

Theme 8 Peasants, Zamindars and The State

Fastrack Revision

► Introduction

- During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries about 85 per cent of the population of India lived in its villages. Both peasants and landed elites were involved in agricultural production and claimed rights to a share of the produce.
- This created relationships of co-operation, competition and conflict among them. The sum of these agrarian relationships made up rural society.
- At the same time agencies from outside also entered into the rural world. Most important among these was the Mughal state, which derived the bulk of its income from agricultural production.
- Agents of the state – revenue assessors, collectors, record keepers – sought to control rural society so as to ensure that cultivation took place and the state got its regular share of taxes from the produce.

► Peasants and Agricultural Production

- The basic unit of agricultural society was the village, inhabited by peasants who performed the manifold seasonal tasks that made up agricultural production throughout the year – tilling the soil, sowing seeds, harvesting the crop when it was ripe.
- Further, they contributed their labour to the production of agro-based goods such as sugar and oil.
- But rural India was not characterised by settled peasant production alone.
- Several kinds of areas such as large tracts of dry land or hilly regions were not cultivable in the same way as the more fertile expenses of land.

► Sources of Information

- The understanding of the workings of rural society does not come from those who worked the land, as peasants did not write about themselves.
- The major source for the agrarian history of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are chronicles and documents from the Mughal court.
- One of the most important chronicles was the *Ain-I Akbari* authored by Akbar's court historian Abu'l Fazl. This text meticulously recorded the arrangements made by the state to ensure cultivation, to enable the collection of revenue by the agencies of the state and to regulate the relationship between the state and rural magnates, the zamindars.
- The central purpose of the *Ain* was to present a vision of Akbar's empire where social harmony was provided by a strong ruling class.
- Any revolt or assertion of autonomous power against the Mughal state was, in the eyes of the author of the

Ain, predestined to fail. In other words, whatever we learn from the *Ain* about peasants remains a view from the top.

- The account of the *Ain* can be supplemented by descriptions contained in sources emanating from regions away from the Mughal capital.
- These include detailed revenue records from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
- Further, the extensive records of the East India Company provide us with useful descriptions of agrarian relations in Eastern India.
- All these sources record instances of conflicts between peasants, zamindars and the state. In the process they give us an insight into peasants' perception of and their expectations of fairness from the state.

► Peasants and their Lands

- The term which Indo-Persian sources of the Mughal period most frequently used to denote a peasant was *raiya* (plural, *riaya*) or *muzarian*.
- In addition, we also encounter the terms *kisan* or *asami*. Sources of the seventeenth century refer to two kinds of peasants – *khud-kashta* and *pahi-kashta*.
- The farmer were residents of the village in which they held their lands. The latter were non-resident cultivators who belonged to some other village, but cultivated lands elsewhere on a contractual basis.
- People became *pahi-kashta* either out of choice – for example, when terms of revenue in a distant village were more favourable – or out of compulsion – for example, forced by economic distress after a famine.
- The average peasant of North India possess more than a pair of bullocks and two ploughs; most possessed even less.
- In Gujarat peasants possessing about six acres of land were considered to be affluent; in Bengal, on the other hand, five acres was the upper limit of an average peasant farm; 10 acres would make one a rich *asami*.
- Cultivation was based on the principle of individual ownership. Peasant lands were bought and sold in the same way as the lands of other property owners.

► Irrigation and Technology

- The abundance of land, available labour and the mobility of peasants were three factors that accounted for the constant expansion of agriculture.
- Since the primary purpose of agriculture is to feed people, basic staples such as rice, wheat or millets were the most frequently cultivated crops.



- ▶ Areas which received 40 inches or more of rainfall a year were generally rice-producing zones, followed by wheat and millets, corresponding to a descending scale of precipitation.
- ▶ Monsoons remained the backbone of Indian agriculture, as they are even today. But there were crops which required additional water. Artificial systems of irrigation had to be devised for this.
- ▶ Irrigation projects received state support as well. For example, in Northern India the state undertook digging of new canals (*nahr, nala*) and also repaired old ones like the *shahnahr* in the Punjab during Shah Jahan's reign.
- ▶ Though agriculture was labour intensive, peasants did use technologies that often harnessed cattle energy.
- ▶ The wooden plough, which was light and easily assembled with an iron tip or coulter. It therefore did not make deep furrows, which preserved the moisture better during the intensely hot months.
- ▶ A drill, pulled by a pair of giant oxen, was used to plant seeds, but broadcasting of seed was the most prevalent method.
- ▶ Hoeing and weeding were done simultaneously using a narrow iron blade with a small wooden handle.
- ▶ **An Abundance of Crops**
 - ▶ Agriculture was organised around two major seasonal cycles, the *kharif* (autumn) and the *rabi* (spring).
 - ▶ This would mean that most regions, except those terrains that were the most arid or inhospitable, produced a minimum of two crops a year (*do-fasla*).
 - ▶ Some areas where rainfall or irrigation assured a continuous supply of water, even gave three crops. This ensured an enormous variety of produce. For instance, we are told in the *Ain* that the Mughal provinces of Agra produced 39 varieties of crops and Delhi produced 43 over the two seasons. Bengal produced 50 varieties of rice alone.
 - ▶ The Mughal state also encouraged peasants to cultivate such crops as they brought in more revenue. Crops such as cotton and sugarcane were *jins-i kamil* par excellence.
 - ▶ Cotton was grown over a great swathe of territory spread over central India and the Deccan plateau, whereas Bengal was famous for its sugar. Such cash crops would also include various sorts of oilseeds (for example, mustard) and lentils. This shows how subsistence and commercial production were closely intertwined in an average peasant's holding.
 - ▶ During the seventeenth century several new crops from different parts of the world reached the Indian subcontinent. Maize (*makka*), for example, was introduced into India via Africa and Spain and by the seventeenth century it was being listed as one of the major crops of Western India.
 - ▶ Vegetables like tomatoes, potatoes and chillies were introduced from the New World at this time, as were fruits like the pineapple and the papaya.
- ▶ **Agricultural Prosperity and Population Growth**
 - ▶ One important outcome of such varied and flexible forms of agricultural production was a slow demographic growth.
 - ▶ Despite periodic disruptions caused by famines and epidemics, India's population increased, according to calculations by economic historians, by about 50 million people between 1600 and 1800, which is an increase of about 33 per cent over 200 years.
- ▶ **The Village Community**
 - ▶ The Peasants were mostly involved in the agricultural production. Peasants held their lands in individual ownership.
 - ▶ At the same time, they belonged to a collective village community as far as many aspects of their social existence were concerned.
 - ▶ This village community has three parts *i.e.* **the cultivators, the panchayat and the village headmen** (*muqaddam or mandal*).
- ▶ **Caste and the Rural Milieu**
 - ▶ The cultivators were a highly heterogeneous group because of deep inequalities based on caste and other caste-like distinctions. Among those who tilled the land, there was a large number who worked as menials or agricultural labourers (*majur*).
 - ▶ There was availability of large amount of cultivable land. Certain caste groups were assigned menial tasks, thus they faced poverty. Such groups comprised a large section of the village population, had least resources and were forced by their position in the caste hierarchy, for example, Dalits of modern India.
 - ▶ Such distinctions had begun spreading into other communities also. In Muslim communities, menials (low status) like the *halalkhoran* (scavengers) were made to stay outside the boundaries of the village. Similarly, the *mallahzadas* (sons of boatmen) in Bihar were comparable to slaves.
 - ▶ According to a manual belonging to seventeenth century Marwar, Rajputs are mentioned as peasants, sharing the same space with Jats, who were given a lower status in the caste hierarchy.
 - ▶ The Gauravas, who cultivated land around Vrindavan (Uttar Pradesh), wanted Rajput status. Castes like Ahirs, Gujars and Malis moved to higher positions in the hierarchy because of the profitability of cattle rearing and horticulture.
 - ▶ In the Eastern regions, intermediate pastoral and fishing castes like the Sadgops and Kalvartas acquired the status of peasants.
- ▶ **Panchayats and Headmen**
 - ▶ The village panchayat was an assembly of elders, usually important people of the village with hereditary rights over their property.
 - ▶ The panchayat was a mixed body in the villages which had mixed caste populations. The decisions made by these panchayats were binding on the members.
 - ▶ The headmen were chosen through the consensus of the village elders and this choice had to be ratified by the zamindar.

- Headmen held office as long as they enjoyed the confidence of the village elders. He could be dismissed by them also.
 - The main function of the headman was to look after the preparation of village accounts. He was assisted by the **accountant** or **patwari** of the panchayat.
 - The panchayat got its funds from the contributions made by the individuals to a common financial pool. These funds were used to pay for the costs of entertaining revenue officials who visited the village from time-to-time.
 - Other expenses for community welfare activities like overcoming the difficulties faced by the natural calamities like floods, were also met from these funds.
 - These funds were also used for construction of a bund or digging a canal which peasants usually could not afford to do on their own.
 - One of the important functions of the panchayat was to ensure that the caste boundaries among the various communities residing in the village were maintained. In Eastern India, all marriages were held in the presence of the *Mandal*.
 - The duties of the village headmen was to oversee the conduct of the members of the village community and to prevent any offence against their caste.
 - Panchayats had the authority to levy fines and impose serious punishments like expulsion from the community.
 - Expulsion meant that the person who was given punishment was forced to leave the village, become an outcaste and lose his right to practice his profession. Such a measure was intended as a restraint to violation of caste norms.
 - Petitions were made collectively by a caste group or a community protesting against what they considered were morally illegitimate demands on the part of elite groups. For instance, excessive tax demands in times of drought or other disasters.
 - For the petitioners, the right to the basic minimum for survival was sanctioned by the custom. They regarded the village panchayats as the court of appeal that would ensure that the state carried out its moral obligations and guaranteed justice.
 - In Western India (especially Maharashtra) petitions were presented to the panchayat complaining about taxation or the demand for unpaid labour (begar) imposed by the 'Superior' castes or officials of the state. These petitions were usually made by villagers, from the lowest ranks of rural society.
 - The decision of the panchayat in conflicts between lower-caste and the state officials or the local zamindar could vary from case-to-case. In case of excessive revenue demands, the panchayat often suggested compromise.
 - In cases where reconciliation failed, peasants took recourse to more extreme forms of resistance like deserting the village. The relatively easy availability of uncultivated land and the competition over labour resources made this an effective weapon in the hands of cultivators.
 - In addition to the village panchayat each caste or jati in the village had its own jati panchayat. They also had considerable power in the rural society.
 - In Rajasthan, jati panchayats settled civil disputes between members of different castes. Jati panchayats mediated in land disputes like
 - When different persons claiming same piece of land,
 - When deciding whether marriages were performed according to the rules laid down by a particular caste group,
 - When determined who had more religious importance in village functions, etc.
 - State respected the decisions of jati panchayats in most cases, except in the matters of criminal justice.
- ▶ **Village Artisans**
- One of the interesting aspects of the village was the relationship of exchange between different producers.
 - According to Marathi documents and village surveys made in the early years of British rule, there existed a huge numbers of artisans, sometimes as high as 25 per cent of the total households in the villages.
 - Sometimes the difference between artisans and peasants in village society was not fixed because many groups performed the tasks of both.
 - Cultivators and their families would also participate in craft production like dyeing, textile printing, baking and firing of pottery, making and repairing agricultural implements.
 - Cultivators engaged in artisanal production when there was a gap in between agricultural activities, like the period between sowing and weeding or between weeding and harvesting.
 - Village artisans like potters, blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, even goldsmiths provided specialised services and in return they were paid by villagers by different means.
 - The most common way of paying was giving them a share of the harvest, or an allotment of land. In Maharashtra such lands on which artisans had hereditary holding were called *miras* or *watan*.
- ▶ **Villages as a Little Republic**
- In the nineteenth century, some British officials viewed village as a little republic made up of people with common interests sharing resources and labour in collective. But this was not a symbol of rural equality.
 - Individual ownership of assets and deep inequities based on caste and gender differences were present in villages. A group of powerful individuals dictated the affairs of the village and exploited the weaker sections. They also had the authority to deliver justice.
 - A cash nexus had already developed through trade between villages and towns. In the Mughal heartland (the central part of a country), revenue was assessed and collected in cash.
 - Artisans producing for the export market received their advances or wages in cash, as did producers of commercial products like cotton, silk or indigo.



► Women in Agrarian Society

- In many different societies, the production process often involves men and women performing certain specified roles. In the contexts that we are exploring, women and men had to work shoulder-to-shoulder in the fields.
- Men tilled and ploughed, while women sowed, weeded, threshed and winnowed the harvest.
- With the growth of nucleated villages and expansion in individual peasant farming, which characterised medieval Indian agriculture the basis of production was the labour and resources of the entire household.
- 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 (paan) were grown in Bengal.
- Artisanal tasks such as spinning yarn, sifting and kneading clay for pottery and embroidery were among the many aspects of production dependent on female labour.
- The more commercialised the product, the greater the demand of women's labour to produce it. In fact, peasant and artisan women worked not only in the fields, but even went to the houses of their employers or to the markets if necessary.
- Women were considered an important resource in agrarian society also because they were child bearers in a society dependent on labour.
- At the same time, high mortality rates among women – owing to malnutrition, frequent pregnancies, death during childbirth – often meant a shortage of wives.
- Marriages in many rural communities required the payment of bride-price rather than dowry to the bride's family. Remarriage was considered legitimate both among divorced and widowed women.
- According to established social norms, the household was headed by a male. Thus women were kept under strict control by the male members of the family and the community. They could inflict draconian punishments if they suspected infidelity on the part of women.
- Documents from Western India – Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra – record petitions sent by women to the village panchayat, seeking redress and justice. Wives protested against the infidelity of their husbands or the neglect of the wife and children by the male head of the household, the *grihasthi*.
- In most cases when women petitioned to the panchayat, their names were excluded from the record: the petitioner was referred to as the mother, sister or wife of the male head of the household.
- Amongst the landed gentry, women had the right to inherit property. Instances from the Punjab show that women, including widows, actively participated in the rural land market as sellers of property inherited by them.
- Hindu and Muslim women inherited zamindaris which they were free to sell or mortgage. Women zamindars were known in eighteenth-century Bengal.

- In fact, one of the biggest and most famous of the eighteenth-century zamindaris, that of Rajshahi, had a woman at the helm.

► Forests and Tribes

► Beyond Settled Villages

- There was more to rural India than sedentary agriculture. Apart from the intensively cultivated provinces in Northern and North-Western India, huge swathes of forests – dense forest (Jangal) or scrubland (kharbandl) – existed all over Eastern India, Central India, Northern India (including the Terai on the Indo-Nepal border), Jharkhand and in peninsular India down the Western Ghats and the Deccan plateau.
- Though it is nearly impossible to set an all-India average of the forest cover for this period, informed conjectures based on contemporary sources suggest an average of 40 per cent.
- Forest dwellers were termed *jangli* in contemporary texts. Being *jangli*, however, did not mean an absence of 'civilisation', as popular usage of the term today seems to connote.
- The term described those whose livelihood came from the gathering of forest produce, hunting and shifting agriculture. These activities were largely season specific.
- Among the Bhils, for example, spring was reserved for collecting forest produce, summer for fishing, the monsoon months for cultivation and autumn and winter for hunting. Such a sequence presumed and perpetuated mobility, which was a distinctive feature of tribes inhabiting these forests.
- For the state, the forest was a subversive place – a place of refuge (*mawas*) for troublemakers. Once again, we turn to Babur who says that jungles provided a good defence "behind which the people of the pargana become stubbornly rebellious and pay no taxes".

► In Roads Into Forests

- External forces entered the forest in different ways. **For example**, the state required elephants for the army. So the *peshkash* levied from forest people often included a supply of elephants.
- In the Mughal political ideology, the hunt symbolised the overwhelming concern of the state to relate to all its subjects, rich and poor. Regular hunting expeditions, enabled the emperor to travel across the territories of his empire and personally attend to the grievances of its inhabitants.
- The lives of people those who lived in forests was effected negatively by the external factors like the spread of commercial agriculture. Forest products like honey, beeswax and gum lac were in great demand.
- In the seventeenth century products like gum lac, became the important items of overseas export from India. Elephants were also captured and sold. The state required elephants for the army.



- ▶ Barter system was also used in trade by exchanging commodities. Some tribes like Lohanis in the Punjab were involved in overland trade, between India and Afghanistan. They also traded in the town-country trade in Punjab itself.
- ▶ The lives of forest people were also manipulated and changed by the social factors. Tribes had their chieftains just like the 'big men' of the village community.
- ▶ Many tribal chiefs had become zamindars and some even became kings. They had to build an army for this and thus they recruited people from their relatives or demanded that their brotherhood *i.e.*, people of their tribes provide military service.
- ▶ Tribes in the Sind region had armies which were comprised of 6000 cavalry and 7000 infantry. **Ahom kings in Assam** had *palks*, people who provide military service in exchange for land. The Ahom kings declared a royal monopoly (ownership) over the capture of wild elephants.
- ▶ In the sixteenth century, transition from a tribal to a **monarchical system** became fully developed though it had started earlier.
- ▶ This could be seen from the *Ain-i Akbari's* observations on the existence of tribal kingdoms in the North-East.
- ▶ War was a common occurrence, **for example**, the Koch kings fought and brought a number of neighbouring tribes under control, after a long series of wars through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- ▶ New cultural influences also began to penetrate into forested zones. Some historians have suggested that sufisaints (*pirs*) played a major role in the slow acceptance of Islam among agricultural communities emerging in newly colonised places.

▶ The Zamindars

- ▶ Zamindars were class of people in the countryside who lived on agriculture but did not participate directly in the processes of agricultural production.
- ▶ Zamindars were holders of property in the form of land and also enjoyed the social and economic privileges by quality of their superior status in rural society.
- ▶ The two main reasons for the elevated status of zamindars were caste and certain services (*khidmat*) that they provided for the state. The zamindars held large areas of personal lands known as ***milkhiyat***, (property).

Knowledge BOOSTER



During the Mughal Empire, Zamindar belonged to the nobility and formed the ruling class.

- ▶ *Milkhiyat* lands were cultivated for the private use of zamindars, often with the help of hired or slave labour. The zamindars could sell, leave or mortgage these lands at their will.
- ▶ Zamindars often collect revenue on behalf of the state and they also controlled military resources which were their sources of power.

- ▶ Abul Fazl's account indicates that an 'upper caste' Brahmana-Rajput combine had already established firm control over rural society. It reflected a fairly large representation from the so-called intermediate castes.
- ▶ Contemporary documents show that some people became zamindars by the means of military force. The action of depriving weaker people's land or property by a powerful military chieftain was quite often a way of expanding a zamindari. This kind of aggression from zamindar was possible only if he was authorised by an imperial order (*sanad*).
- ▶ The slow processes of zamindari unification also helped in birth of new zamindars. These involved colonisation of new lands, by transfer of rights, by order of the state and by purchase.
- ▶ Other factors also allowed the consolidation of clan or lineage based zamindaris. **For example**, the Rajputs and Jats adopted these strategies to centralise their control over large parts of territory in Northern India.
- ▶ Similarly, peasant-pastoralists like the Sadgops created powerful zamindaris in areas of central and South-Western Bengal.
- ▶ Zamindars led the process of colonisation of agricultural land and helped cultivators to settle down by providing them the means of cultivation, like cash loans. The buying and selling of zamindaris increased the process of monetisation in the village side.
- ▶ Zamindars also sold the produce from their milkhiyat lands. They often established markets (*haats*) to which peasants also came to sell their produce.
- ▶ Zamindar's relationship with the peasantry had an element of mutual benefit, authority and subordinate relation and patronage. This view can be supported by two aspects:

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| <p>(i) Bhakti saints who fearlessly condemned caste-based and other forms of oppression did not show the zamindars or moneylender as exploiters or oppressors of the peasantry. They criticised the revenue official of the state.</p> | <p>(ii) Zamindars were often supported by the peasantry in their struggle against the state in the large number of agrarian revolts that arose in North India.</p> |
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▶ Land Revenue System

- ▶ Revenue from the land was the economic mainstay of the Mughal Empire. It was therefore vital for the state to create an administrative apparatus to ensure control over agricultural production, and to fix and collect revenue from across the length and breadth of the rapidly expanding empire.
- ▶ This apparatus included the office (*daftar*) of the diwan who was responsible for supervising the fiscal system of the empire. Thus revenue officials and record keepers penetrated the agricultural domain and became a decisive agent in shaping agrarian relations.



- ▶ The land revenue arrangements consisted of two stages – first, assessment and then actual collection. The jama was the amount assessed, as opposed to hasil, the amount collected. In his list of duties of the amil-guzar or revenue collector, Akbar decreed that while he should strive to make cultivators pay in cash, the option of payment in kind was also to be kept open.
- ▶ While fixing revenue, the attempt of the state was to maximise its claims. The scope of actually realising these claims was, however, sometimes thwarted by local conditions.
- ▶ Both cultivated and cultivable lands were measured in each province. The *Ain* compiled the aggregates of such lands during Akbar's rule. Efforts to measure lands continued under subsequent emperors.
- ▶ In 1665, Aurangzeb expressly instructed his revenue officials to prepare annual records of the number of cultivators in each village. Yet not all areas were measured successfully. As we have seen, forests covered huge areas of the subcontinent and thus remained unmeasured.
 - **The Mansabdari System:** The Mughal administrative system had at its apex a military-cum- bureaucratic apparatus (mansabdari) which was responsible for looking after the civil and military affairs of the state. Some mansabdars were paid in cash (naqdi), while the majority of them were paid through assignments of revenue (jagirs) in different regions of the empire. They were transferred periodically.
- ▶ **The Flow of Silver**
 - ▶ The Mughal Empire was among the large territorial empires in Asia that had managed to consolidate power and resources during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
 - ▶ These empires were the Ming (China), Safavid (Iran) and Ottoman (Turkey). The political stability achieved by all these empires helped create vibrant networks of overland trade from China to the Mediterranean Sea.
 - ▶ Voyages of discovery and the opening up of the New World resulted in a massive expansion of Asia's (particularly India's) trade with Europe. This resulted in a greater geographical diversity of India's overseas trade as well as an expansion in the commodity composition of this trade.
 - ▶ An expanding trade brought in huge amounts of silver bullion into Asia to pay for goods procured from India, and a large part of that bullion gravitated towards 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 *rupya* in India. This facilitated an unprecedented expansion of 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.
- ▶ The testimony of an Italian traveller, Giovanni Careri, who passed through India c. 1690, provides a graphic account about the way silver travelled across the globe to reach India. It also gives us an idea of the phenomenal amounts of cash and commodity transactions in seventeenth-century India.
- ▶ **The Ain-i-Akbari of Abu'l Fazl Allahi**
 - ▶ The *Ain-i-Akbari* was the collection of a large historical, administrative project of classification. It was undertaken by Abu'l Fazl at the order of Emperor Akbar, which was completed in 1598.
 - ▶ The *Ain-i-Akbari* was part of a larger project of history writing commissioned by Akbar, which was known as the **Akbar Nama**. Akbar Nama is consisted of three books.
 - ▶ The first two provided a historical narrative and the *Ain-i-Akbari* and the third book was organised as a collection of imperial regulations and a gazetteer of the empire.
 - ▶ *The Ain-i-Akbari* gave detailed accounts of the organisation of the court, administration and army, the sources of revenue, the physical layout of the provinces of Akbar's empire and the literary, cultural and religious traditions of the people.
 - ▶ It also gave the description of the various departments of Akbar's government and detailed descriptions of the various provinces (*subas*) of the empire.
 - ▶ It informed the emperor about the different and diverse customs and practices that existed across his large empire in different regions.
 - ▶ The *Ain-i-Akbari* recorded information about the empire and the people of India, and thus introduced a standard of reference for studying India during the seventeenth century.
 - ▶ The *Ain-i-Akbari* was made up of five books (daftars), out of which the first three books describe the administration, which are given below:
 - **Manzil-abadi** was the first book which was concerned about the imperial household and its maintenance.
 - **Stpan-abadi** was the second book, which covers the military and civil administration and the establishment of servants. It also included notices and short biographical sketches of imperial officials (*mansabdars*), learned men, poets and artists.
 - **Mulk-abadi** was the third book which dealt with the fiscal side of the empire and provides rich quantitative information on revenue rates, followed by the 'Account of the Twelve Provinces'. This section has detailed statistical information, which includes the geographic, topographic and economic profile of all *subas* and their administrative and fiscal divisions (*sarkars*, *parganas* and *mahals*), total measured area and assessed revenue (*Jama*). The *mulk-abadi* gave a fascinating, detailed and highly complex view of agrarian society in Northern-India.

- ▶ The *Ain-i-Akbari* after setting out details at the *suba* level and gives a detailed picture of *sarkars*. This was in the form of tables, which had **eight columns** giving the following information:
 - *Parganat/mahal*
 - *Qila* (forts)
 - *Arazi* and *zamin-i paimuda* (measured area)
 - *Naqdi*, revenue assessed in cash
 - *Suyurghal*, grants of revenue in charity
 - Zamindars
 - Details of the castes of the zamindars
 - Details of the troops including horsemen (*sawar*), foot soldiers (*piyada*) and elephants (*fil*) of the zamindars.
- ▶ The manuscript of *Ain-i-Akbari* was revised five times by the author and this suggested that a high degree of action was taken by Abul' Fazl in search for authenticity.
- ▶ For example, oral testimonies were cross checked and verified before being incorporated as 'facts' in the chronicle. In the quantitative sections, all numeric data

were reproduced in words to minimise the chances of subsequent transcriptional errors.

- ▶ Historians who have carefully studied the *Ain* pointed. Many errors in totalling have been detected. These were due to simple mistakes in arithmetic or of transcription by Abu'l Fazl's assistants.
- ▶ Another limitation of the *Ain* was the biased nature of the quantitative data.
- ▶ Data were not collected uniformly from all provinces. For example, for many subas detailed information was compiled about the caste composition of the Zamindars, but such information was not available for Bengal and Orissa.
- ▶ The fiscal data from the subas was remarkable for its richness, but some equally important parameters such as prices and wages from these same areas were not documented.
- ▶ The detailed list of prices and wages provided by *Ain-i-Akbari* derived from data related to the areas in and around the imperial capital of Agra. Therefore, this data is limited relevance for the rest of the country.



Practice Exercise



Multiple Choice Questions

- Q 1.** The term used for village headman was?
- a. Kamil b. Muqaddam
c. Shahnahr d. Zamindars
- Q 2.** Where did Maize crop come from to the Indian Subcontinent in the 17th century?
- a. Australia b. Africa
c. Spain d. Both b. and c.
- Q 3.** Which of the following is correct answer? Select the answer using codes.
- (I) In 16th century, transition from a tribal to a monarchical system became partially developed.
(II) War was common during this phase.
(III) The Ahom kings declared a royal monopoly over the capture of wild elephants.
- Codes:**
- a. (I) and (II) b. (I) and (III)
c. (I), (II) and (III) d. (II) and (III)
- Q 4.** Which one of the following metallic coins was more prevalent during the Mughal Empire?
- (CBSE SQP 2022-23)
- a. Gold b. Copper c. Bronze d. Silver
- Q 5.** Which of these was a form of tribute collected by the Mughal State?
- a. Kharbandi b. Pargana c. Peshkash d. Mawas
- Q 6.** Choose the correct option given below:
- a. *Ain-i Akbari* was written by Abu'l Fazl.
b. *Ain-i Akbari* was the collection of large military project classification.
c. *Akbar Nama* was consisted of five books.
d. None of the above
- Q 7.** Abu'l Fazl was a court historian of which Mughal emperor?
- a. Humayun b. Aurangzeb
c. Akbar d. Jahangir
- Q 8.** Arrange the following in sequence:
- (I) Bahadur Shah (II) Nadir Shah
(III) Ahmad Shah Abdali (IV) Reign of Jahangir
- Codes:**
- a. (IV), (II), (III), (I) b. (III), (IV), (II), (I)
c. (I), (II), (III), (IV) d. (I), (III), (IV), (II)
- Q 9.** Arrange the following in sequence:
- (I) Reign of Shah Jahan
(II) Reign of Akbar
(III) Humayun's reign
(IV) Reign of Aurangzeb
- Codes:**
- a. (III), (IV), (II), (I) b. (III), (II), (I), (IV)
c. (IV), (II), (III), (I) d. (II), (III), (IV), (I)
- Q 10.** Which of the following lands is annually cultivated for each crop in succession?
- a. Banjar b. Parauti
c. Chachar d. Polaj
- Q 11.** Which of the following are incorrect statements? Select the answer using the codes:
- (I) The peasants were mostly involved in the agricultural production.
(II) *Khud-Kashta* were non-residents cultivator of the village.
(III) *Pahl-Kashta* were the residents of the village in which they held their lands.
- Codes:**
- a. (I) and (II) b. (II) and (III)
c. (I) and (III) d. (I), (II), (III)



- Q 12. Select the correct statements.
- (I) Men and women worked together in the fields.
 - (II) Agricultural production was based on the labour.
 - (III) The commercialised product decreased the demand of women's labour.
 - (IV) Women tilled and ploughed the fields.

Codes:

- a. (I) and (II)
- b. (II) and (III)
- c. (III) and (IV)
- d. (II) and (IV)

- Q 13. Select the correct statement about the *Ain-i Akbari*.
- (I) The first book is called Manzil-abadi.
 - (II) The second book is Mulk-abadi.
 - (III) The third book is Sipah-abadi.
 - (IV) The fourth book deal with the religious traditions of people of India.

Codes:

- a. (I) and (II)
- b. (II) and (III)
- c. (I) and (IV)
- d. (III) and (IV)



Assertion & Reason Type Questions

Directions (Q. Nos. 14-19): In the following questions given below, there are two statements marked as Assertion (A) and Reason (R). Read the statements and choose the correct option:

- a. Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) is the correct explanation of (A).
- b. Both (A) and (R) are true, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A)
- c. (A) is true, but (R) is false
- d. (A) is false, but (R) is true

- Q 14. Assertion (A): Maize was introduced into India via Africa and Spain.

Reason (R): Several new crops from different parts of the world reached the Indian sub-continent during the seventeenth century.

- Q 15. Assertion (A): One of the major sources for the agrarian history of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are chronicles and documents from the Mughal court.

Reason (R): Peasants did not write about themselves.

- Q 16. Assertion (A): The village panchayat was an assembly of elders.

Reason (R): Muqaddam or mandal headed the panchayat.

- Q 17. Assertion (A): The abundance of land, available labour and the mobility of peasants were three factors that accounted for the constant expansion of agriculture.

Reason (R): There were crops which required additional water.

- Q 18. Assertion (A): State dug new canals and also repaired old ones.

Reason (R): The state supported irrigation projects.

- Q 19. Assertion (A): The book 'Sipah Abadi' was the important book on the military and civil administration of the Mughals.

Reason (R): Book includes short biographical sketches of imperial official like Mansabdars, Poets etc. (CBSE 2023)



Fill in the Blanks Type Questions

- Q 20. The was the amount assessed and was the amount collected by the Mughal Kings as land revenue. (CBSE SQP 2023-24)

Choose the correct answer from the given options.

- a. Iqta and Jagir
- b. Jama and Hasil
- c. Naqdi and Iqta
- d. Zabti and Jama

- Q 21. Peasants belonging to Pahi-kashta category cultivated land on

- a. Agreement basis
- b. Contractual basis
- c. Both a. and b.
- d. Neither a. nor b.

- Q 22. *Ain-i-Akbari* was written by

- a. Abu'l Fazl
- b. Ibn Battuta
- c. Al-Biruni
- d. Abdur Razzaq

- Q 23. Along with the village panchayat, every village had its own

- a. caste panchayat
- b. jati panchayat
- c. kula panchayat
- d. family panchayat

- Q 24. French traveller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier pointed out that the villages had money changer called a

- a. Tax
- b. Rent
- c. Shroff
- d. None of these



Correct and Rewrite Type Questions

- Q 25. For the Bhil tribal group, spring was reserved for cultivation, monsoon months for collecting forest produce and autumn and winter for fishing.

- Q 26. The major source for the agrarian history of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are accounts left by peasants and the traders.

- Q 27. According to Historians, peasants played a great role in the slow acceptance of Islam by agricultural communities.

- Q 28. During the sixteenth century, areas which received 40 inches or more of rainfall a year were generally wheat producing zones, followed by millets and rice, corresponding to a descending scale of precipitation.

- Q 29. One important function of Mughal state was to ensure that caste boundaries among the various communities inhabiting the village were upheld.

- Q 30. The Mughal state favoured the cultivation of basic staples and discouraged the cultivation of cash crops.

 **Match the Following** Type Questions 

Q 31. Match the following:

Column I	Column II
A. Diwan	1. Imperial regulation in the province
B. Amin	2. Supervision of the fiscal system of the empire
C. Amil Gulzar	3. Village headmen
D. Muqaddam	4. Revenue collection

Codes:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| A B C D | A B C D |
| a. 1 3 2 4 | b. 2 4 3 1 |
| c. 3 4 1 2 | d. 4 1 2 3 |

Q 32. Match the following:

Column I	Column II
A. Pargana	1. Administrative subdivision
B. Peshkash	2. Money exchanger
C. Shroff	3. Tribute collected by the Mughal State.
D. Patwari	4. Maintenance of land records

Codes:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| A B C D | A B C D |
| a. 3 2 1 4 | b. 2 1 4 3 |
| c. 1 3 2 4 | d. 4 1 3 2 |

Q 33. Match the following:

Column I	Column II
A. The land is annually cultivated for each crop in succession.	1. Banjar
B. The land left out of cultivation for a time.	2. Polaj
C. The land is uncultivated for five years and more.	3. Parauti

Codes:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| A B C | A B C |
| a. 2 3 1 | b. 2 1 3 |
| c. 1 2 3 | d. 3 1 2 |

Answers

1. (b) 2. (d) 3. (d) 4. (d) 5. (c)
 6. (a) 7. (c) 8. (a) 9. (b) 10. (d)
 11. (b) 12. (a) 13. (c) 14. (a) 15. (a)
 16. (a) 17. (b) 18. (a) 19. (d) 20. (b)
 21. (b) 22. (a) 23. (b) 24. (c)
25. For the Bhil tribal group, spring was reserved for collecting forest produce, the monsoon months for cultivation and autumn and winter for hunting.
26. The major source for the agrarian history of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are chronicles and documents left by the Mughal Court.

27. According to Historians, Sufi Saints played a great role in the slow acceptance of Islam by agricultural communities.
28. During the sixteenth century, areas which received 40 inches or more of rainfall a year were generally rice producing zones, followed by wheat and millets corresponding to a descending scale of precipitation.
29. One important function of Panchayat was to ensure that caste boundaries among the various communities inhabiting the village were upheld.
30. The Mughal state favoured the cultivation of both basic staples and cash crops.
31. (c) 32. (c) 33. (a)

 **Picture Based** Type Questions 

Q 1. Study this painting of Abu'l Fazl presenting the manuscript of the completed Akbar Nama to his patron, carefully and answer any three of the following questions by choosing the correct options:



- (i) Name the patron of Abu'l Fazl.
- a. Humayun b. Akbar
 c. Jahangir d. Shah Jahan
- (ii) The Akbar Nama primarily deal with:
- a. historical narrative of the Mughal rule.
 b. the reign of Mughal Emperor, Akbar.
 c. Imperial regulation and gazette of the Empire.
 d. All of the above
- (iii) The gesture of the patron towards Abu'l Fazl suggests:
- a. his recognition of the efforts put forth by Abu'l Fazl for completion of the manuscript.
 b. his disinterest towards his pupil, Abu'l Fazl
 c. the depiction of images in the Islam is strictly forbidden.
 d. None of the above

(iv) Which of the following statement(s) is/are true regarding Abu'l Fazl?

- a. He was among the most favourite nobles of the Mughal Emperor Akbar.
- b. He was well versed in Arabic, Persian, Greek philosophy and sufiism.
- c. He supported the inclusion of paintings in the Mughal Chronicles and manuscripts.
- d. All of the above

Answers

1. (i) (b) Akbar
(ii) (c) imperial regulation and gazette of the Empire.
(iii) (a) his recognition of the efforts put forth by Abu'l Fazl for completion of the manuscript.
(iv) (d) All of the above

Q 2. Study the following picture of textile produced in India and answer any three of the following questions by choosing the correct options:



(i) The picture of couple represented in this textile suggest:

- a. awareness among Indian craftsmen about the preference of the European consumers
- b. popularity of Indian textile products in European market
- c. excellent skill and craftsmanship of Indian artisans
- d. All of the above

(ii) Which of the following factor(s) was/were responsible for increase in export of Indian products in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

- a. Political stability in the Indian subcontinent.
- b. Discovery of new trade route to the Europe.
- c. Both a. and b.
- d. Huge financial support provided to Indian craftsmen by the Mughal Rulers.

(iii) Which of the following designing pattern is used in the following textile product?

- a. Floral design
- b. Geometrical shapes
- c. Animal motifs
- d. All of these

(iv) The couple represented in these image has dressed in accordance with:

- a. European style
- b. Indian style
- c. Both a. and b.
- d. None of these

Answers

2. (i) (d) All of the above (ii) (c) Both a. and b.
(iii) (d) All of these (iv) (c) Both a. and b.



Source Based Type Questions

Source 1

Read the source given below and answer the questions that follow by choosing the most appropriate option:

The Emperor Akbar in his profound sagacity classified the lands and fixed a different revenue to be paid by each. Polaj is land which is annually cultivated for each crop in succession and is never allowed to lie fallow. Parauti is land left out of cultivation for a time that it may recover its strength. Chachar is land that has laid fallow for three or four years. Banjar is land uncultivated for five years and more. Of the first two kinds of land, there are three classes, good, middling, and bad. They add together the produce of each sort, and the third of this represents the medium produce, one-third part of which is exacted as the Royal dues.

Q 1. The Mughal classification of land under different categories was/were mainly based on:

- a. cultivation status and fertility
- b. crop productivity
- c. irrigation status
- d. ownership status

Q 2. Among the given classification of land which of them was/were further classified based on the productivity?

- a. Polaj
- b. Parauti
- c. Both a. and b.
- d. Chachar

Q 3. Choose the correct option:

Assertion (A): The *Ain-i-Akbari* is the most important literary source to conclude about the Mughal administration in India.

Reason (R): Authored by Abu'l Fazl, it gives an elaborate account of state of agriculture, land revenue, justice and geography during the reign of Akbar.

Codes:

- a. Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) is the correct explanation of (A).
- b. Both (A) and (R) are true, but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A).
- c. (A) is true, but (R) is false.
- d. (A) is false, but (R) is true.

Q 4. Consider the following statements:

I. The effective land revenue during the Mughal rule was $\frac{1}{3}$ of the agricultural produce.

II. Mughal rulers didn't pay any attention towards increasing the land under cultivation.

Choose the correct option:

- a. I and II
- b. Only I
- c. Only II
- d. None of these

Answers

1. (a) 2. (c) 3. (a) 4. (b)

Source 2

Read the following source carefully and answer the questions that follows:

Clearance of Forests for Agricultural Settlements

This is an excerpt from a sixteenth-century Bengali poem, Chandimangala, composed by Mukundaram Chakrabarti. The hero of the poem, Kalaketu, set up a kingdom by clearing forests.

Hearing the news, outsiders came from various lands. Kalaketu then bought and distributed among them Heavy knives, axes, battle-axes and pikes. From the North came the Das (people) One hundred of them advanced. They were struck with wonder on seeing Kalaketu who distributed betel-nut to each of them. From the South came the harvesters Five hundred of them under one organiser. From the West came Zafar Mian, together with twenty-two thousand men. Sulaimani beads in their hands. They chanted the names of their *pir* and *paighambar* (Prophet).

Having cleared the forest they established markets. Hundreds and hundreds of foreigners ate and entered the forest. Hearing the sound of the axe, Tigers became apprehensive and ran away, roaring.

Q 1. What is the source of this passage and name the author?

Ans. This passage is an excerpt from a sixteenth century Bengali poem, Chandimangala, composed by Mukundaram Chakrabarti.

Q 2. Who are the people identified as 'foreigners' from the perspective of the forest dwellers? What kind of tools did Kalaketu distributed to outsiders?

Ans. People from North, the Das, harvesters from South, from the West, Zafar Mian along with twenty two thousand men were all identified as foreigners from the perspective of the forest dwellers.

Heavy knives, axes, battle-axes and pikes were distributed by Kalaketu to the outsiders.

Q 3. Who is the hero of the poem? How did he set up his kingdom? Why did tigers run away?

Ans. The hero of the poem is Kalaketu. He set up a kingdom by clearing forests. After hearing the sound of the axe, tigers were frightened and ran away.



Very Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Mention any one factor that accounted for the constant expansion of agriculture during 16th and 17th centuries.

Ans. The mobility of peasants were the reason for constant expansion of agriculture during 16th and 17th centuries.

Q 2. What was the primary purpose of the agriculture?

Ans. The primary purpose of the agriculture was to feed people.

Q 3. Name any one source through which we can get a picture of rural society.

Ans. Revenue records from Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan was the source through which we can get a picture of rural society.

Q 4. What was Khud-Kashta?

Ans. Khud-Kashta were the residents of the village in which peasants held their lands.

Q 5. Mention the major crop of Western India during 17th century.

Ans. The major crops of Western India during 17th century were maize (makka), vegetables like tomatoes, potatoes, chillies and fruits like pineapple and papaya etc.

Q 6. What was the chief function of the headman of a panchayat?

Ans. The chief function of the headman was to supervise the preparation of village accounts, assisted by the accountant or patwari.

Q 7. What was the main source of fund for panchayat?

Ans. Contribution made by the individual to a common financial pool was the main source of fund for panchayat.

Q 8. Who was Giovanni Careri?

Ans. He was an Italian traveller who passed through India in 1690 CE.

Q 9. What was milkiyat?

Ans. It refers to extensive personal lands held by zamindars and was used for cultivation.

Q 10. Who was Amin?

Ans. Amin was an official responsible for ensuring that imperial regulations were carried out in the provinces.

Identify the Image Type Question ↘

Q 1. Identify the picture.



Ans. A silver rupya issued by Aurangzeb.

Short Answer Type Questions ↘

Q 1. What are the problems in using the *Ain* as a source for reconstructing agrarian history? How did historians deal with this situation?

Ans. The problems in using the *Ain-i-Akbari* as a source for reconstructing agrarian history are:

- (i) Numerous errors in totalling have been detected. These are however minor and do not detract from the overall quantitative accuracy of the manuals. Another problem is the skewed nature of the data. Data was not collected uniformly from all provinces for example Information regarding the caste composition of the zamindars is not available for Bengal and Orissa. (Odisha)
- (ii) The fiscal data collected from the various sources is very detailed yet important parameters like wages and prices have not been properly documented. The detailed list of prices and wages found in the *Ain* have been acquired from data pertaining to capital Agra and its surroundings. It is therefore of limited value for the rest of the country.

The historians deal with this situation by acquiring information from the detailed seventeenth-eighteenth centuries revenue records from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra and The East India Company's numerous records which also provide useful description of agrarian relations in Eastern-India.

Q 2. Describe the condition of an average peasant of North-India during 17th century.

Ans. The condition of an average peasant of North-India during the 17th century was as follows:

(i) **Possession** : The average peasant of North-India did not possess more than a pair of bullocks and two ploughs and most of them had even less.

(ii) **Affluent** : In Gujarat, peasants were considered affluent or rich, if they had about six acres of land.

(iii) **Upper Limit** : In Bengal, five acres was the upper limit of an average peasant farm and 10 acres of land would make one a rich asami.

(iv) **Principle** : Cultivation was based on the principle of individual ownership. Peasant lands were bought and sold in the same way as the lands of other property owners.

Q 3. How did state help peasants in irrigation sector? How did peasants help themselves by using different technologies?

Ans. The state help peasants in irrigation sector by supporting irrigation projects. Peasants help themselves by using different technologies are as follows:

- (i) In Northern India, state dug new canals (nahr, nala) and also repaired old one like the shahnahr in the Punjab during Shah Jahan's rule.
- (ii) Peasants help themselves by using technologies that often produced cattle energy. For example, using wooden plough, which was light and easily combined with an iron tip or iron blade.
- (iii) A drill, pulled by a pair of giant oxen, was used to plant seeds, but scattering the seeds by hand was the most used method. Hoeing and weeding were done together using a narrow iron blade with a small wooden handle.

Q 4. How were the subsistence and commercial production closely intertwined in an average peasant's holding during the Mughal period in 16th and 17th centuries? Explain.

Ans. The agriculture in medieval India was not only for subsistence. The term jins-i-Kamil or perfect crops was found in the sources. The subsistence and commercial production were intertwined in an average peasant's holding in the following ways:

- (i) The Mughal State encouraged peasants to produce commercial crops like cotton, and sugar for more revenue.
- (ii) Cotton was grown over a vast territory, spreading over central India and the Deccan plateau.
- (iii) Other cash crops included various sorts of oil seeds (mustard) and lentils.
- (iv) Many new crops from the different parts of the world reached India. These were maize, tomatoes, potatoes, etc. It clearly shows that subsistence and commercial production were closely intertwined.

Q 5. Describe three factors that accounted for the constant expansion of agriculture during 16th and 17th centuries.

Ans. Factors responsible for the expansion of agriculture were:

- (i) **The Abundance of Land:** The cultivating peasants (asamis) *le.* plough up the fields, marked the limit of each field for identification and demarcation with borders of earth, brick and thorn. There was abundance of land for agriculture.
- (ii) **Availability of Labour During Mughal Regime:** There was much labour available for the purpose of agriculture, mobility of peasants, which would help in continuous expansion of agricultural land as it increased cultivable land.
- (iii) **Artificial System of Irrigation:** Monsoons remained the backbone of Indian agriculture as they are even today. But there were crops which required additional water. Artificial system of irrigation had to be devised for this. Irrigation projects received state support as well.

Q 6. Discuss with examples, the significance of monetary transactions during the Mughal period under consideration.

Ans. The significance of monetary transactions during the Mughal period were as follows:

- (i) Cash connections had already developed through trade between villages and towns during the Mughal period. In the most important part of Mughal Empire revenue was evaluated and collected in cash.
- (ii) Artisans who produced for the export market such as weavers received their advances or wages in cash.
- (iii) The producers of commercial products like cotton, silk or indigo also got payments in cash.
- (iv) The seventeenth century French traveller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier pointed out that the villages had money changer called Shroff. They acted as bankers to make settlements of monetary transactions.

Q 7. Examine the evidence that suggests land revenue was important for the Mughal fiscal system.

(CBSE SQP 2023-24)

OR

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

Ans. Land revenue was important for the Mughal fiscal system are:

- (i) The Mughal economy or fiscal system was based on the revenue from the land. So it was very much important for Mughal state to create

an administrative machinery to have control over agricultural production and to fix and collect revenue from the large empire which was expanding rapidly.

- (ii) This administrative machinery included the office (daftar) of the diwan who was responsible for looking after budget system of the empire.
- (iii) Revenue official and record keepers entered the agricultural domain and became important people in shaping agrarian relations.
- (iv) Before fixing and collecting taxes from people, Mughal state first tried to gather specific information about the total area of the agricultural lands in the empire and what these lands produced.
- (v) The land revenue arrangements consisted of two stages - first was assessment and then actual collection. The jama was the amount assessed and hasil is the amount collected.
- (vi) Akbar in his order mentioned that the revenue can be paid by the cultivators to amil-gulzar or revenue in cash and also in kind. The main motto of the state while fixing revenue was to maximise its claims, but sometimes it was prevented because of local conditions.

Q 8. Describe the role played by women in agricultural production.

Ans. The role played by women in agricultural production are:

- (i) Women were an important resource. Women and men had to work shoulder-to-shoulder in fields. They worked not only in the house but also worked as labour in the fields. Men tilled and ploughed, while woman sowed, weeded, threshed and winnowed the harvest.
- (ii) Artisanal tasks such as spinning yarn sifting and kneading clay for pottery and embroidery made many aspects of production dependent on female labour. The more commercialised the product, the greater demand on women's labour to produce it.
- (iii) The women had the right to inherit property among the landed class of people. For example, in Punjab women including widows participated in the rural land markets as sellers of property inherited by them.

Q 9. To what extent is it possible to characterise agricultural production in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries as subsistence agriculture? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans. Due to following reasons it is possible to characterise agricultural production in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries as subsistence agriculture:

- (i) During Mughal rule, India was basically an agricultural country. In the Mughal state of India a different varieties of crops were produced. In Bengal two varieties of rices were produced. But the focus on the cultivation of basic crops does not mean that only subsistence agriculture existed in medieval India.
- (ii) The Mughal state encouraged peasants to cultivate varieties of crops which brought in revenue especially cotton and sugarcane.
- (iii) Cotton was grown over a large area of territory spread over central India and the Deccan plateau, whereas Bengal was famous for sugar.
- (iv) Cash crops also included various kinds of oil seeds like mustard and lentils.
- (v) This shows that peasants cultivated crops both for subsistence and commercial production.

Q 10. What were the major seasonal cycles in agriculture?

Ans. The major seasonal cycles in agriculture are:

- (i) The kharif (autumn) and the rabi (spring) were the two major seasonal cycles around which agriculture was organised in Mughal India. This means that most regions, other than areas that were the most arid or dry or harsh, produced a minimum of two crops a year.
- (ii) Some areas where there was good amount of rainfall or irrigation provided a continuous supply of water gave three crops.
- (iii) The Ain-I-Akbari pointed out that Mughal provinces of Agra produced 39 varieties of crops and Delhi produced 43 over the two seasons. Bengal produced 50 varieties of rice alone.

Q 11. Discuss about the spread of tobacco crop in the Northern India.

- Ans.**
- (i) Tobacco arrived first in the Deccan and it spread to Northern India in the early years of seventeenth century. The Ain-i-Akbari does not mention tobacco in the lists of crops in Northern India.
 - (ii) In 1604, Akbar and his noble came across tobacco for the first time.
 - (iii) Smoking tobacco in hookahs or chillums became a big fashion at that time. Jahangir was so concerned about its addiction that he banned it.
 - (iv) It was totally ineffective because by the end of the seventeenth century, tobacco had become a major article of consumption, cultivation and trade all over India.

Q 12. Discuss about the village and the peasants living in village.

Ans. Village and the Peasants Living in Village:

- (i) Village was the basic unit of agricultural society, where peasants lived and performed different kinds of tasks.

- (ii) Peasants were involved in tilling the soil sowing seeds, harvesting the crop when it was ripe. They also performed labour for the production of agro-based goods like sugar and oil.
- (iii) Rural India also had other kind of areas like large tracts of dry land or hilly regions which were not suitable for cultivation.
- (iv) Forest areas also made a very large proportion of territory. All these different kinds of topography are important while discussing about agrarian society.

Q 13. Explain the sources of revenue of village panchayats during the Mughal rule in India. (CBSE 2018)

Ans. The sources of revenue of village panchayats are:

- (i) The panchayat derived its funds from contributions made by individuals to a common financial pool.
- (ii) Panchayats also had the authority to levy fines.
- (iii) Agricultural Taxes.

Q 14. How did village panchayat use the funds available to it?

Ans. The funds were used in various ways:

- (i) The funds was used for the cost of entertaining revenue officials who used to visit the village from time-to-time.
- (ii) The funds was used to meet expenses for community welfare activities like flood or any other natural calamity.
- (iii) Often these funds were used for community works like construction of a bund or digging a canal which peasants were unable to afford on their own.

Q 15. Discuss briefly about Jajmani system.

Ans. Jajmani System

- (i) It was a system where artisans and individual peasant households entered into a mutually negotiated system of remuneration, most of the time goods for services.
- (ii) Eighteenth century records suggested that zamindars in Bengal payed blacksmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths for their work by paying them a small daily allowance and diet money.
- (iii) The term jajmani was not popular during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Q 16. State some features of Akbar Nama.

Ans. Features of Akbar Nama are:

- (i) **Composed By:** Akbar Nama composed by Abu'l Fazl was written to provide a detailed description of Akbar's reign.
- (ii) **Three Books:** It is divided into three books of which the first two are chronicles. The third one is the Ain-I-Akbari.

(iii) **Detailed Accounts:** It gives detailed accounts of the organisation of the court administration and army and also describe about the sources of revenue and the physical layout of the provinces of Akbar's empire.

Q 17. Discuss briefly about the five books of *Ain-i-Akbari*?

Ans. The *Ain-i-Akbari* is made up of five books (daftars). The first three books describe about the administration. These are:

(i) First Book	The first book is called <u>manzil-abadi</u> . It is concerned about the Imperial household and its maintenance.
(ii) Second Book	The second book, <u>sipah-abadi</u> , covered the military and civil administration and the establishment of servants.
(iii) Third Book	The third book, <u>muluk-abadi</u> , is the one which deals with the financial matters of the empire and provided rich quantitative information on revenue rates, followed by the 'Account of the Twelve Provinces'.
(iv) Fourth and Fifth Books	The <u>fourth and fifth books (daftars)</u> dealt with the religious, literary and cultural traditions of the people of India and also contained as collection of <u>Akbar's 'auspicious sayings'</u> .

Q 18. How land revenue was fixed?

Ans. It consisted of two stages:

- (i) **Jama:** Jama was the amount assessed.
- (ii) **Hasil:** Hasil was the amount collected.

Both cultivated and cultivable land measured in each province. Prepared annual record of the number of cultivators in each village.

Q 19. Describe the results of India's overseas trade under the Mughals.

Ans. The Mughal Empire was considered as one of the largest territorial empires in Asia which consolidated power and resources during the 16th and 17th centuries. India's overseas trade under the Mughals flourished due to the following reasons:

- (i) The Political Stability achieved by the Ming (China) empire, Safavid (Iran) empire and Ottoman (Turkey) empire helped to create vibrant network of overland trade from China to the Mediterranean Sea.

(ii) Voyages of discovery and the opening up of the New World resulted in a large expansion of Asia's, particularly India's trade with Europe. It led to a greater geographical diversity of India's overseas trade.

(iii) An expanding trade brought in huge amounts of silver bullion to India which was good for India as it did not have natural resources of silver.

Q 20 Explain the condition of zamindars in Mughal agrarian society. (CBSE SQP 2023-2024)

OR

Examine the position of zamindars in the Mughal Village Society. (CBSE 2023)

OR

Examine the role played by zamindars in Mughal India.

Ans. Zamindars: Zamindars were class of people in the countryside that lived on agriculture but did not participate directly in the processes of agricultural production.

Zamindars were holders of property in the form of land and also enjoyed the social and economic privileges by quality of their superior status in rural society.

The role played by Zamindars were as follows:

- (i) The Zamindars held large areas of personal lands known as Milkiyat, meaning property. Milkiyat lands were cultivated for the private use of zamindars, often with the help of hired or slave labour. The zamindars could sell, leave or mortgage these lands at their will.
- (ii) They performed certain services to the state.
- (iii) Caste was one factor that elevated their status.
- (iv) Most of the zamindars had fortresses.
- (v) They had small military contingents.
- (vi) They belonged to Brahmana-Rajput, Intermediate castes, and Muslims as well.
- (vii) Zamindars spearheaded the colonisation of agricultural lands.
- (viii) Zamindars also acted as money lenders to the poor peasants.
- (ix) Zamindars often received support from the peasants in their struggle against the state.
- (x) The zamindars are seen as paternal figures and patrons.
- (xi) The Bhakti saints do not see them as exploiters of peasants.

Q 21. To what extent do you think caste was a factor influencing social and economic relations in agrarian society?

Ans. Caste was a factor influencing social and economic relations in agrarian society in the following ways:

- (i) Cultivators were divided on the basis of their caste and other caste-like distinctions or caste based distinctions. Thus, among the peasants were many who worked as agricultural labourers or worked as manacles. They were not allowed to live in villages and assigned to do menial tasks and lacked resources. Thus, they are poverty stricken.
- (ii) In Muslims Communities, menials like the halalkhoran (scavengers) were made to stay outside the boundaries of the village. Similarly, the mallahzadas meaning sons of boatmen in Bihar were compared to slaves.
- (iii) In the Seventeenth century Marwar Rajputs are described as peasants and equated with jats. They were given an inferior status in the caste hierarchy.
- (iv) Castes like Ahirs, Gujjars and Malis reached and elevated status in the Eastern regions.
- (v) The pastoral and fishing castes like the Sadgops and Kalvartas acquired the status of peasants.

Q 22. How were the lives of forest dwellers transformed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?

OR

Describe the life led by the forest dwellers during the Mughal Era in 16th-17th centuries.

Ans. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the North, North-Western, North-Eastern and central parts of India were heavily forested. Forest dwellers were people who resided in these deep forests. They lived by hunting animals and gathering fruits and other forest products.

Although the forest dwellers were termed jungli in many texts, it does not mean the absence of civilisation among them. The term describes people who earned their livelihood by gathering forest products and by hunting animals. Their lives were transformed during the 16th and 17th centuries in the following ways:

- (i) The lives of people who lived in forests was effected negatively by the external factors like the spread of commercial agriculture. Forest products like honey, beeswax and gum lac were in great demand. In the seventeenth century, products like gum lac, became the important items of overseas export from India.
- (ii) Elephants were also captured and sold. Barter system was also used in trade by exchanging commodities. Some tribes like Lohanis in the Punjab were involved in overland trade, between India and Afghanistan. They also traded in the town-country trade in the Punjab itself.
- (iii) Many tribal chiefs had become zamindars and some even became kings. They had to build an army for this and thus they recruited people from their relatives or demanded that their brotherhood i.e. people of their tribes provide military service.

- (iv) Tribes in the Sindh region had armies comprised of 6000 cavalry and 7000 infantry. Ahom kings, in Assam had their paiks, people who were morally bound to render military service in exchange for land. The Ahom kings declared a royal monopoly over the capture of wild elephants.
- (v) The penetration of Sufi Saints and their teachings also impacted the lives of forest dwellers in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Q 23. Examine the ways in which Panchayats and village headmen regulated Mughal rural society.

(CBSE 2022)

OR

Examine the role of Village Panchayats in the Mughal rural society.

(CBSE 2023)

OR

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

OR

“The village Panchayat during the Mughal period regulated rural society.” Explain the statement.

(CBSE 2016)

OR

Assess the role played by Panchayats in the villages during Mughal period.

(CBSE 2016)

OR

Describe the role of village Panchayats and headmen during the Mughal period in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

(CBSE 2015)

Ans. The village Panchayat regulated the rural society in the Mughal period in the following ways:

- (i) The village Panchayat was an assembly of elders and important people of the villages. They had hereditary landed properties, the Panchayat represented various castes and communities in the village but it was dominated by the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas.
- (ii) The Panchayat was headed by a headman known as Muqaddam Mandal.
- (iii) The chief function of the headman was to supervise the preparation of village accounts, assisted by the accountant or Patwari.
- (iv) The Panchayat ensured that caste boundaries among the various communities of the village were upheld to prevent any offence against their caste. In Eastern-India, all marriages were held in the presence of the Mandal.
- (v) The Panchayat got its funds from the contributions made by the individuals to a common financial pool. These funds were used to pay for the costs of entertaining revenue officials who visited the village from time-to-time. These funds were also used for construction of a bund or digging a canal which peasants usually could not afford to do on their own.
- (vi) Panchayats also had the authority to impose fines.

- (vii) It could give severe punishment like expulsion from the community. Thus, forcing a person to leave the village and losing his right to practise his profession.
- (viii) For petitioners, village Panchayat was a court of appeal which could ensure that the state carried out its moral duties and guaranteed justice.



Long Answer Type Questions ↘

Q 1. Discuss in detail about the village artisans in India during Mughal period. Discuss about the Jajmani system related to village artisans.

Ans. Village Artisans:

- (i) Marathi documents and village surveys made in the early years of British rule pointed out the existence of huge numbers of village artisans, sometimes as high as 25 per cent of the total households in the villages.
- (ii) Sometimes the difference between artisans and peasants in village society was not fixed because many groups performed the tasks of both. Cultivators and their families would also participate in craft production like dyeing, textile printing, baking and firing of pottery, making and repairing agricultural implements.
- (iii) Cultivators engaged in artisanal production when there is a gap in between agricultural activities, like the period between sowing and weeding or between weeding and harvesting.
- (iv) Village artisans like potters, blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, even goldsmiths provided specialised services and in return they were paid by villagers using different means.
- (v) The most common way of paying them was by giving them a share of the harvest, or an allotment of land, perhaps cultivable wastes, which was most likely decided by the panchayat. In Maharashtra, such lands became the artisans' miras or watan i.e., their hereditary holding.

Relationship between Villages Artisans and Jajmani System:

- (i) There was a different kind of system where artisans and individual peasant households entered into a mutually agreed system of remuneration, most of the time it was goods for services. This system was called jajmani system.
- (ii) Eighteenth century records suggested that zamindars in Bengal payed blacksmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths for their work by paying them a small daily allowance and diet money.
- (iii) The term jajmani was not popular during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It indicated the complicated ways in which exchange networks worked at the micro-level of the village.

Q 2 Analyse the importance and limitations of Ain-i-Akbari as a source of Akbar's reign?

(CBSE SQP 2022-23)

OR

In spite of the limitations, the Ain-i-Akbari remains an extraordinary document of its time. Explain the statement.

(CBSE 2016)

Ans. The *Ain-i-Akbari* was the collection of a large historical, administrative project of classification undertaken by Abu'l Fazl at the order of emperor Akbar. It was completed in 1598, the forty second ruling year of the emperor, after going through five revisions. The *Ain-i-Akbari* was part of a larger project of history writing commissioned by Akbar, which was known as the Akbar Nama. The *Ain-i-Akbari* is made up of five books.

Its limitations are:

- (i) The first three books describe about the administration.
- (ii) The fourth and fifth books dealt with the religious, literary and cultural traditions of people of India and also contained a collection of Akbar's auspicious sayings.
- (iii) Though there are many problems in the *Ain-i-Akbari* but it remains an extraordinary document of its times.

Its importance are as follows:

- (i) It provided the interesting views into the structure and organisation of the Mughal Empire and gave us quantitative information about its products and people.
- (ii) It provided information about the important political events like wars, conquests, political machinery and dynastic disturbances.
- (iii) By the information it contains on people, their professions and trades and on the imperial establishment and the persons of the high ranks of the empire, it is possible for the historians to reconstruct the social fabric of India at that time.

Q 3. "There was more to rural India than the sedentary agriculture." Explain the statement in the context of Mughal period.

(CBSE 2016)

Ans. Different aspects of rural Mughal India both Sedentary and subsistence with more emphasis on 'jangli'.

- (i) Forest dwellers were called jangli.
- (ii) Their livelihood come from the gathering of forest produce, hunting and shifting agriculture.
- (iii) Being jangli, did not mean an absence of 'civilisation'.
- (iv) The livelihood practices of the forest dwellers were season specific.
- (v) The Bhils collected forest produce in spring, fishing in summer, the monsoon months were for cultivation and autumn and winter were for hunting.

- (vi) Abu'l Fazl describes the trade of the hill tribes with traders and villagers of Awadh (Uttar Pradesh).
- (vii) They exchanged the forest produce for items like, white and coloured cloth, salt, ornaments, glass, and earthen ware.
- (viii) They sold bees wax, honey, gum, lac etc. This resulted in continuous mobility.

Q 4. Describe Bernier's views on the land ownership of Mughals. (CBSE 2019)

Ans. The Bernier's views on the land ownership of Mughals are:

- (i) Bernier's book, 'Travels in the Mughal Empire' has detailed observations, critical insights and reflection of Mughal period.
- (ii) He compared Mughal India with contemporary Europe and stressed on the superiority of the Europe. He strongly believed that it is good to have private property for both the state and its people.
- (iii) In the Mughal period, the emperor owned all the land and distributed it among his nobles. This method had disastrous consequences for the economy and society.
- (iv) Bernier said that in crown ownership of land, landholders could not pass on their land to their children. It discouraged them to invest in the sustenance and expansion of production.
- (v) The absence of private property in land prevented the emergence of the class of landlords who focused on improving their lands as in Western Europe.
- (vi) This system led to the uniform destruction of agriculture excessive oppression of the peasantry and continuous decline in the living standards of all sections of society, except the ruling aristocracy.

Q 5. Explain how the chronicle *Ain-i-Akbari* is the major source to understand agrarian agriculture of 16th and 17th centuries. Also, explain the method of irrigation and technology used during that period.

(CBSE 2019)

Ans. The Chronicle *Ain-i-Akbari*:

- (i) *Ain-i-Akbari* is a mine of information regarding agricultural aspects of Mughal rule. It recorded meticulously the arrangements made by the state to develop agriculture.
- (ii) It explains the ways to collect land revenue and

records the arrangements made by the state to ensure cultivation.

- (iii) The aim of *Ain* was to present a vision of Akbar's empire where social harmony prevailed. It gives the arrangements made by the state to regulate the relation between the landowners and the state.
- (iv) Any revolt against the Mughal State was predestined to fail. It gives a view of the peasants from the top.
- (v) The account of *Ain* can be supplemented by details of revenue records from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan etc.

Irrigation and Technology:

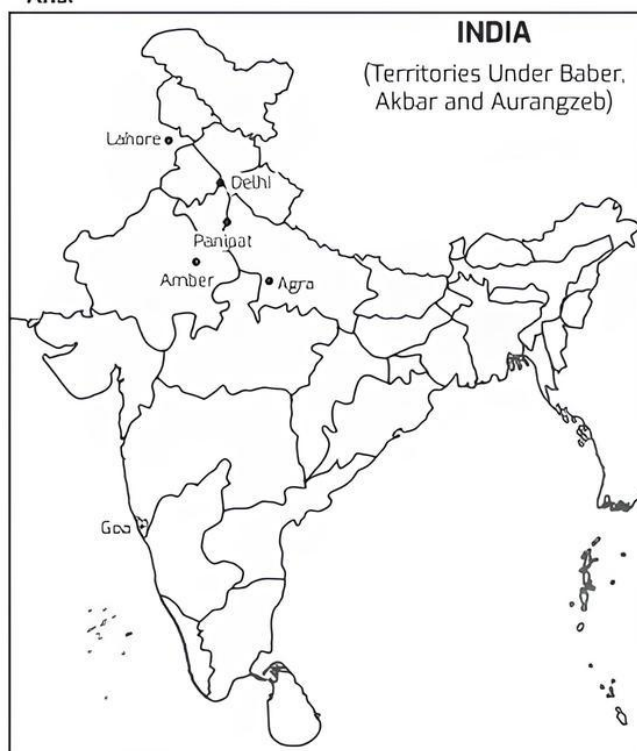
- (i) Artificial system of irrigation was devised.
- (ii) Canal irrigation was developed along with Persian wheels.
- (iii) Wooden plough with iron tip was used to till the land.



Map Based Question ↘

Q 1. On the given political map of India, locate and label the territories under Babar, Akbar and Aurangzeb (Delhi, Agra, Panipat, Amber, Ajmer, Lahore, Goa).

Ans.





Chapter Test

Multiple Choice Questions

- Q 1. coins were prevalent during the Mughal Empire.
- a. Gold b. Copper
c. Tin d. Silver
- Q 2. During the Mughal Empire, what was Jins-i-kamil?
- a. Half Crop b. Perfect Crop
c. Rabi Crop d. Kharif Crop

Fill in the Blank Type Question

- Q 3. The was the amount assessed and was the amount collected by the Mughal Kings as land revenue.
- Choose the correct answer from the given options.
- a. Iqta and Jagir b. Jama and Hasil
c. Naqdi and Iqta d. Zabti and Jama

Match the Following Type Question

Q 4. Match the following:

Column I	Column II
A. To estimate or appraisal of grain.	1. Lang batai
B. The grain is divided by agreement in the presence of the parties.	2. Khet batai
C. The fields are divided after they are sown.	3. Bhaoli
D. The crops are arranged in heaps and divided.	4. Kankut

Codes:

- A B C D A B C D
- a. 1 2 3 4 b. 4 3 2 1
- c. 4 3 1 2 d. 2 1 4 3

Assertion and Reason Type Question

Q 5. In the question given below, there are two statements marked as Assertion (A) and Reason (R). Read the statements and choose the correct option:

Assertion (A): State dug new canals and also repaired old ones.

Reason (R): The state supported irrigation projects.

- a. Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) is the correct explanation of (A).
- b. Both (A) and (R) are true but (R) is not the correct explanation of (A).
- c. (A) is true but R is false.
- d. (A) is false but (R) is true.

Correct and Rewrite Type Question

Q 6. Aurangzeb was the last Mughal ruler and he was exiled to Africa.

Source Based Question

Q 7. Read the following source carefully and answer the questions that follows:

The Ain-i-Akbari on Land Revenue Collection

Let him (the amil-guzar) not make it a practice of taking only in cash but also in kind. The latter is effected in several ways.

First, kankut, in the hindi language kan signifies grain, and kut, estimates ... If any doubts arise, the crops should be cut and estimated in three lots, the good, the middling, and the inferior, and the hesitation should be removed. Often, too, the land taken by appraisalment, gives a sufficiently accurate return. Secondly, batai, also called bhaoli, the crops are reaped and stacked and divided by agreement in the presence of the parties. But in this case several intelligent inspectors are required; otherwise, the evil-minded and false are given to deception. Thirdly, khet-batai, when they divide the fields after they are sown. Fourthly, lang batai, after cutting the grain, they form it in heaps and divide it among themselves, and each takes his share home and turns it to profit.

- (i) Explain the kankut system of land revenue.
- (ii) How was the land revenue assessed in the case of batai or bhaoli?
- (iii) Do you think that the land revenue system of the Mughals was flexible?

Very Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 8. What peshkash was expected from the forest people?
- Q 9. What was Pargana?

Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 10. Explain the authorities and functions of Jati Panchayat.
- Q 11. Describe the life of forest dwellers in the Mughal Era.

Long Answer Type Question

- Q 12. Examine the role of panchayat as the main constituent of the Mughal Village Community.