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NCERT Class 9 History Chapter 4: Forest society and Colonialism YouTube Lecture Handouts

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What Forest Gives Us?

- Books, desks and tables, doors and windows, dyes, tendu leaf in bidis, gum, honey, coffee, tea and rubber
- B/w 1700 & 1995 – 13.9 million sq. km. of forest or 9.3% was cleared for industrial use

Deforestation

- Disappearance of forests
- In 1600, 1/6th of India's landmass was under cultivation & now it has increased to half
- In colonial period, cultivation expanded
- British encouraged production of jute, sugar, cotton – demand increased & production of raw material increased
- Early 10th century – believed forest as unproductive and wilderness – so idea was to bring them under cultivation, increase yield and enhance income
- B/w 1880 & 1920 – cultivated area rose by 6.7 million hectares
- Sleepers for railways – adivasis were hired to cut sal trees
- In Australia – when settlers came – they believed land was empty or terra nullius
- Ngarrindjeri people of Australia plotted their land along the symbolic body of the first ancestor, Ngurunderi. This land included five different environments: salt water, riverine tracts, lakes, bush and desert plains, which satisfied different socio-economic needs.
- Central America – American owned United Fruit Company was founded and grew banana on industrial scale in Central America. The government acquired such powers that they were known as Banana Republics.

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- 19th Century – oak forest in England were disappearing – created problem of timber supply for Royal Navy. So by 1820s sent parties to explore forest in India (& timber was exported from India)
- 1850s – railways spread created demand for timber – important for colonial trade and each railway required 1760 to 2000 sleepers (only in Madras presidency around 35,000 trees were cut every year) – forests started disappearing
- (LOGIC: One average sized tree yields 3 to 5 sleepers for a 3 metre wide broad gauge track)
- By 1890 – 25,500 km track was laid for railways which increased to 765,000 km in 1946

Plantations

- Large area of natural forests were cleared for plantation of tea, coffee and rubber
- Colonial govt. took the forest and gave it to European planters at cheap rate

Commercial Forestry

Dietrich Brandis - first Inspector General of Forests in India

- Asked for system to manage the forest and people to be trained in science of conservation
- Rules about use of forest resources must be framed
- Restrict felling of trees and grazing
- Gave Indian Forest Service in 1864 & formulated Indian Forest Act 1865

1906 – Imperial Forest Research Institute was established in Dehradun – taught scientific forestry (poplar trees for timber in straight lines) – plant only one type of tree in straight rows – old trees were cut and new were planted

Forest act was amended in 1878 and 1927

1878 Act – 3 forest types as reserved (bets and villagers could take nothing), protected and village forests

What Forests Give?

- Villagers wanted mix of species – fuel, fodder and leaves
- Mahua flowers can be eaten or used to make alcohol. The seeds can be used to make oil.
- Hard wood trees – tall and straight like teak and sal
- Fruits and tubers are nutritious to eat
- Herbs for medicines
- Wood for agricultural implements like ploughs

- Bamboo for fences, baskets and umbrellas
- Siadi (*Bauhinia vahlii*) creeper can be used to make ropes
- Thorny bark of the semur (silk-cotton) tree is used to grate vegetables
- After Forest Act – collect wood, collecting fruits, hunting and fishing became illegal

How Forest Rules Affect Cultivation?

Shifting or Swidden Cultivation

- Lading in Southeast Asia
- Milpa in Central America
- Chitemene or tavy in Africa
- Chena in Sri Lanka
- Dhya, penda, bewar, nevad, jhum, podu, khandad and kumri in India

Seeds sown after 1st monsoon, crops harvested in Oct-Nov

Left fallow for 12-18 years

Seeds are scattered and left to irrigated by rain

Then again mix crop is grown (millets in India and Africa; manioc in Brazil and maize and beans in Latin America)

Europeans considered shifting cultivation as dangerous – burning add to flames

Also it was hard to calculate taxes – so was later banned

Many shifted to different occupations

Taungya cultivation in which local farmers were allowed to cultivate temporarily within a plantation in Burma. For sowing paddy, men make holes in the soil using long bamboo poles with iron tips. The women sow paddy in each hole.

Baiga are forest community in Central India – involved in shifting cultivation

Who Could Hunt?

- Those caught hunting were punished for poaching
- Forest laws deprived people of customary rights to hunt
- Hunting was part of culture for Mughals but under colonial rule it increased to a level that species got extinct
- Britishers gave rewards for killing wild animals like tigers, wolves, etc.

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- Over 80,000 tigers, 150,000 leopards and 200,000 wolves were killed for reward in the period 1875-1925. Gradually, the tiger came to be seen as a sporting trophy.
- Maharaja of Sarguja alone shot 1,157 tigers and 2,000 leopards up to 1957
- British administrator, George Yule, killed 400 tigers
- Later environmentalist and conservators began to argue

New Trades, New Employments and New Services

- Many got in new jobs – trading forest products
- Mid-19th century - Mundurucu peoples of the Brazilian Amazon who lived in villages on high ground and cultivated manioc, began to collect latex from wild rubber trees for supplying to traders – live in trading posts and got totally dependent on traders
- India – trade in hides, horns, silk cocoons, ivory, bamboo, spices, fibres, grasses, gums and resins through nomadic communities like the Banjaras
- After British Government - pastoralist and nomadic communities like the Korava, Karacha and Yerukula of Madras Presidency lost their livelihoods. Some were called ‘criminal tribes’, and were forced to work instead in factories, mines and plantations, under government supervision.
- In Assam, both men and women from forest communities like Santhals and Oraons from Jharkhand, and Gonds from Chhattisgarh were recruited to work on tea plantations – low wages and bad work conditions
- Rubber extractions in Putumayo – extraction by Peruvian Rubber Company which was dependent on local Indians called Huitotos

Rebellion in Forest

Leaders of movements against the British were

- Siddhu and Kanu in the Santhal Parganas
- Birsa Munda of Chhotanagpur
- Alluri Sitarama Raju of Andhra Pradesh

Bastar

- South of Chhattisgarh and borders Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Maharashtra
- Central part is plateau with north as Chhattisgarh plains and south as Godavari plains
- Indravati River crosses Bastar east to west
- Communities - Maria and Muria Gonds, Dhurwas, Bhatras and Halbas

- People speak different languages, customs and beliefs
- Show respect to earth, river, forest and mountains

In 1947 Bastar kingdom was merged with Kanker kingdom and become Bastar district in Madhya Pradesh

In 1998 it was divided again into three districts, Kanker, Bastar and Dantewada

In 2001, these became part of Chhattisgarh

If people from a village want to take some wood from the forests of another village, they pay a small fee called *devsari*, *dand* or *man* in exchange

Villages protected forest by engaging watchmen and each household contribute some grains to pay

Fears of People

- In 1905 – British govt. asked to reserve 2/3rd forest in 1905, stop cultivation, hunting and collection of forest produce.
- Some were asked to work free for forest department in cutting trees and protecting them from fires – were known as forest villages
- Villagers were suffering from high land rent, demand for free labor and goods
- Famine affected in 1899-1900 and 1907-08
- Initiative was taken by the Dhurwas of the Kanger forest, where reservation first took place
- Gunda Dhur from Nethanar village was important leader
- In 1910, mango boughs, a lump of earth, chillies and arrows, began circulating between villages. These were actually messages inviting villagers to rebel against the British
- British surround Adivasi camps and fired – marched to villages and punished the rebellion
- Work on reservation was suspended and area to be reserved was reduced to half of that planned before 1910
- In the 1970s, World Bank proposed that 4,600 hectares of natural sal forest should be replaced by tropical pine to provide pulp for the paper industry. It was only after protests by local environmentalists that the project was stopped.

Indonesia

- Most of Indonesia's forests are located in islands like Sumatra, Kalimantan and West Irian.
- Java is where the Dutch began their 'scientific forestry'.

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- Java – now rice producing region with Dutch powers who started forest management – known for teak
- Like British, they wanted timber from Java to build ships
- In 1600, population of Java was 3.4 million with fertile plains
- Kalangs of Java – skilled forest cutters
- In 1755 – Mataram kingdom of Java split – 6,000 Kalang families were equally divided between two kingdoms
- Dutch wanted Kalangs to work under them
- In 1770, Kalangs resisted by attacking Dutch fort at Joana but were suppressed
- 19th century – Dutch enacted forest laws in Java and restricted villagers access to forests – wood could now be cut only for specific purpose like boats/houses
- In 1882, 280,000 sleepers were exported from Java alone.
- *Blandongdiensten System*: Dutch first imposed rents on land being cultivated in the forest and then exempted some villages from these rents if they worked collectively to provide free labor and buffaloes for cutting and transporting timber.
- Later rather than rent exemption, forest villagers were given small wages, but their right to cultivate forest land was restricted.

Samin’S Challenge

- Around 1890, Surontiko Samin of Randublatung village, a teak forest village, began questioning state ownership of the forest. He argued that the state had not created the wind, water, earth and wood, so it could not own it. Soon a widespread movement developed.
- 3000 families followed him
- Some protested by laying down on land when survey was done and others refused to pay tax/fine or perform labor
- Java, just before the Japanese occupied the region, the Dutch followed ‘a scorched earth’ policy, destroying sawmills, and burning huge piles of giant teak logs so that they would not fall into Japanese hands.
- Japanese then exploited the forests recklessly.
- Both WW-I and WW-II had devastating impacts on forests to satisfy war needs
- After 1980 – conservation of forest became main goal
- Across India, from Mizoram to Kerala, dense forests have survived only because villages protected them in sacred groves known as sarnas, devarakudu, kan, rai, etc.

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- Villages have been patrolling their own forest with households taking turns to guard them

-Manishika