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Rural Life and Society

Lesson Plan

Contents

- ▶ An overview of rural life and society under British rule
- ▶ Understanding the changes that took place in rural life during British rule

Objectives

- ▶ To understand the manner in which the British organised India's rural life
- ▶ To learn about the changes that took place in India's rural life
- ▶ To know about the unrest caused by the changes among farmers and rural people
- ▶ To appreciate the outcome of the changes in rural life

Teacher's Aids

- ▶ Globe
- ▶ Pictures, charts, atlas and wall maps
- ▶ Blackboard
- ▶ Internet

Tips for Teacher

- ▶ Explain the background of British rule—it was for the profit of the British, not for the welfare of the people.
- ▶ The policies and regulations streamlined administration, but the benefit was intended for the British, not for the people. If there was any benefit to the people, it was just accidental. Largely, they were an unhappy and oppressed lot.
- ▶ Students should be encouraged to know places, locations and their placement on the maps.

Background and Reading

- ▶ Read the lesson aloud and explain, sharing the aids, etc., pausing to examine and explain the data in the boxes.
- ▶ Particularly focus on the regulations being a burden to the rural people.

The Agrarian Policies

- ▶ Indians not satisfied with many policies of the British—agrarian policy affected the Indian peasantry and landlords.
- ▶ British colonial power established political control over Indian territories—had administrative expenses—Company faced financial liabilities as they needed revenue for profits and for administration—explored ways to increase revenue.
- ▶ Adopted policies aimed at maximising revenue (1793-1857), which had an adverse effect on people. Some of these are listed below:
 - Indian rulers angry at annexation of their territories
 - Nobles angry at losing their zamindari status
 - Peasants unhappy with exploitative policies
 - Craftsmen facing unfair competition from foreign goods
 - Sepoys angry at unjust treatment
 - Society expressed anger through protests and revolts

The Land Revenue Policy, 1857

- ▶ Villages self-sufficient and agriculture the main occupation—most products needed were produced in the village itself—every village had: a panchayat to settle disputes—farmers had right over the land they cultivated—during disasters revenue was either reduced or waived.
- ▶ When East India Company came to India, it got the Diwani rights of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha in 1765—Company officials continued to collect revenue by the traditional methods—unofficially, officials started collecting huge amounts from farmers.
- ▶ When income reduced, Warren Hastings introduced the Ijaradari system—highest bidder was allowed to collect the revenue for five years—this system failed because bidders not interested in improvement of land—only in extracting money from peasants.
- ▶ Collection of tax a vital problem—introduced three new systems: Permanent Settlement, Mahalwari and Ryotwari.

The Permanent Settlement

- ▶ Lord Cornwallis introduced this in 1793—landowners or zamindars obtained hereditary right over land—farmers were treated as tenants and forced to pay a fixed amount of about 50% of the total produce as land revenue—failing that, their land would be auctioned.
- ▶ Company's advantage: It got a continuous flow of revenue in all circumstances; created a new class of landlords loyal to the British; and for a stable income, fixed the land revenue of Bengal and Bihar on a permanent basis.

The Impact on Farmers

The following was the impact of the Permanent Settlement on farmers:

1. To get more revenue—farmers forced to cultivate cash crops like indigo and cotton instead of rice or wheat
2. Methods of cultivation—primitive and efforts made to improve land and techniques
3. Often moneylenders replaced landlords—paid no attention to improving agricultural production
4. Peasants were socially oppressed and exploited for more revenue

The Mahalwari System

- ▶ Introduced in Uttar Pradesh and parts of Madhya Pradesh and Punjab—common ownership of land by a group of villages called mahals—revenue collected from villages by the head of the mahals and given to government—made the condition of the peasants pitiable.

The Ryotwari System

- ▶ Introduced in Bombay and Madras Presidencies—agreement between government and the ryot/peasant—farmers recognised as owners of land and half the produce was the land revenue settled for 30 years to be collected directly—high rate made farmers dependent on moneylenders.

Impact on Rural Life

- ▶ Revenue collection brought many changes into villages—rise of a new class to please the British and indifferent to farmers.
 - Land could be easily bought, sold and mortgaged—made farmers' position worse.
 - No irrigation facilities—dependent only on monsoon rains.
 - Failure of rains—famine during 1876-78 in Madras, Mysore, Hyderabad, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

Indebtedness of the Rural People

- ▶ Peasants had very little to eat—failure of crops and social customs made them sell their land or borrow money from the moneylender—since attached to their land, so instead of selling, they kept on borrowing money—at mercy of moneylenders—high rate of interest—peasants found it impossible to support their families.

Sub-letting of the Land

- ▶ Farmers' condition worse by letting and sub-letting of land—many middlemen emerged with no productive role in society—prevailing law that cultivator's land be divided among his sons at his death—left small holdings—earning very little.
- ▶ 19th century—cultivation of cash crops given importance—profitable for peasants and the British—in due course it resulted in decline in production of food grains—problems for peasants—paved the way for revolts.

Peasant Revolts

- ▶ Peasants angry due to harsh laws—revolts in different parts of the country.
- ▶ The Peasant Revolt—First major revolt—soon after British conquest of Bengal—led by sanniyasis and fakirs—spread to eastern India—took British 30 years to end this.
- ▶ The Chimar Revolt—1796—continued till 1816.
- ▶ Moplah peasants—Malabar—rebellions from 1836 to 1854.
- ▶ Ferazis—followers of a Muslim religious movement—revolted against oppression by zamindars and the British—started at Barasat—1838 to 1848—one-sixth of Bengal under this revolt led by Dudu Mian.
- ▶ The Wahabi Revolt—led by Syed Ahmed of Bareilly—Muslims wanting to revive Islam—made Persian the court language instead of English.

The Indigo Rebellion

- ▶ Important rebellion in Bengal 1859—indigo derived from Greek word 'indikon' meaning 'from India'—natural blue dye used for colouring clothes—first crop grown by British cultivators—peasants refused because indigo cultivation makes land barren—did not cooperate—wave of discontent against British—in 1860 angry rebels dragged out cultivators and beat them up—3000 went on a march—police could not take any action—on 20th March 1860 they attacked a factory with spears and swords—attacked Lokenathpur and Chadupur factories—even women participated.
- ▶ Other revolts too—but all unorganised—British took a long time to suppress them—but in some places established a good administration—there people did not revolt.

Assessment Corner

Oral Assignment

- A. Ask for answers at random from the students. Confirm the right answers. Let them write down the correct answers if they like in their books.

Written Assignment

- B–D. The teacher has two options—(i) Either do these exercises orally first and then ask the students to write them down. OR (ii) Ask the students to write the answers on their own. Then the teacher can announce the correct answers to the students and they can ask their partners to cross-check them.

In either case, the answers can be written as homework and the teacher can check them in the class.

Think Tank

- E. **HOTS questions:** Discuss the questions in the class and let the students write the answers to E and F as homework. Teacher should assess individual work.