

Peasants and Farmers Date: / /⇒ The coming of Modern Agriculture in England

- Before sixteenth century, in large parts of England, the countryside was open.
- The common land was there which is accessible to all villagers where they can graze their animals, catch fish, collect forest product, and hunt animals.
- With the rise in population, the demand for food grains also increased.
→ Rich Farmers began dividing and enclosing common land.
- After the mid-eighteenth century, this enclosure process expanded through the countryside.
- British parliament passed 4000 Acts legalising these activities.

⇒ New Demands for Grain:

- After mid-eighteenth century, the demand of food grain increased in England because:
 - War between England and France
 - Rise in population.
 - People began to work and leave in urban areas.

⇒ The age of Enclosures ÷

- In the nineteenth century, grain production in England grew as quickly as population by:
 - (i) Bringing new land under cultivation.
 - (ii) Growing Turnip and clover, these crops improved the soil made it more fertile.

⇒ What happened to the poor?

- Enclosures found their customary rights gradually disappearing.
→ Now everything was available on payment basis only.
- By 1800, labourers were being paid wages and employed only during harvest time.

⇒ The Introduction of Threshing Machines ÷

- During the Napoleonic Wars, farmers began buying the new threshing machines that had come into the market, fearing a shortage of labour.
- After the war, soldiers returned to the villages and needed alternative jobs to survive.

- As their jobs were taken over by the machines, people were not able to find jobs.
- Thus, they started threatening farmers through letters urging them to stop using machines that deprived workman of their livelihood.
→ Most of these letters were signed in the name of captain Swing.

⇒ Bread Basket and Dust Bowl - case study of US :

- Till the 1780s, white American settlements were confined to a small narrow strip of coastal land in the east.
- Native American group survived by hunting, gathering, fishing or by doing & shifting cultivation.

The westward move and wheat cultivation.

- After the formation of USA, white settlers started moving toward west, America seemed to be a land of promise.
- White settlers drove American Indians westwards and settled in the Appalachian, than in Mississippi valley, cleared land and sowed corn and wheat.

⇒ The Wheat Farmers:

- Rise in the urban population increased the demand for wheat and encouraged farmers to produce wheat.
- Spread of Railways and First World War created more demand.

⇒ The coming of New Technology:

- Through the nineteenth century, the Farmers entered the mid-western prairies and they needed new types of implements to break the soil and the soil.
- Before the 1830s, to harvest crop they initially used cradle or sickle.
→ In 1831 Cyrus McCormick invented the first Mechanical Reaper.
- By early twentieth century most Farmers were using combined harvesters to cut grain.

⇒ What happened to the Poor?

- Many of them bought these machines on loans, however many were not able to pay back their debts, deserted their farms and looked for jobs elsewhere.

- Unsold Foodgrains stock piled up.
→ wheat prices fell and export markets collapsed.
→ This created the ground for the Great Agrarian Depression of the 1930s.

⇒ Dust Bowl :

- In the 1930s terrifying duststorms rolled in.
- People were blinded and choked, cattle were suffocated to death.
- Sand buried fences, covered fields and coated the surfaces of rivers till the fish died
→ Machines were clogged with dust, damaged beyond repair.
- The entire landscape was ploughed, stripped of all grass, tractors had turned the soil over and broken the sod into dust.
- They came because the early 1930s were years of persistent drought.

⇒ The Indian Farmer and opium production :

- The British imposed a regular system of land revenue, increase revenue rates, and expand the area under cultivation.

- By the end of the nineteenth century, India became a major centre for production of sugarcane, cotton, jute, wheat and several other crops for export.

⇒ A Taste for Tea: The Trade with China:

- The English East India company was buying tea and silk from China.
- The Confucian rulers of China, the Manchus were not willing to allow the entry of foreign goods.
 - English could buy tea only by paying in silver coin or bullion which meant an outflow of treasure from England.
- The English traders wanted a commodity which could be easily sold in China so that the import of tea could be financed in a profitable way.
- Western merchants began an illegal trade in opium in the mid-eighteenth century.

⇒ Where did opium come from?

- When the British conquered Bengal, they made it possible to produce opium in the lands under their control.

- With the growth of market for opium in china export from Bengal ports increased.
- The Indian Farmers were not willing to produce opium because:
 - They were not willing to divert their best fields for opium cultivation because it would have resulted in poor production cereals and pulses.
 - Many cultivators did not own land. For opium cultivation, they had to lease land from landlord and pay rent.
 - The cultivation of opium was a difficult process and time consuming.
 - The Government paid very low price for the opium which made it an unprofitable proposition.

⇒ How were unwilling cultivators made to produce opium?

- By giving advance loan, the cultivator was forced to grow opium on a specified area of land and hand over the produce to the agents once the crop had been harvested.
- The cultivator also had to accept the low price offered for the produce
- British wanted to buy very cheap and sell at high premium to the opium agents in

calcutta. Thus the British wanted to earn huge profit in opium trade.

- By the early eighteenth century, the cultivators began to refuse the advances.
→ Many cultivators sold their crop to travelling traders who offered higher price.
- By 1773, the British government in Bengal had established a monopoly to trade in opium.
- By the 1820s, the British found that there was a ~~dec~~ drastic fall in opium production in their territories.
- The production of opium was increasing outside the British territories.
→ It was produced in central India and Rajasthan which were not under British control. The local traders in these regions were offering much higher prices to peasants.
- The Government instructed its agent in those princely state to confiscate all opium and destroy the crops.