

## **IMPORTANT QUESTION CLASS – 12 HISTORY CHAPTER- 9 COLONIALISM AND THE COUNTRYSIDE: EXPLORING OFFICIAL ARCHIVES |**

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### **Question 1.**

**Discuss the difficulties faced by the Zamindars in collecting revenue from the peasants (ryots). Give any two points.**

#### **Answer:**

Sometimes it was very difficult for the ryots to pay their dues to the Zamindars. It can be seen from the following points:

1. The farmers (ryots) failed to pay the revenue when their crops were damaged or when they got less price for their harvest.
2. Sometimes the payments were deliberately delayed by the farmers. It led to the accumulation of unpaid balances.

### **Question 2.**

**What was the relation between ryots and under-ryots?**

#### **Answer:**

Ryot is a term used to describe the peasants. It was spelt as Raiyat in the British records. They did not cultivate the land directly and leased it out to under-ryots.

### **Question 3.**

**Why did the British decide to clear the forests and to remove the Paharis? Give any two reasons.**

#### **Answer:**

1. The British wanted to extend the settled agriculture so that the sources of land revenue may be enlarged.
2. They associated forests with the wilderness. They considered the forest people as savage, unruly and primitive. They found these people difficult to govern. Therefore, they cleared the forests to tame the forest people and make them orderly and civilised.

### **Question 4.**

**Why did the Zamindars default on the payment of revenues under the British government? Give two reasons.**

#### **Answer:**

The British introduced the system of Permanent Settlement in Bengal. They thought that the

fixed revenue would imbibe a sense of security among the Zamindars. But contrary to this perception, the Zamindars regularly failed to pay the revenue. This resulted in the accumulation of unpaid balances.

Important Reasons: The Zamindars failed to make regular payments of revenue due to the following reasons:

1. The initial rate of revenue was very high. It was fixed for all time to come. The East India Company had thought that it would never be able to claim a share in the increased income from the land if at any stage, the prices rose and the cultivation expanded. The Company also argued that the burden on the Zamindars would slowly come down with the increase in agricultural production and the prices of agricultural products.
2. The amount of revenue was fixed during the period of economic depression. The ryots found it difficult to pay their dues to the Zamindars. As such the Zamindars were unable to pay the revenue to the East India Company.
3. The revenue was invariable. It had to be paid punctually even if the harvest was not good. There was the enforcement of Sun-Set law. If any Zamindar did not make the payment before the sun-set on a specific day, his estate was auctioned.
4. The Permanent Settlement had reduced the power of the Zamindars to collect rent from the ryot.

### **Question 5.**

**What was the policy of Paharias towards plains people and why?**

**Answer:**

1. They often attacked the plains where settled agriculturists lived.
2. These attacks were a way of asserting power over settled groups.
3. Zamindars, lived in plains, regularly paid tribute to Paharia Chiefs to keep themselves safe and secure.
4. Traders also gave a small amount of money to Paharias for getting permission for using the passes controlled by them. After getting the toll, these traders were protected by Paharia chiefs and were ensured that no one could plunder their goods.

### **Question 6.**

**Explain the impact of refusal of moneylenders to extend loans to Ryots around 1865, under the colonial rule in India.**

**Answer:**

As a boom in cotton market lasted for long, India cotton merchants began to visualise the capturing of the world market in raw cotton by permanently displacing the United States of

America (U.S.A.). But this condition changed in 1865. American Civil War came to an end and America again began to produce cotton. As a result, Indian export of cotton to British steadily declined.

Under these circumstances, moneylenders and export merchants of Maharashtra were no longer keen on providing long-term loans. The refusal of moneylenders to extend loans enraged the ryots. What infuriated them was not that they had got deeper and deeper into debt, or that they were utterly dependent on the moneylender for survival, but that moneylenders were not sensitive to their plight. The moneylenders were violating the customary norms of the countryside.

### **Question 7.**

**Who were the hill folk? Why were they so apprehensive of I Buchanans visit to Rajmahal hills in the 19th century? Explain.**

#### **Answer:**

The Paharis were known as the hill folk. They lived in the vicinity of the Rajmahal hills. They earned their livelihood from the forest produce and also practised shifting cultivation. Buchanan reached the Rajmahal Hills in the early 19th century. He found these hills as impenetrable.

They posed a great risk and danger to the travellers like him. Buchanan also found the hilly people as hostile, apprehensive and not willing to talk to any traveller. In fact, all the Paharis looked at him with suspicion and distrust. When he arrived at a village with his army of people, he was immediately perceived as an agent of the Sarkar, i.e., the British Govt.

### **Question 8.**

**What was the Fifth Report? What was its objective? On what grounds has it been criticised?**

#### **Answer:**

The Fifth Report was submitted to the British Parliament in 1813. It was called the Fifth Report as it was the fifth in a series of reports about the working of the East India Company. The core issue of the Fifth Report was the administration and activities of the East India Company. This report had 1002 pages out of which 800 pages were in the form of appendices which included the petitions of Zamindars and ryots, reports of Collectors, statistical tables on revenue returns and the official notes on the revenue and judicial administration of Bengal and Madras.

Objectives of the Report: Many groups of people in Britain were not happy with the working of East India Company in India. They opposed the monopoly enjoyed by the East India Company over trade with India and China. Many of the British traders wanted a share in

Company's trade in India. They emphasised that the Indian market should be opened for British manufacturers. Many political groups even argued that the conquest of Bengal benefitted only the East India Company and not the British nation as a whole.

They highlighted the misrule and maladministration by East India Company. As a result, the British Parliament passed several Acts in the late 18th century to regulate and control the rule of East India Company in India. It even asked the Company to submit regular reports on its administrative activities in India. The Fifth Report was such a report. It was produced by a select committee. It was concerned with the nature of the Company's rule in India. It contained invaluable evidence against the rule of East India Company in India. It brings out the pitiable condition in rural Bengal in the late 18th century.

**Basis of Criticism:** The Fifth Report has been carefully examined by the critics. They find the following limitations in it:

1. It has many unconvincing arguments and evidence.
2. Its purpose was only to criticise the maladministration of the East India Company.
3. It exaggerated the collapse of traditional Zamindari power.
4. It stated in hyperbolic words that the Zamindars were losing their land. The land of most of the farmers was auctioned.
5. The Company did not collect revenue with punctuality.

### **Question 9.**

**Examine the circumstances that led to the passing of 'Limitation Laws' by the British in 1859.**

**Answer:**

1. The Ryots came to see the moneylenders as devious and deceitful. They complained of money-lenders manipulating laws and forging accounts.
2. Most of the times, the money-lenders had charged over 2000% as interest on a loan of 100 Ryots complained of the injustice of such exactions and the violation of custom.
3. One general norm was that the interest charged could not be more than the principal. But this norm was generally violated.

Consequently in 1859, the British passed a Limitation Law that stated that the loan bonds signed between moneylenders and ryots would have validity for only three years.

### **Question 10.**

**Why did the British want to clear forests and expand settled cultivation? Enumerate any five reasons.**

**Answer:**

Due to the following reasons, the British wanted to clear the forests and expand the settled cultivation of land:

1. By adopting the settled cultivation of land, the colonial government wanted to enhance its revenue.
2. It could grow cash crops for export.
3. The British could establish an ordered and civilised society.
4. They associated forests with wildness. They considered the forest people as savage, unruly and primitive. They found these people difficult to govern. So they exhorted the Santhals to clear the forests and encouraged settled agriculture.
5. They wanted to tame, civilise and persuade the forest people to give up hunting and take up ploughing to cultivate the land.