

**CBSE Class 09 Social Science**  
**NCERT Solutions**  
**Chapter 4 History**  
**Forest Society and Colonialism**

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**Question 1.** Discuss how the changes in forest management in the colonial period affected the following groups of people:

(i).Shifting cultivators

**Answer :** (i) Shifting cultivators practise slash and burn agriculture. In this practise, parts of the forest are cut and burnt in rotation. European foresters regarded this practice as harmful for the forests. They felt that such land could not be used for growing trees for railway timber and was dangerous while being burnt as it could start a forest fire. This type of cultivation also made difficult for the government to calculate taxes. Thus, Colonial government banned shifting cultivation. As a result, many communities were forcibly displaced from their homes in the forests. Some had to change occupations, while some resisted through large and small rebellions.

(ii).Nomadic and pastoralist communities

**Answer :** (ii) The reservation of forest areas by the British Government also sealed the fate of many nomadic and pastoral communities like the Korava, Karacha and Yerukula of the Madras Presidency lost their means of livelihood. Earlier these people and their cattle depended totally on the forest from which they were deprived because of the new forest management. Some of these communities began to be called 'criminal tribes' and were forced to work in factories, mines, and plantations under government supervision. Thus, these people were forced to operate within new systems and reorganize their lives. They were forced to steal wood. If they were caught, they were at the mercy of the forest guards and they would have to offer bribes to the guards.

Many pastoralist and nomadic communities like the Korava, Karacha of the Madras Presidency lost their livelihoods.

They were also recruited to work in plantations. Their wages were low and conditions of work very bad.

(iii).Firms trading in timber/forest produce

**Answer :** By the early nineteenth century, oak forests in England were disappearing. This created a problem of timber supply for the Royal Navy.

By the 1820s, search parties were sent to explore the forest resources in India. Trees were felled on a massive scale and large quantities of timber were being exported from India. The colonial government took over the forests and gave vast areas to European planters at cheap rates.

The British Government gave many large European trading firms the sole right to trade in the forest products of particular areas.

The government gave contracts to contractors who cut trees indiscriminately and made huge profits.

(iv).Plantation owners

**Answer :** Large areas of natural forests were also cleared to make way for tea, coffee and rubber plantations to meet Europe's growing need for these commodities.

The colonial government took over the forests, and gave vast areas to European planters at cheap rates. These areas were enclosed and cleared of forests and planted with tea or coffee. Communities like Santhals from Assam, and Oraons from Jharkhand and Gonds from Chhattisgarh were recruited to work on tea plantations. Their wages were low and conditions of work very bad.

The plantation owners, under the protection and rights given by the British Government, made huge profits.

(v).Kings/British officials engaged in shikar

**Answer :** In India, Shikar or hunting of tigers and other animals had been part of the culture of the court and nobility for centuries.

Under colonial rule the scale of hunting increased to such an extent that various species became almost extinct.

The British saw large animals as signs of a wild, primitive and savage society. They believed that by killing dangerous animals the British would civilize India.

The British gave rewards for the killing of tigers, wolves and large animals on the grounds that they posed a threat cultivators.

The Maharaja of Sarguja alone shot-1157 tigers and leopards upto 1957. A British Administrator George Yule 400 tigers.

Over 80000 tigers, 150000 leopards and 200000 wolves were killed for reward between 1875 and 1925.

Initially certain areas of the forests were reserved for hunting.

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**Question 2.** What are the similarities between colonial management of the forests in Bastar and in Java?

**Answer :** The similarities between colonial management of the forests in Bastar and Java were :

- Forest laws were enacted in Java and Bastar.
  - These laws restricted villagers' access to forests.
  - Timber could be cut from only specified forests and under close supervision.
  - Villagers were punished for entering forests and collecting forest products without permit.
  - Permits were issued to the villagers for entry into forests and collection of forest products.
  - Both had a forest service.
  - Both followed a system of forestry which was known as scientific forestry.
  - In both places Forest Acts meant severe hardship for villagers. Their everyday practices — cutting wood for their houses, grazing their cattle, collecting fruits and roots, hunting and fishing became illegal.
  - Constables and forest guards began to harass people.
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**Question 3.** Between 1880 and 1920, forest cover in the Indian subcontinent declined by 9.7million hectares, from 108.6 million hectares to 98.9 million hectares. Discuss the role of the following factors in this decline:

(i).Railways

**Answer :** (i)Railways played a vital role in the decline of the forest cover in India.For laying railway tracks forestland had to be cleared.Apart from clearing area for tracks, railway locomotives required timber for fuel and sleepers. For all these needs forests had to be cut down. The British government gave contracts to individuals to supply the required quantity of timber. These individuals cut down trees indiscriminately. The spread of railways from

the 1850's created a new demand. Railways were essential for colonial trade and for the movement of imperial troops. To run locomotives. Wood was needed as fuel and to lay railway lines sleepers were essential to hold the tracks together. Each mile of railway track required between 1760 and 2000 sleepers. From the 1860's the railway network expanded rapidly. As the length of the railway tracks expanded a very large number of trees were felled. As early as the 1850s, in the Madras Presidency alone 35000 trees were cut annually for sleepers. Forests around the railway tracks started disappearing very fast.

(ii).Shipbuilding

**Answer :** ii) By the end of 19th century, oak forests in England had almost disappeared. This created a shortage of timber for the Royal Navy. If the imperial power was to be protected and maintained, the building of ships was the first priority. So, search parties were sent to explore the forest resources of India. A large number of sleepers began to be exported to England annually. This further led to the indiscriminate cutting of trees year after year which caused deforestation on a massive scale.

(iii).Agricultural expansion

**Answer:** (iii) As population increased, the demand for food went up. Peasants extended the boundaries of cultivation by clearing forests. This gave them more land available for cultivation. In addition, there was great demand for cash crops such as tea, cotton, jute, sugar, etc., which were needed to feed the industries of England.

In the early 19th century, the colonial state thought that the forests were unproductive. They were considered to be wilderness that had to be brought under cultivation so, that the land could yield agricultural products and revenue, and enhance the income of the state. So between 1880 and 1920, cultivated area rose by 6.7 million hectares by clearing the forests. The demand for commercial crops like jute, sugar, wheat, cotton and raw material for industries increased. Therefore the British encouraged expansion of cultivation by clearing forests, Leading to decline in forest cover.

(iv).Commercial farming

**Answer :** (iv) The British directly encouraged the production of commercial crops like jute, sugar, wheat and cotton. The demand for these crops increased in the 19th century in Europe, where food grains were needed to feed the growing urban population and raw

materials were required for industrial production. In commercial farming, natural forests which had lots of different types of trees were cut down, In their place one type of trees was planted in straight rows, This is called a plantation, To promote plantation farming or commercial farming, different varieties of trees were cut down leading to loss of many species and loss of forest cover when the trees were cut for commercial use. Hence, large tracts of forest land were cleared to make land available for commercial farming.

(v). Tea/Coffee plantations

**Answer :** (v) The colonial state thought that forest land was unproductive. It did not yield agricultural produce nor revenue. Large areas of natural forests were hence cleared to make way for tea, coffee and rubber plantations to meet Europe's growing need for these commodities. The colonial government took over the forests and gave vast areas to European planters at cheap rates. The areas were enclosed and cleared of forests and planted with tea or coffee. Large areas of natural forests were also cleared to make way for tea, coffee and rubber plantations to meet Europe's growing need for these commodities, The colonial government took over the forests and gave vast areas to European planters at cheap rates, These areas were enclosed and cleared of forests and planted with tea or coffee. Plantations were large in area leading to loss of large forest areas.

(vi). Adivasis and other peasant users

**Answer :** (vi) The Adivasis and other peasant users, gather forest products and graze their cattle. Their livelihood mainly came from forest produce. This does not destroy the forests except sometimes in shifting agriculture. In fact, now the new trends that promote forest conservation tend to involve local villagers in conservation and preservation. The adivasis and other peasant communities regard the forests as their own and even engage watchmen to keep a vigil over their forests. Only one-sixth of India's landmass was under cultivation in the 1600s. Now, more than half the landmass is under cultivation as the population has increased rapidly. As the demand for food went up, peasants extended the boundaries of cultivation, clearing forests and cultivating new land. The Adivasis were hired by the forest department, during the colonial period to cut trees, and make sleepers for the railways. But the Adivasis were not allowed to cut trees to build their own houses. es in India also,

In shifting cultivation, parts of the forest area are cut and burnt in rotation. Seeds were sown in the ashes after the first monsoon rains and the crop was harvested by October-November. When fertility decreased, the process was repeated at another location. This led to a large loss of forests.

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**Question 4.** Why are forests affected by wars?

**Answer :** Forests are affected by wars because forest products are used for fulfilling various needs and requirements during war. In the case of India, during the First World War and the Second World War the forest department cut trees freely to meet British war needs.

During the Second World War in Java just before the Japanese occupied the region, the Dutch followed 'a scorched Earth policy', destroying sawmills and burning huge piles of giant teak logs so that they did not fall into Japanese hands.

The Japanese exploited the forests recklessly for their war industries forcing villagers to cut down forests. Many villagers took this opportunity to expand cultivation in the forests. Thus, wars also led to destruction of forests.