



Chapter iv : Forest Societies and Colonialism

Livelihoods, Economies and Societies

Q1. Discuss how the changes in forest management in the colonial period affected the following groups of people:

a) Shifting cultivators: the forest management in the colonial period considered the practice of shifting cultivation harmful for the forests. As a result, shifting cultivators were forcibly displaced from their homes in the forests. Some had to change occupations, while some resisted through large and small rebellions.

b) Nomadic and pastoralist communities: nomadic and pastoral communities do not maintain a permanent place of residence. They own a herd of cattle and keep moving from one place to another in search of food and shelter for themselves and for their cattle wealth. Under colonial rule, the life of these communities changed dramatically:

i) Their grazing grounds were influenced.

ii) Their movements were regulated.

iii) The revenue they had to pay increased.

iv) Their agricultural stock declined.

v) Their trades and crafts were adversely affected.

c) Firms trading in timber/forest produce: these trades were in great pain. They were having support of the government. With the increasing demand of timber (due to ships and railways) their total profit increased. They engaged the local people to collect different forest produce and earned money.

d) Plantation owners: the new forest laws protected the rights of owners of plantations like tea. They experienced prosperity and accumulated huge wealth. But the workers on these plantations were paid very low wages; they had to live in bad conditions.

e) Kings/British officials engaged in shikar (hunting): hunting of tigers and other animals had been a part of the culture of the court and nobility for centuries. The British saw large animals as a sign of a wild, primitive and savage society. Therefore, they provided strong incentives to encourage people to take guns and kill these dangerous animals. Thus, hunting as a game for pleasure flourished under the new forest laws.



Q2. What are the similarities between colonial management of the forests in Bastar and in Java ?

Ans. There were many similarities in the laws for forest control in Java (Indonesia) and Bastar (India). In Bastar the British started forest management. Java in Indonesia is where the Dutch (people of Holland) started forest management. The British wanted timber from Bastar. Like the British, the Dutch wanted timber from Java to build ships. From Bastar many communities were forced to leave their old region and forest areas. In Java also many villages were in the fertile forests. They also left forests to move in the mountains and gave up practicing shifting cultivation. In some forests and areas of Java the people of several communities raised the banner of rebellion as the same was done by different people of Bastar in India. But the colonial governments in Java as well as in Bastar were successful in crushing the rebellions.

Q3. Between 1880 and 1920, forest cover in the Indian subcontinent declined by 9.7 million hectares, from 108.6 million hectares to 98.9 million hectares. Discuss the role of the following factors in this decline.

- a) Railways: the impact of railways has a devastating effect on forests. Railways required wooden sleepers for its tracks. In addition, wood was required as fuel. Wood was also used in a great measure in wagons.
- b) Shipbuilding: shipbuilding had a devastating effect on railways. It led to reckless cutting down of trees.
- c) Agriculture expansion: the British thought that forest land represented a non productive use of land. Land could be used more productively if put to cultivation. Hence, large tracks of forest and land were cut down.
- d) Commercial farming: the Colonial rulers were in need of commercial crops for
- i) Coping with the expanding needs of urban population and
- ii) Fast expanding industries. These needs could be met only by diverting land under forests to cultivation of commercial crops.
- e) Tea/Coffee plantations: tea/coffee plantations were another productive source of income and revenue. Here, again a large number of village communities were deprived of their traditional rights; forests were cut down. Plantations were raised on it.
- f) Adivasis and other peasant users: adivasis and peasant usually fought tooth and nail for their traditional rights. If they had their way, they would not have let even a single inch of forest land to suffer the fate it did.

**Q4. Why are forests affected by wars/**

Ans. Forests are affected by wars because forest products are used for fulfilling various needs and requirement during war. In the case of India, during the first world war and the second world war the forest department cut trees freely to meet British wars. Thus, wars also led to destruction of forests. In India, working plans were abandoned at this time and many adivasis and peasants use battles and wars opportunities to expand cultivation in the forest.

Q5. How did industrialization effect forest:

Ans. With the establishment of industries on a large scale, the demand for raw material increased. The brunt of this demand was felt by the forests. The industrialized nation encouraged the production of commercial crops, like jute, sugar, wheat and cotton. Thus, forests had to clear for cultivation of these crops. Timber was also required to build ships. The spread of railways from the 1850's created a new demand for timber. Forest round the railway tracks started disappearing rapidly.

GEOGRAPHY : Project work

1. collect the information about the impact of encroachment and pollution on Dal lake.
2. on an outline map of India show the following:
 - i) The Indian desert, Western Ghats, Himalayan mountains, Chotanagpur and Malwa plateau.
 - ii) Neighbouring countries surrounding India, including oceans.