

HISTORY

Chapter 3: Ruling the Countryside



Ruling the Countryside

The Company Gets Revenue Rights

In 1765, the Company received the Diwani (right to collect revenues) of Bengal from the Mughal Emperor. It resulted in the following:

- Before 1865, the Company was purchasing goods from India by importing gold and silver from Britain. After it got the diwani rights, the revenues of Bengal were used by the Company to finance its trading activities.
- Because the East India Company was a trading company, initially it was not inclined towards administering the country.
- Within five years of the Company's rule, the economy of Bengal began to deteriorate. Many artisans began to desert villages as they were forced to sell their products at low prices to Company officials.
- Peasants were unable to pay the dues to the Company. In 1770, a terrible famine occurred in Bengal in which one-third of the population was killed.

Revenue for the Company

The Company's aim was to increase the revenue to buy fine cotton and silk cloth as cheaply as possible. Within a span of five years, the value of goods bought by the Company in Bengal doubled. The Company, before 1865, purchased goods in India by importing gold and silver from Britain. Now it was financed by the revenue collected in Bengal. Artisanal production was in decline, and agricultural cultivation showed signs of collapse. Then in 1770, a terrible famine killed ten million people in Bengal.

Permanent Settlement of Bengal

- As the Company worried about declining revenues, it introduced the Permanent Settlement of Bengal in 1793.
- According to this settlement, the rajas and taluqdars were recognised as the zamindars of the land. They had to collect rent from the peasants and pay the revenues to the Company.
- The amount to be paid to the Company was fixed permanently. The Company thought that this

would ensure a steady and regular flow of revenues to them and would encourage the zamindar to invest in the improvement of the land.



Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement of Bengal

Limitations of the Settlement

- The Company fixed the revenue so high that it became difficult for zamindars to pay revenues to the Company.
- Anyone who could not pay revenues lost his zamindari. The zamindars thus did not invest in the improvement of the land.
- By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the cultivation began to expand. The Company however did not benefit from the change as revenues could not be increased.
- Zamindars did not invest in improving the land as they wanted to maximise profits.
- The settlement was oppressive for villagers as they had to pay high rent to the zamindars. Their rights on the land were maintained till they paid the revenues. To pay the high land revenues, they had to take loans from moneylenders at high interest rates.
- Cultivators failed to pay the high rent and thus were evicted from their lands which they had been cultivating since generations.

The Mahalwari System

- The Mahalwari system of land revenue was introduced in the Central provinces, North West Frontier Provinces, Agra, Punjab and the Gangetic valley.
- In this system, the land was inspected and measured. The land was divided into mahals or villages. Each mahal could consist of one or more villages.
- Thus, revenues were paid not by a peasant but by the people of the mahal collectively.
- The village headmen had to collect revenues from mahals and pay it to the Company.

The Ryotwari System

- The Ryotwari system was introduced by Thomas Munro in 1820.
- Under this system, the ownership rights of the land were given to the peasants. Revenues were collected by British officers directly from the peasants.
- Lands were surveyed before fixing the land revenue.
- The Ryotwari system was mainly introduced in South India. The peasants or cultivators were called 'ryots.

In these land settlement systems, revenue was fixed at a very high rate. Most of the time, peasants were not able to pay and fled to the countryside.

Production of Crops for Europe

The British also began to encourage the growing of cash crops on Indian soil in order to export them to Europe. Thus, they persuaded Indian cultivators to grow tea in Assam, jute in Bengal, sugarcane in Uttar Pradesh and cotton in Maharashtra.

Story of Indigo Production in India during the Colonial Period

Indigo is a plant from which a blue-coloured dye is obtained. The demand for Indian indigo was high in Europe. Cloth manufacturers in Europe preferred the indigo plant for dye rather than the woad plant which was widely grown in Europe. This was because indigo produced a rich blue colour, while the dye from the woad plant was pale and dull. Because the production of indigo fell in the world between 1783 and 1789, the cloth manufacturers turned to India for the production of indigo.

By 1810, India was supplying indigo to Great Britain in huge quantities.

Problems with Indigo Cultivation

The British persuaded Indian farmers to grow indigo in their fields. The Indian farmers were reluctant in growing indigo in their fields because of the following reasons:

- Indigo planters required large pieces of compact land for growing indigo. Planters sought to acquire lands for cultivating indigo either by leasing the lands or by evicting the farmers from the lands. This led to conflicts and tension between the peasants and the farmers.
- A large indigo plantation required much labour. This labour was required at the time when most farmers were busy with rice cultivation.
- Under the Ryotwari system, the planters forced the ryots to sign a contract to grow indigo on 25% of their land holdings.
- The farmers who signed the contract were paid money in advance to grow indigo. After the indigo plant was given to the planters after the harvests, farmers were given new loans for growing indigo.
- The peasants who received advanced loans from the planters realised that the prices they received for the indigo plant was too low and they were always involved in the cycle of debt.
- Indigo had to be grown on fertile soil. However, it exhausted the fertility of the soil. The farmers always preferred to grow rice on fertile soil because the fertility of the soil decreased after indigo was cultivated. Thus, the ryots were reluctant to grow indigo.

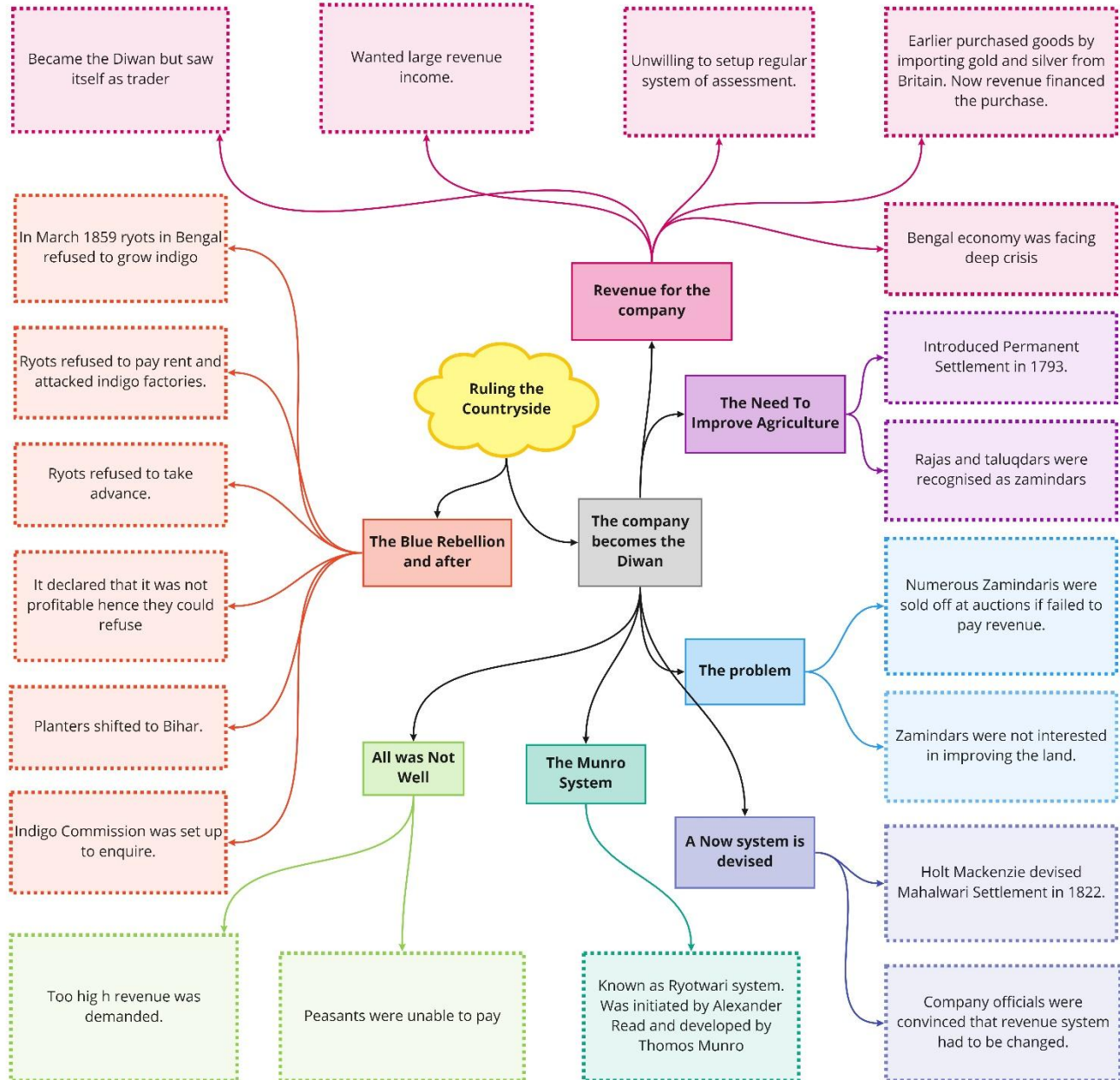
Rebellion among Indigo Farmers

By 1859, many indigo farmers refused to grow indigo in their fields. This was due to many reasons:

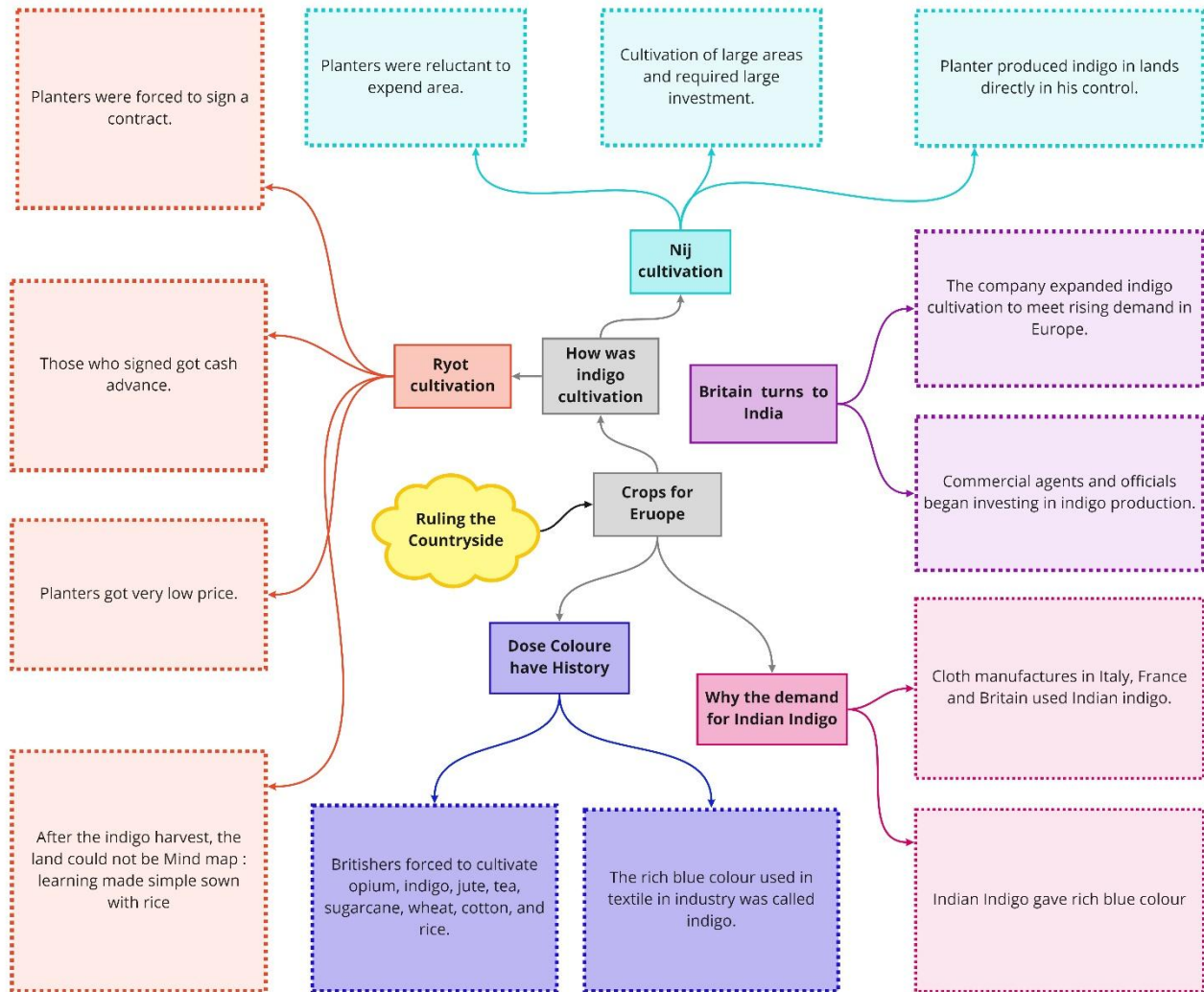
- The indigo farmers began to rise in rebellion as they had the support of village headmen in their rebellion.
- The headmen who were forced to sign the contract fought battles with the agents of the indigo planters. The zamindars also supported the farmers as they were unhappy with the increasing powers of the planters.

- The indigo farmers also believed that the British Government would support them in their rebellion against the planters. This was because the Government did not want another rebellion after the revolt of 1857.
- With the spread of the indigo rebellion, many intellectuals from the city of Calcutta began to visit the villages of indigo plantations and wrote about the miseries of the indigo farmers.
- After the revolt, the Government established the Indigo Commission to enquire into the system of indigo production.
- The Commission held the planters guilty and declared that indigo farming was not profitable for farmers. The Commission also criticised the planters for forcing farmers to grow indigo.
- Although the Commission asked the farmers to complete their existing contracts, they also told the ryots that they could refuse to grow indigo in their fields in the future.
- Indigo production declined rapidly in Bengal after the revolt of the indigo farmers. The planters then shifted their base to Bihar. However, the invention of synthetic dyes affected their businesses.
- In 1917, Gandhi visited Champaran in Bihar and was moved by the sad plight of the indigo farmers. This marked the beginning of the Champaran Movement in Bihar.

Class : 8th Social Studies (History)
Chapter 3 Ruling the Countryside part 1



Class : 8th Social Studies (History)
Chapter 3 Ruling the Countryside part 2



Important Questions

Multiple Choice Questions

1. A large farm operated by a planter employing various forms of forced labour is called:
 - a. Plantation
 - b. Nij
 - c. Bigha
 - d. Ryoti
2. The lathi wielding strongmen maintained by planters are:
 - a. Ryots
 - b. Peasant
 - c. Lathiyals
 - d. Vat-Beater
3. Which year is the mark of beginning of Champaran Movement by Mahatama Gandhi?
 - a. 1756
 - b. 1930
 - c. 1911
 - d. 1917
4. 1770, famine killed:
 - a. 10 million people
 - b. 20 million
 - c. 1/4th of population
 - d. 1 Lac
5. In the process of improving agriculture and earning the revenue income the Britishers needed to invest in:
 - a. Ryots
 - b. Money lenders
 - c. Land
 - d. Officials

6. Mahalwari systems was devised by:
 - a. Thomas Munro
 - b. Holt Mackenzie
 - c. Charles Cornwallis
 - d. Robert Clive
7. In Which area Mahalwari system of land revenue collection was not introduced?
 - a. Punjab
 - b. North West Provinces
 - c. Awadh
 - d. Delhi region
8. Which product Company was trying to expand and cultivate?
 - a. Opium
 - b. Indigo
 - c. Both a and b
 - d. None of these
9. In which year the Permanent Settlement of Bengal was introduced?
 - a. 1763
 - b. 1773
 - c. 1783
 - d. 1793
10. Where did the Ryotwari Settlement was introduced?
 - a. Bombay Presidency
 - b. South and West India
 - c. Deccan
 - d. Punjab
11. When the price of indigo was very high the Europeans depended on which plant?
 - a. Woad
 - b. Sal

- c. Palash
- d. Juniper

12. When was the Diwani of Bengal appointed to East India Company?

- a. 1765
- b. 1950
- c. 1845
- d. 1763

13. What do you mean by the term 'Slave'?

- a. Paid worker
- b. Person owned by someone else
- c. Royal Person
- d. None of these

14. What are commercial crops?

- a. Crops cultivated for tax paying
- b. Crops cultivated for own use
- c. Crops cultivated for sale
- d. None of these

15. What is a Mahal?

- a. A revenue estate
- b. Kings Empire
- c. Kings mansion
- d. Freedom movements

Very Short:

1. When did the Mughal emperor appoint the East India Company as the Diwan of Bengal?
2. Which settlement was introduced during 1793?
3. Who were appointed to collect rent and pay revenue to the Company during Permanent Settlement?
4. Who devised the system of Mahalwari?

5. What was the conclusion of Permanent Settlement at end?
6. Who initiated and developed the Ryotwari system?
7. Name the two systems adopted for growing indigo by the cultivators.
8. What is meant by Mahal?
9. What was the aim of the Company after getting Diwani?
10. What was the difficult task for the Company to be done?
11. What led to minimise the bringing of gold and silver by the Company for trade purpose in India?

Short Questions :

1. When was the 'Diwani' of Bengal granted to the East India Company?
2. During the Mughal rule what was the status of the 'Diwan'?
3. What were the benefits reaped by the East India company as the Diwan of Bengal?
4. What were the ambitious plans of the East India Company?
5. What were the disadvantages of the ryotwari system?
6. What were to the two major systems of indigo cultivation in India?
7. What were the main features of the 'Nij' system of cultivation?

Long Questions:

1. What were the main features of the 'Ryoti' system of cultivation?
2. What gave the indigo peasants the power to rebel?
3. What were the problems with ryoti system?
4. Why was there demand of Indigo in Europe?
5. Give a brief description of the 'ryotwari system'.

Answer Key

MCQ:

1. (a) Plantation
2. (c) Lathiyals
3. (d) 1917
4. (a) 10 million people
5. (c) Land
6. (b) Holt Mackenzie

7. (d) Delhi region
8. (c) Both a and b
9. (d) 1793
10. (b) South and West India
11. (a) Wood
12. (a) 1765
13. (b) Person owned by someone else
14. (c) Crops cultivated for sale
15. (a) A revenue estate

Very Short Answer:

1. On 12th August 1765, the Mughal emperor appointed the East India Company as the Diwan of Bengal.
2. Permanent Settlement was introduced during 1793.
3. Zamindars were appointed to collect rent and pay revenue to the Company during Permanent Settlement.
4. Holt Mackenzie devised the Mahalwari system.
5. Permanent Settlement got failed.
6. Captain Alexander Read initiated and Thomas Munro developed the Ryotwari system.
7. Nij and Ryoti were two systems adopted by the cultivators.
8. Mahal means village or groups of villages.
9. After Diwani the Company aimed at administering the land and organising its revenue resources and this was done in way that could help the Company attaining enough revenue.
10. The Company needed to pacify those who ruled the countryside in past. So it was difficult task to eliminate entirely the past rulers of the countryside of the Company.
11. Revenue which was collected from Bengal was sufficient for the Company to purchase goods for exports so the Company started reducing getting gold and silvers for trade purpose.

Short Answer:

Ans: 1. The 'Diwani' of Bengal was granted to the British East India Company, in 1765.

Ans: 2. During the rule of the Mughal Empire, the Diwan served as the chief revenue officer of a province

Ans: 3. With the appointment as the Diwan, the Company became the chief financial Administrator of Bengal. The company could now administer the land and revenue resources of Bengal and could utilize the revenue to meet the expanses of the Company.

The Company now had the liberty to trade in all the goods it wanted to

Ans: 4. The East India Company wanted to colonise the country side and organise revenue resources. Its priority was to redefine the rights of the people. The Company was also keen to produce the crops it wanted, in India.

Ans: 5. The revenue fixed by the British officials in the ryotwari system was too high for the farmers. The farmers who were unable to pay the revenue left the farms. As the farmers left their farms the villages in the region wore a deserted look.

Ans: 6. The two major systems of indigo cultivation in India were the 'Nij' system of cultivation and the 'Ryoti' system of cultivation.

Ans: 7. In the 'nij' system of indigo cultivation the planter produced indigo in lands that he directly owned. He either bought the land or rented it from other zamindars and produced indigo by directly employing hired labourers.

Long Answer:

Ans: 1. Under the Ryoti system, the planters forced the ryots or peasants to sign a contract. The village headman was also forced to sign an agreement on behalf of the ryots. The peasants received a loan from the planters to cultivate their land. Due to this the peasants were forced to cultivate indigo in 25% of their land.

The peasants received seeds and ploughs for cultivation from the Planters. They had to cultivate the crop and harvest it. The harvested indigo crop had to be given to the planters.

Ans: 2.

- In 1859, the indigo ryots felt that they had the support of the local Zamindar and Village headmen in their rebellion against the planters.
- In many villages, headmen who had been forced to sign indigo contracts, mobilized the indigo peasants and fought pitched battles with the lathiyals.
- In other places even the zamindars went around villages urging the ryots to resist the planters.
- These zamindars were unhappy with the increasing power of the planters and angry at

being forced by the planters give them land on long bases.

- The indigo peasant also imagined that the British govt. would support them in their struggle against the planters.

Ans: 3.

- Under the ryoti system, the planters forced the ryots to sign a contract, an agreement (satta). At times they pressurised the village headman to sign the contract on behalf of the ryots.
- Those who signed the contract got each advance from the planters at low rates of interest to produce indigo. But the loan committed the ryot to cultivating indigo on at least 25 per cent of the area under his holding.
- The planter provided the seed and the drill, while the cultivators prepared the soil sowed the seed and looked after the crop.
- The planters wanted that the indigo should be grows in the best soil.

Ans: 4.

- British cloth dyers, however, preferred indigo as a dye Indigo produced a rich blue colour, whereas the dye from woad was pale and dull.
- By the seventeenth century, European cloth producers persuaded their government to relax the ban on indigo import.
- The French began cultivating indigo in St. Domingue in the Caribbean islands, the Portuguese in Brazil, the English in Jamaica, and the Spanish in Venezuela. Indigo plantations also came up in many parts of North America.
- By the end of the eighteenth century, the demand for Indian indigo increased its existing supplies from the West Indies and America collapsed for a variety of reasons. Between 1783 and 1789 the production of indigo in the world fell by half. Cloth dyers in Britain now desperately looked for new source of indigo supply.

Ans: 5. The 'ryotwari system' was introduced by Captain Alexander Read. This system was further developed by Thomas Munroe. According to the new system the revenue was to be collected directly from the farmers or ryots. This was necessary as the zamindari system was not prevalent in the southern regions. The lands of each farmer were separately assessed, and the revenue was fixed accordingly. This system was also known as the Munro System.