

# CBSE Class 9 Social Science History Notes

## Chapter 4 - Forest Society and Colonialism

Chapter 4 - Forest Society and Colonialism will take you into the forest. It talks about the growth of industries and urban centres, ships and railways, new demand on the forests for timber and other forest products. Students will also get to learn topics such as new rules of forest use, new ways of organising the forest, colonial control, how forest areas were mapped, trees were classified, and plantations were developed. The chapter will give you an idea of the history of such developments in India and Indonesia. CBSE Class 9 notes of History will help the students to study the subject in a very detailed and concise way. The notes are all prepared by subject experts and have kept the study material very simple, including the language and the format.

### Why Deforestation

Deforestation means disappearance of forests and is not a recent problem. It began many centuries ago, but under colonial rule, it became more systematic and extensive.

#### Land to be Improved

Over the centuries, as the population grew and the demand for food went up, peasants started clearing forests and breaking new land. British encouraged the production of commercial crops like jute, sugar, wheat and cotton. In the 19th century, the demand for these crops increased. The colonial state thought that forests were unproductive in the early 19th century. So between 1880 and 1920, cultivated areas and the expansion of cultivation showed a sign of progress.

#### Sleepers on the Tracks

In England, by the early nineteenth century, oak forests were disappearing. Search parties were sent to India to explore the forest resources. Railways spread from the 1850s. Railways were essential for colonial trade and for the movement of imperial troops. From the 1860s, the railway network expanded rapidly. Trees started falling as the railway tracks spread through India. The government gave out contracts to individuals to supply the required quantities. Forests around the railway tracks started disappearing.

#### Plantations

Large areas of natural forests cleared to make way for tea, coffee and rubber plantations to meet Europe's growing need for these commodities. The forests were taken over by the colonial government and gave vast areas to European planters at cheap rates to plant tea or coffee.

### The Rise of Commercial Forestry

British were worried that reckless use of trees by traders and use of forests by local people would destroy forests. Dietrich Brandis, a German expert, became the first Inspector General of Forests in India. He realised that a proper system had to be introduced to manage the forests and people need to be trained in the science of conservation. But it needed legal sanction. In 1864, Indian Forest Service was set up in Dehradun in 1906. In scientific forestry, natural forests, which had lots of different types of trees were cut down. In 1906, the Forest Act was enacted which was amended twice, once in 1878 and then in 1927. The Act of 1878, divided forests into three categories: reserved, protected and village forests. The best forests were called 'reserved forests'.

# CBSE Class 9 Social Science History Notes

## Chapter 4 - Forest Society and Colonialism

How were the Lives of People Affected?

Villagers wanted forests with species of different types to satisfy their needs of fuel, fodder and leaves. On the other hand, the forest department wanted trees like teak and sal suitable for building ships or railways. Roots, leaves, fruits and tubers were used for many things. In the forest almost everything was available such as herbs, yokes, ploughs, bamboo, etc. From the fruit of mahua tree, oil was extracted for the purpose of cooking and lighting lamps. The Forest Act meant severe hardship for villagers across the country. People were forced to steal wood from the forests. Forest guard used to take bribes if they got caught. Police constables and forest guards harass people by demanding free food from them

How did Forest Rules Affect Cultivation?

Practice of shifting cultivation or swidden cultivation was introduced during European colonialism or swidden agriculture. It is a traditional agricultural practice in many parts of Asia, Africa and South America. In shifting cultivation, parts of the forest are cut and burnt in rotation. After the first monsoon rains, seeds are sown in the ashes, and the crop is harvested by October-November. For a couple of years such plots are cultivated and then left for 12 to 18 years. On these plots a mixture of crops is grown. According to European foresters, this practice is harmful for the forests. This type of cultivation also made it difficult for the government to calculate taxes. So, the government decided to ban shifting cultivation.

Who could Hunt?

People who lived near forests survived by hunting deer, partridges and a variety of small animals. The practice was prohibited by the forest laws and those who were caught hunting were punished for poaching. In India, hunting of tigers and other animals is a part of the culture of the court and nobility for centuries. The scale of hunting increased under colonial rule to such an extent that various species became almost extinct. Rewards were given for killing wild animals. Some areas of the forest were reserved for hunting.

New Trades, New Employments and New Services

New opportunities opened up in trade. In India, forest trade was not new. It existed from medieval period, where adivasi communities used to trade elephants and other goods like hides, horns, silk cocoons, ivory, bamboo, spices, fibres, grasses, gums and resins through nomadic communities like the Banjaras. But, trade was completely regulated by the government, which gave many large European trading firms the sole right to trade in the forest products of particular areas. New opportunities of work did not improve the wellbeing of the people.

Rebellion in the Forest

Forest communities rebelled against the changes that were being imposed on them. Some of the leaders of these movements are the Siddhu and Kanu in the Santhal Parganas, Birsa Munda of Chhotanagpur or Alluri Sitarama Raju of Andhra Pradesh.

# CBSE Class 9 Social Science History Notes

## Chapter 4 - Forest Society and Colonialism

### The People of Bastar

Bastar is located in the southernmost part of Chhattisgarh and borders Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra. The Bastar central part is on a plateau and to the north is the Chhattisgarh plain and to its south is the Godavari plain. Different communities live in Bastar such as Maria and Muria Gonds, Dhurwas, Bhatras and Halbas. The people of Bastar believed that each village was given its land by the Earth, and in return, they look after the earth by making some offerings at each agricultural festival. Local villagers look after all the natural resources within their boundaries and people pay a small fee called devsari, dand or man in exchange if they want to take some wood from the forests of another village.

### The Fears of the People

In 1905, colonial government proposed to reserve two-thirds of the forest in and stop shifting cultivation, hunting and collection of forest produce. Some people used to stay in forests by working free for the forest department and these are called forest villagers. Villagers for a long run suffered from increased land rents and frequent demands of labour and goods. People started discussing these issues in their village council, bazaars, and at festivals. Dhurwas of the Kanger forest, took initiative where reservation first took place. Bazaars were looted, the houses of officials and traders, schools and police stations were burnt and robbed, and grain redistributed. British troops were sent to suppress the rebellion. After Independence, the same practice of keeping people out of the forests and reserving them for industrial use continued.

### Forest Transformations in Java

Java is famous as a rice-producing island in Indonesia. But, there was a time when it was covered mostly with forests. In Java the Dutch started forest management. Villages existed in the fertile plains, and there were also many communities living in the mountains and practising shifting cultivation.

### The Woodcutters of Java

The Kalangs of Java were skilled forest cutters and shifting cultivators. They are experts in harvesting teak and for the kings to build their palaces. When the Dutch began to gain control over the forests in the eighteenth century, they tried to make the Kalangs work under them. In 1770, the Kalangs resisted by attacking a Dutch fort at Joana, but the uprising was suppressed.

### Dutch Scientific Forestry

In the nineteenth century, Dutch enacted forest laws in Java, restricting villagers' access to forests. Wood could only be cut for making river boats or constructing houses. Villagers were punished for grazing cattle, transporting wood without a permit, or travelling on forest roads with horse carts or cattle. Firstly, the Dutch imposed rents on land being cultivated in the forest and then exempted some villages from these rents if they worked collectively to provide free labour and buffaloes for cutting and transporting timber. This was known as the blandongdiensten system.

## CBSE Class 9 Social Science History Notes

### Chapter 4 - Forest Society and Colonialism

#### Samin's Challenge

Surontiko Samin of Randublatung village, a teak forest village, questioned the state ownership of the forest and argued that the state had not created the wind, water, earth and wood, so it could not own it. Soon a widespread movement developed. Some of the Saminists protested by lying down on their land when the Dutch came to survey it, while others refused to pay taxes or fines or perform labour.

#### War and Deforestation

The First World War and the Second World War had a major impact on forests. In Java, the Dutch followed 'a scorched earth' policy, destroying sawmills, and burning huge piles of giant teak logs. After the war, it was difficult for the Indonesian forest service to get this land back.

#### New Developments in Forestry

Conservation of forests has become a more important goal. In many places, 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.