

Ruling the Countryside | Easy Notes for class 8th

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Introduction:

This chapter focuses on the expansion of British India's control over the economic and political matters of the Indian people. In the previous chapter, we learned about Robert Clive, who played the most important role during the company rule. In this chapter, we will learn about some other personalities from the East India Company. The Indian economy was largely dependent on the agricultural sector. Therefore, the company officials began to focus on the land and the crops that needed to be grown (in countryside) in order to accumulate more wealth. Let us discuss the attempts initiated by the British officials in this regard.

The Company becomes the Diwan:

12 August 1765:

- After getting defeated in **the Battle of Buxar** (1764), the Mughal emperor **Shah Alam II** had to appoint the East India Company as **the Diwan of Bengal**.
- Company got 'Diwani Right' through **the treaty of Allahabad**.
- **Diwani right** made the Company the chief financial administrator of the territory. In other words, It provided them **strong control over** the management of **revenue** resources.
- Company got the Diwani of **Bengal, Bihar** and **Orissa** from the Mughal ruler in 1765.
- Now, the company needed to use Diwani in a way that could help them collect more revenue.
- Indian society was primarily based on agriculture. Therefore, the company shifted its focus

towards the rural areas with the aim of generating more revenue.

Revenue for the Company:

- Company started working further for its primary goal i.e. large revenue income.
- Earlier, the company imported gold and silver from Britain to purchase Indian goods. However, after gaining control over the finances of major Indian territories, it managed to collect money from Bengal itself to cover all its expenses.
- This led to **crises in Bengal economy**.
 - *For Example:* Artisans and peasants experienced a decline in their respective fields of production and cultivation.
- Over **10 Million people died** due to terrible famine in Bengal (in 1770).

The Need to Improve Agriculture:

1. The Permanent Settlement:

- Some Company officials recommended promoting investment in land and enhancing agriculture.
- Later in **1793**, Company finally introduced **the Permanent Settlement**.
- This system came under the **Governor General of India; Charles Cornwallis**.
 - This settlement system recognized Rajas and Taluqdars as zamindars.
 - They were responsible for collecting rent from peasants and paying revenue to the Company.
 - Moreover, the amount paid was predetermined and did not change (it was fixed).
- Through the Permanent Settlement, Company officials wanted to achieve dual objectives.
 1. Regular flow of revenue
 2. Encouragement to the zamindars for investing on land.

Drawbacks of the Permanent Settlement

- The *predetermined amount was so high* that it made it very difficult to pay the rent.
 - As a result of non-payment of taxes, many landowners, also known as zamindars, lost their zamindari.
- Over time, zamindars saw their incomes increase, but the *Company's fixed revenue* under the permanent settlement didn't allow them to benefit.
- Furthermore, *the zamindars lacked the motivation* to take any risks and invest in the development of their land.
- Besides this, the cultivator had to face eviction from the lands they cultivated due to pending rents. (*Note: Cultivators often took loans from the moneylenders for payment*)

A New System devised:

Seeing problems in the permanent settlement, company officials in the north-western Provinces of Bengal devised a new system called the Munro System. Meanwhile, the officials in the south devised the Ryotwari System.

2. The Mahalwari System:

- The Mahalwari System **devised by Holt Mackenzie**.
- It came into effect in **1822**.
- Under this system, Collectors had to perform tasks like; inspecting the land, measuring the fields, and recording the customs and rights of different groups by visiting different villages.
- Additionally, the village headman had the charge of collecting revenue within the villages.
 - *Note: The term “village” is referred to as “Mahal” in the Mahalwari System.*

3. The Ryotwari System (in the South):

- The Ryotwari System is also known as **the Munro System**.
- **Captain Alexander Read** first tried this system on a small scale. Later, **Thomas Munro** (the Governor of Madras) introduced it all over South India.
- This system came into effect in **1820**.
- They chose the Ryotwari system since there were no traditional zamindars. Thus, they established a **direct agreement with the cultivators** (Ryots) who had been cultivating the land for generations.
- Moreover, they acted as Parental father figures of Ryots' lands.

Drawbacks of the Ryotwari System:

- The revenue officials fixed too high revenue for the peasants.
- Ryots left their villages for other alternatives as they could not pay the revenue.

Crops for Europe:

- Alongside the land revenue system, the company also sought to expand their profits through the **cultivation of opium and indigo**.
 - *Note: opium and indigo were not only crops they ordered peasants to grow but there were several other crops cultivators grew.*
- To cater to the demand of European markets and increase profits, cultivators had to grow specific crops based on the climate and soil conditions of their land.
 - **For Example:** *Jute in Bengal, tea in Assam, sugarcane in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), wheat in Punjab, cotton in Maharashtra and Punjab, rice in Madras.*

Does color have a history?

- The use of **Indigo plant** was in high demand for dyeing the clothes as it gave rich blue color.
- In 19th century, **India** became the **biggest supplier of indigo** in the world.
 - **For Example:** 30 % of the indigo imported into Britain from India.
 - Other examples are:- The blue dye in **Morris prints** (in England) and The **Kalamkari print** created by weavers of Andhra Pradesh in India.

Why the demand for Indian indigo?

Indigo gave rich blue color whereas other alternate source 'Woad' gave pale and dull color. However, it is the Indian indigo which was in demand. Here are the reasons:-

- The growth of Indigo cultivation in India flourished due to the **favorable climate**.
- As **industrialization** took hold, the demand for Indigo grew exponentially.
- Additionally, there were various reasons that led to the **collapse of supplies** from the West Indies and America, which further increased the demand for Indian Indigo.

Note: Indigo was expensive and grown in tropical regions, while Woad was the only dye plant in temperate Europe. European Woad producers pressured their governments to ban Indigo imports.

Britain turns to India:

- Rising demand made the Company think of ways to expand the area under indigo cultivation.
- Company chose Bengal for indigo cultivation, leading to its dominance in the world market.
- Later, they shifted the indigo plantation work to Bihar.

Two main systems of Indigo Cultivation:

Nij System:

- The planters had direct control on lands used for indigo cultivation.
- They either bought the land or rented it from other zamindars.
- Moreover, they produced indigo by directly employing hired laborers.
- The nij system utilized less than 25% of the land for indigo production.

Ryoti System:

- Under this system, the planters forced the ryots to sign a contract, an agreement (satta).
- They pressurized the village headmen sign on the behalf of Ryots.
- Planters used to give cash advances to the cultivators at low rate of interest.
- The agreement required the farmer to grow indigo on 25% of their land holding.
- Furthermore, the planters provided the seed and drill while the cultivators prepared the soil, sowed the seed, and took care of the indigo crop.

The problems with Nij and Ryoti System:

Nij System:

- **Equipment Shortage:** Large-scale indigo cultivation required many ploughs and bullocks, causing a shortage of resources.
- **Reluctance to Expand:** Planters hesitated to expand nij cultivation due to the need for extensive resources.
- **Dependency on Peasants:** Difficulty in obtaining supplies from peasants, as their resources were tied up in rice fields.
- **Limited Land Under Nij System:** Less than 25% of indigo-producing land was under the nij system due to these challenges.

Ryoti System:

- **Forced Contracts:** Planters coerced ryots into signing contracts, committing them to indigo cultivation.
- **Low Returns:** Ryots received cash advances at low interest rates but faced low prices for indigo, trapping them in a cycle of debt.
- **Soil Exhaustion:** Indigo depleted soil rapidly, preventing cultivation of other crops like rice after harvest.
- **Preference for Best Soils:** Planters demanded indigo cultivation on prime lands preferred by peasants for rice, causing conflicts over land use.

The "Blue Rebellion" and After:

The **Blue Rebellion of 1859** was a peasant uprising against oppressive indigo cultivation, sparked by the exploitation and coercion of planters.

Here are the various reasons for Peasant's Rebellion:-

- **Oppressive Indigo System:** The harsh conditions and coercive practices imposed by indigo planters fueled discontent among peasants.
- **Exploitative Contracts:** Forced contracts and low wages for indigo cultivation burdened peasants, leading to resentment.
- **Local Support:** Peasants found solidarity among local leaders like zamindars and village headmen, encouraging resistance against the planters.
- **Economic Hardship:** Economic hardships faced by peasants, exacerbated by the indigo system, contributed to their decision to rebel.
- **Perceived Government Support:** Peasants believed the British government would support their grievances, adding to their confidence in rebelling against the planters.

Aftermath of Rebellion:

- **Government Response and Reform:** The British government, prompted by the rebellion,

initiated the Indigo Commission, leading to reforms and criticism of the oppressive indigo system.

- **Shift in Indigo Production:** The rebellion caused a decline in indigo production in Bengal, prompting planters to shift towards synthetic dyes and relocate operations to Bihar.
- **Inspiration for Future Movements:** The Blue Rebellion showed others how to stand up against indigo planters, inspiring Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran movement in 1917.

Category

1. Class 8th

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