auctioned zamindars were not always displaced, given the ingenious methods they used to retain their lands.

- (ii) The report was biased as it sought to highlight the mal-administration of the East India Company.

Q. 26. What were the duties of a Paharia Chief ?

- Ans.** (i) The Paharia Chief settled disputes and led their tribes into battle.
(ii) Helped maintain tribal unity.

Q. 27. Why did the Paharia's regularly raid the plains ?

- Ans.** (i) Raids were necessary for Paharia survival. Raids goaded the zamindars to pay regular tribute and traders to pay toll tax in exchange for protection from plunder and for safe passage of goods through passes controlled by Paharias.
(ii) They were a means of negotiating political relations with outsiders.

Q. 28. Why are revolts useful for historians ?

Ans. Revolts are useful for historians because :

- (i) Revolts produce records which historians can use.
(ii) Enquiry as to why it occurred so that remedial measures can be taken and peace restored, provide evidence that historians can explore.

Q. 29. When and why was the Limitation Law passed ?

- Ans.** (i) The Limitation Law was passed in 1859.
(ii) The law stated that the loan bonds signed between moneylender and ryots would be valid for only three years. It was meant to check the accumulation of interest over time.

Q. 30. How did the moneylenders exploit the peasants in the Deccan.

- Ans.** (i) To circumvent the Limitation Law the moneylenders forced the ryot to sign a new bond every 3 years, in which unpaid loan was entered as principal, on which a new set of interest charges was calculated.
(ii) They refused to give receipts when loans were repaid, acquired the peasants harvest at low prices and ultimately took over the property.

Q. 31. State any two merits of the Permanent Settlement ?

- Ans.** (i) Permanent settlement created a class of wealthy privileged zamindars who owed their existence to the British and therefore became their most loyal supporters.
(ii) It enabled the company to maximise its income as land revenue was fixed higher than it had been in the past.

Q. 32. Explain any two observations made by Buchanan that helped the EI Co. to expand its trade in India. (CBSE F 2008) (2 marks)

- Ans.** (i) Buchanan's observations of stones, rocks and different layers of soil helped the company control and exploit natural resources.
(ii) He searched for minerals and stones that were commercially viable and recorded all signs of iron ore, mica and granite. He carefully observed local practices of salt making and iron ore mining.

Q. 33. How did the British help the Santhals to settle in Rajmahal hills ?

(CBSE F 2008) (2 marks)

- Ans.** (i) The Santhals were regarded by the British as ideal settlers so they cleared forests and ploughed land eagerly.