

NCERT SOLUTIONS

CLASS - 12th



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Subject : History

Chapter : 8

Chapter Name : Peasants, Zamindars and The State

Q1 What are the problems in using the Ain as a source for reconstructing agrarian history? How do historians deal with this situation?

Answer. Ain-i Akbari was authored by Abu'l Fazl. It was completed in the year 1598. It gives detailed accounts of the organisation of court, administration and army, the sources of revenue and the physical layout of the provinces of Akbar's empire and the literary, cultural and religious traditions of the people.

The problems in using the Ain as a source for reconstructing agrarian history are :

- Numerous errors in totalling have been detected, these are generally minor and do not detract from the overall quantitative veracity of the manuals.
- The quantitative data is skewed in nature. Data were not collected uniformly from all Provinces
- Detailed information about the caste composition is not available for Bengal and Orissa.
- Fiscal data from the subas are remarkable but some data on some equally vital parameters such as ages and prices are not well documented.

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Q2 To what extent is it possible to characterise agricultural production in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries as subsistence agriculture? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer. Subsistence agriculture is a kind of agricultural practice which is particularly done by the farmers in order to feed themselves and their families. During the medieval period India was an agricultural country with major portion of the people practicing agriculture as their main

occupation. However the focus on the cultivation of basic staples did not mean that agriculture in medieval India was only for subsistence.

The Mughal provinces of Agra produced 39 varieties of crops and Delhi produced 43 varieties whereas Bengal alone produced 50 varieties of rice.

The Mughal state also encouraged peasants to cultivate such crops that brought in more revenue. Crops such as cotton and sugarcane were par excellence. During the seventeenth century several new crops from different parts of the world reached Indian subcontinent.

Cash crops were also grown which include lentils and varieties of oilseeds.

These clearly indicates that both subsistence and commercial production was closely intertwined.

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Q3 Describe the role played by women in agricultural production.

Answer. The women played a very important role in the agricultural production. They worked shoulder to shoulder with men. Men tilled and ploughed, while women sowed, weeded, threshed and winnowed the harvest.

A gendered segregation between women and men was not possible though biases related to women's biological functions did continue. Menstruating women, for instance, were not allowed to touch the plough or the potter's wheel in western India, or enter the groves where betel-leaves were grown in Bengal.

The artisanal tasks such as spinning yarn, shifting and kneading clay for pottery and embroidery were done by female labour.

Hindu and Muslim women inherited zamindaris which they were free to sell or mortgage at their own will.

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Q4 Discuss with examples, the significance of monetary transactions during the period under consideration.

Answer. The Mughal Empire being a large territorial empires in Asia managed to maintain trade relations with the Ming (China), Safavid (Iran) and Ottoman (Turkey). An expanding trade brought in huge amounts of silver bullions into Asia to pay for goods procured from India. This was good for India as it did not have natural resources of Silver. As a result, the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries was also marked by a remarkable stability in the availability of metal currency, particularly the silver rupyā in India. This facilitated an unprecedented expansion in minting of coins and the circulation of money in the economy as well as the ability of the Mughal state to extract taxes and revenue in cash. It also facilitated in payment of wages or advances to the labourers and weavers in cash.

For example : An Italian traveller named Giovanni Careri, passed through India in 1690, provided a graphic account about the way silver travelled across the globe to reach India. This testimony gives us an idea of the phenomenal amounts of cash and commodity transactions that took place in seventeenth-century India.

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Q5 Examine the evidence that suggests that land revenue was important for the Mughal fiscal system.

Answer. A huge amount of money was required in order to run the administration of the Mughal empire. The need for which could be catered largely by this revenue so the land revenue was important.

The evidence that suggests its importance are :

The state tried to obtain accurate information about the extent of the lands and the type of crops produced and then the taxes were fixed. The land revenue arrangements consisted of two stages i.e assessment and then actual collection.

There was a complete system for the revenue fiscal system. This included the office of the diwan and he was responsible for supervising the fiscal system of the empire.

There were options to pay the taxes either in cash or in kind. The state always tried to maximize the claims.

Hence, the land revenue system was handled at utmost care as this was the bloodstream of the empire's administration.

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Q6 To what extent do you think caste was a factor in influencing social and economic relations in agrarian society?

Answer. Caste played an important part in influencing social and economic relations in agrarian society. There were deep inequalities on the basis of caste and other caste-like distinctions. Though there was an abundance of cultivable land, certain caste groups were assigned menial tasks and thus relegated to poverty.

→ In Muslim communities menials like halalkhoran (scavengers) were housed outside the boundaries of the village ; similarly the mallahzadas (sons of boatmen) in Bihar were comparable to slaves.

→ In seventeenth-century Marwar, Rajputs are mentioned as peasants, sharing the same space with Jats, had a lower status in the caste hierarchy.

→ The Gauravas, who cultivated land around Vrindavan (Uttar Pradesh), sought Rajput status in the seventeenth century.

→ Castes such as the Ahirs, Gujars and Malis rose in hierarchy because of the profitability of cattle rearing and horticulture.

→ In the eastern regions, intermediate pastoral and fishing castes like the Sadgops and Kaivartas acquired the status of peasants.

Thus we can conclude that caste was a very detrimental factor and it has a direct relationship with the social status of the people which greatly influenced the relations in agrarian society.

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Q7 How were the lives of forest dwellers transformed in the sixteenth-seventeenth and seventeenth centuries?

Answer. The lives of the forest dwellers greatly transformed in the sixteenth- seventeenth century.

Forest dwellers were termed as jangli in contemporary texts but this did not mean lack of civilization rather the term described those whose livelihood came from gathering of forest produce, hunting and shifting agriculture. These activities were largely season specific.

Among the Bhils, spring was reserved for collecting forest produce, summer for fishing, monsoon months for cultivation, and autumn and winter for hunting.

The lives of the forest dwellers transformed in following ways :

- The state required elephants for the army. So the peshkash levied from forest people often included a supply of elephants.
- The emperor used to travel across the territories of the empire during regular hunting expeditions and used to personally attend to the grievances of the inhabitants.
- The spread of commercial agriculture was an important external factor that impinged on the lives of those who lived in the forests.
- Forest products like honey, beeswax and gum lac were in great demand. Gum lac became major items of overseas export from India in the seventeenth century.
- Tribes like Lohanisin the Punjab were engaged in overland trade between India and Afghanistan, and in the town-country trade in the Punjab itself.
- Many tribal chiefs had become zamindars, some even became kings. They required army so they recruited people from their group.

Though the transition from a tribal to a monarchical system had started much earlier, the process seems to have become fully developed only by the sixteenth century.

Page : 222 , Block Name : Long Answer

Q8 Examine the role played by zamindars in Mughal India.

Answer. The zamindars were a class of people in the countryside that lived off agriculture but did not directly participate directly in the processes of agricultural production. They enjoyed a superior status in rural society.

The zamindars held extensive personal lands. These lands were cultivated for the private use of zamindars, often with the help of hired or servile labour.

- They could collect revenue on behalf of the state, a service for which they were compensated financially.

- They had control over the military resources. Most zamindars had fortresses as well as armed contingent comprising units of cavalry, artillery and infantry.
- They helped in settling cultivators by providing them with the means of cultivation, including cash loans.
- The buying and selling of zamindaris accelerated the process of monetisation in the countryside.
- Zamindars often established markets (haats) to which peasants also came to sell their produce.
- When we observe social relations of villages during Mughal era, as a pyramid then Zamindars were placed the highest or at the top in the hierarchy.
- Zamindars were exploitative in nature and their relationship with the peasant class depended on an element of reciprocity, paternalism and patronage. We can observe that in a large number of agrarian uprisings which erupted in north India in the seventeenth century, zamindars often received the support of the peasantry in their struggle against the state.

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Q9 Discuss the ways in which Panchayats and village headmen regulated rural society.

Answer. The village Panchayat was an assembly of elders, usually important people of the village with hereditary rights over their property. In mixed-caste villages, the Panchayat was usually a heterogeneous body. In oligarchy, the Panchayat represented various castes and communities in the village, though the menial-cum-agricultural worker was unlikely to be represented there. The decisions made by the Panchayats were binding on the members.

The ways in which Panchayat and the village headmen regulated rural society were :

- The village Panchayat was headed by a headman known as muqaddam or mandal. The chief function of the headman was to supervise the preparation of village accounts, assisted by the accountant or patwari of the Panchayat.
- The important function of the panchayat was to ensure that caste boundaries among the various communities inhabiting the village were upheld.
- Panchayats had the authority to levy fine and inflict more serious form of punishment like expulsion from the community.

- Each caste or jati in the village had its own jati Panchayat. These panchayats has considerable power in rural society.
- The panchayats were considered as the court of appeal that would ensure that the state carried out its moral obligations and guaranteed justice.
- In case of excessive revenue demands, the panchayats often suggested compromise.

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Q10 On an outline map of the world, mark the areas which had economic links with the Mughal Empire, trace out possible routes of communication.

Answer. Areas that had economic links with the Mughal Empire are :

Afghanistan, Iran, France, Britain, the countries of Central Asia.

The possible routes were through Atlantic Ocean, Arabian Sea, Cape of Good Hope, Indian Ocean, etc.



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