

## Forest Society and Colonialism (Case based Questions)

### 1. Read the source given below and answer the question that follow:

The spread of railways from the 1850s created a new demand. Railways were essential for colonial trade and for the movement of imperial troops. To run locomotives, wood was needed as fuel, and to lay railway lines sleepers were essential to hold the tracks together. Each mile of railway track required between 1,760 and 2,000 sleepers. From the 1860s, the railway network expanded rapidly. By 1890, about 25,500 km of track had been laid. In 1946, the length of the tracks had increased to over 765,000 km. As the railway tracks spread through India, a larger and larger number of trees were felled. As early as the 1850s, in the Madras Presidency alone, 35,000 trees were being cut annually for sleepers. The government gave out contracts to individuals to supply the required quantities. These contractors began cutting trees indiscriminately. Forests around the railway tracks fast started disappearing.

Q.1 Why were railways considered essential during colonial rule in India? (1)

Q2 How did the expansion of railway tracks impact forests in the Madras Presidency during the 1850s? (1)

Q.3 Explain the impact of the spread of railway tracks on forests in India during the colonial period. (2)

### 2. Read the source given below and answer the question that follow:

One of the major impacts of European colonialism was on the practice of shifting cultivation or swidden agriculture. This is a traditional agricultural practice in many parts of Asia, Africa and South America. It has many local names such as lading in Southeast Asia, milpa in Central America, chitemene or tavy in Africa, and chena in Sri Lanka. In India, dhya, penda, bewar, nevad, jhum, podu, khandad and kumri are some of the local terms for swidden agriculture. In shifting cultivation, parts of the forest are cut and burnt in rotation. Seeds are sown in the ashes after the first monsoon rains, and the crop is harvested by October-November. Such plots are cultivated for a couple of years and then left fallow for 12 to 18 years for the forest to grow back. A mixture of crops is grown on these plots. In central India and Africa it could be millets, in Brazil manioc, and in other parts of Latin America maize and beans.

Q.1 What is shifting cultivation, and how is it practiced in different regions? (1)

Q.2 Mention two local names for swidden agriculture used in India. (1)

Q.3 Describe how shifting cultivation is practiced, including its process and crops grown in different regions. (2)

### 3. Read the source given below and answer the question that follow:

Everywhere in the world, conditions of work in plantations were horrific. The extraction of rubber in the Putumayo region of the Amazon, by the Peruvian Rubber Company (with British and Peruvian interests) was dependent on the forced labour of the local Indians, called Huitotos. From 1900-1912, the Putumayo output of 4000 tons of rubber was associated with a

decrease of some 30,000 among the Indian population due to torture, disease and flight. A letter by an employee of a rubber company describes how the rubber was collected. The manager summoned hundreds of Indians to the station: He grasped his carbine and machete and began the slaughter of these defenceless Indians, leaving the ground covered with 150 corpses, among them, men, women and children. Bathed in blood and appealing for mercy, the survivors were heaped with the dead and burned to death, while the manager shouted, "I want to exterminate all the Indians who do not obey my orders about the rubber that I require them to bring in."

Q.1 What was the impact of rubber extraction in the Putumayo region of the Amazon on the local Huitoto population? (1)

Q.2 Describe the working conditions faced by local Indians in the Putumayo region during rubber extraction from 1900-1912. (1)

Q.3 What was the impact of the rubber extraction in the Putumayo region on the local Huitoto population? (1)

- (a) Increase in population due to better healthcare
- (b) Decrease in population due to torture, disease, and flight
- (c) Population remained unaffected
- (d) Population grew due to migration

Q.4 What method did the manager of the Peruvian Rubber Company use to collect rubber in the Putumayo region? (1)

- (a) Voluntary labor
- (b) Paid workers from nearby villages
- (c) Forced labor and violence against the local Indians
- (d) Agricultural tools for harvesting rubber

#### 4. Read the source given below and answer the question that follow:

The new forest laws changed the lives of forest dwellers in yet another way. Before the forest laws, many people who lived in or near forests had survived by hunting deer, partridges and a variety of small animals. This customary practice was prohibited by the forest laws. Those who were caught hunting were now punished for poaching. While the forest laws deprived people of their customary rights to hunt, hunting of big game became a sport. In India, hunting of tigers and other animals had been part of the culture of the court and nobility for centuries. Many Mughal paintings show princes and emperors enjoying a hunt. But under colonial rule the scale of hunting increased to such an extent that various species became almost extinct. The British saw large animals as signs of a wild, primitive and savage society.

Q.1 How did the new forest laws impact the lives of forest dwellers, particularly in terms of hunting? (1)

Q.2 How did the British view large animals like tigers in India during colonial rule? (1)

Q.3 Explain the changes brought by the forest laws in India, especially concerning hunting practices,

and how they affected both forest dwellers and colonial elites. (2)

**Q.5 Read the source given below and answer the question that follow:**

Brandis realised that a proper system had to be introduced to manage the forests and people had to be trained in the science of conservation. This system would need legal sanction. Rules about the use of forest resources had to be framed. Felling of trees and grazing had to be restricted so that forests could be preserved for timber production. Anybody who cut trees without following the system had to be punished. So Brandis set up the Indian Forest Service in 1864 and helped formulate the Indian Forest Act of 1865. The Imperial Forest Research Institute was set up at Dehradun in 1906. The system they taught here was called 'scientific forestry'. Many people now, including ecologists, feel that this system is not scientific at all. In scientific forestry, natural forests which had lots of different types of trees were cut down. In their place, one type of tree was planted in straight rows. This is called a plantation. Forest officials surveyed the forests, estimated the area under different types of trees, and made working plans for forest management. They planned how much of the plantation area to cut every year. The area cut was then to be replanted so that it was ready to be cut again in some years. After the Forest Act was enacted in 1865, it was amended twice, once in 1878 and then in 1927. The 1878 Act divided forests into three categories: reserved, protected and village forests. The best forests were called 'reserved forests'. Villagers could not take anything from these forests, even for their own use. For house building or fuel, they could take wood from protected or village forests.

Q.1 Why did Brandis set up the Indian Forest Service and the Indian Forest Act of 1865? (1)

Q.2 What is the concept of "scientific forestry" and how was it implemented in India? (1)

Q.3 How did the Forest Act of 1878 change villagers' access to forest resources? Explain the distinction between reserved, protected, and village forests under this Act. (2)

**Category**

1. Case based Questions for class 9th

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