

## 1. BENGAL AND THE ZAMINDARS

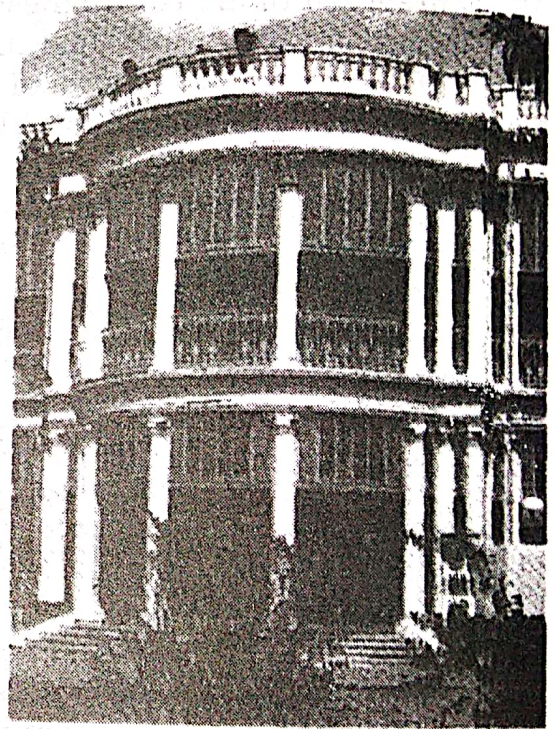
- Colonial rule was first setup in Bengal. It was in this region that the earliest attempts were made to reorder rural society, establish a new way of governance of land rights and new revenue system.

### 1.1 An auction in Burdwan

- The permanent settlement came into practice in 1793. As per the settlement, the East India company had set the revenue to be paid by each zamindar. The estates of those zamindars who were unable to pay were auctioned to recover the revenue.
- Lot of purchasers came to the auction to bid, were agents of the Raja. The purchasers bought the land on the belief of their Raja. More than 95% of the sale in such auctions used to be fake.

### 1.2 The problem of unpaid revenue

- More than 75% of the zamindars were sold off after the permanent settlement came in force.
- British officials assumed to make the solution of the problems which they faced since captured Bengal. By 1770s, Bengal's rural economy started a lot of crisis due to the famines and decreasing the agricultural production.
- Britishers thought that agriculture, trade and revenue resources of the state to be increased with the help of investment in agriculture.
- They helped that property rights to be secured and fixed the revenue rates demand permanently. Due to the permanent settlement, a group of farmers and rich land owners may be emerged. They would have both the capital and enterprise to bring improvement in agriculture.



Burdwan raja's city palace on Diamond Harbour Road, Calcutta By the late nineteenth century many rich zamindars of Bengal had city palaces with ballrooms, large grounds, entrance porches supported by Corinthian columns like these.

- Due to the support and motivation by the British this class would remain loyal to the East India company.
- The permanent settlement was made with the Rajas and taluqdars of Bengal. They were categorised as zamindars now. They had to pay revenue as a fixed amount to the company.
- Many villages were under the zamindars. Company managed the villages under one zamindar made demand over the whole state. The Zamindar collected the amount that was fixed for revenue from the villages.
- To avoid auction of the state, the zamindars were expected to pay the company on a regular basis. If they failed, company was free to take action as it was told before.

### 1.3 Why Zamindars defaulted on payments

- After the permanent settlement, in the early decades the zamindars could not pay revenue demand regularly. The unpaid balance was piled up as a result.
- There were several causes to which zamindar could not pay the revenue.
  - (a) First: the initial demands were very high. As agricultural production was increased and prices were risen. Company loss could be minimised and the burden on the zamindars would gradually decline.
  - (b) Second: This high revenue demand was placed in 1790s. The prices of agricultural produce were low. It made difficulty to ryots to pay their dues to the zamindars. If such zamindars were failed to do the same how could they pay their revenue to the company.
  - (c) Third: The revenue was constant. No matter was considerable with harvest good or bad The revenue to be paid regularly at the right time. As per the sunset law, actions were taken against defaulters.
  - (d) Fourth: The permanent settlements limited the power of zamindars as they collected rent revenue from the ryots and to retained their zamindaris.
- The East India company considered the zamindar as an important part but it wanted to keep control and restrictions over their autonomy. Reason was the zamindars troops were dispersed, custom duties finished and their courts were brought under the supervision of collector as was appointed by company.
- The zamindars lost their power to organise local justice and police. The collectorate was known as centre of choice. The zamindars faced severe limitations if a raja could not pay his revenue, the zamindari, influence into might be dispatched and lost is effective status.
- At that time, an officer of zamindar was appointed to collect the revenue from two ryot was known as amlah. Revenue collection, itself was a problem. Sometime due to bad harvest and low prices, it becomes much more typical for the ryot to pay their dues. At other times ryots made delay the payments deliberately.
- Rich ryots and village headmen as jotedars and Mandals become happy to see the zamindar in trouble, because he could not be able to implement his authority on them. The zamindars could punish the defaulters. But the judicial process was considered as a long process.

### 1.4 The rise of the Jotedars

- Zamindars started to face the crisis by the end of 18th century. A group of rich peasants were increasing their status in the village. They were known as jotedars.
- The jotedars had captured a huge areas of land and set control over them. They set a direct control over trade and moneylending. They exercised their positive power over the poor peasants.
- A big part of their land (of jotedars) was cultivated by share croppers (adhiyars or bargadars). They used to bring their own ploughs, laboured in the fields and hand over the half produce to the jotedars after the harvest.

- The jotedars were more powerful than the zamindars. Its reason was that zamindars lived in towns while the jotedars lived in the villages. Jotedars kept direct control over a large section of poor villagers.
- The jotedars opposed the efforts done by zamindars as they wanted to increase the jama of the village. Zamindari officials were checked by them in executing that recovering duties. Ryots made delay in payments of revenue deliberately.
- As the zamindars failed to pay his revenue and his estate was auctioned, that was purchased by the jotedars.
- The jotedars were most powerful in North Bengal. In the rural parts, several rich peasants and village headmen emerged in commanding status. They were known as Gantidars or mandals.

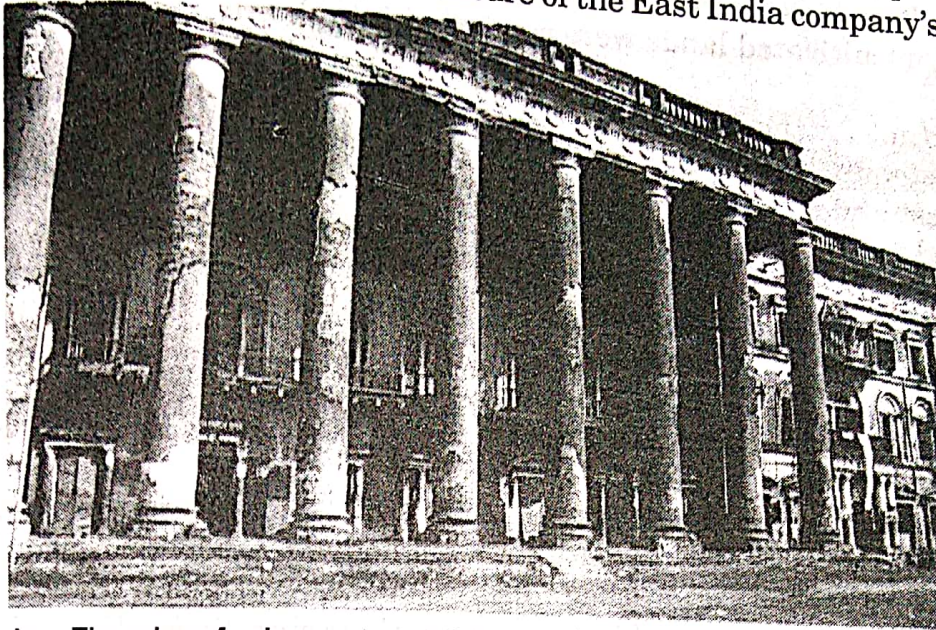
### 1.5 The zamindars resist

- The authority of zamindars was not ended in rural areas but they faced the high revenue demand and stopped the auctions of their estates. They opted ways of surviving under the pressure with the accommodated new strategies.
- The zamindars exercised their strong control over their zamindars with the help of fictitious sale. During the auction the agents of zamindars would buy the estates. Such exercise took place many times and several sides consider. In the last the estate was sold at a low price again to the zamindars.
- The zamindar never paid complete revenue demand. So, the company rarely recovered the pile of unpaid balances.
- Between 1793 to 1801, four big zamindars of Bengal made benami purchases from where a big amount of rupees 30 lac were collected of the total sales at the auctions. More than 15% sale was fake out of the total sales.
- There were many different ways by which zamindars entrapped and removed as outside people bought the zamindari of the estate at the auction. But new zamindars could not take possession as they were prevented by previous ones using the 'Lathiyals' they attacked them sometimes the ryots resisted the entry of outsiders.
- Ryots believed that the zamindar was their figure of authority and themselves as his subjects. The sale of the zamindari interrupted their sense of equality and their pride.
- By the beginning of the 19th century the slump in prices was ended those who had survived the trouble of the 1790 and gathered their power more flexible. As a result power of zamindar over the villages were strengthened.

### 1.6 The Fifth Report

- A detailed report was submitted to the British Parliament in 1813. It was the fifth report of the series of reports which were prepared on the activities and administration of the East India Company in India. So, it was referred as the Fifth Report. It contained 1002 pages.
- It generated again request of zamindars and ryots of collectors from various districts etc.
- From the time of settlement of the company in Bengal its governances were minutely observed in England. There were many groups in Great Britain. They resisted the monopoly of the trade of the company with India and China. The groups wanted a revocation of the Royal charter that gave monopoly to the company.
- Due to increasing number of private businessmen, they wanted sharing in Indian business. The industrialists of Britain were eager to get the Indian Market opened up for the British manufactures. Many political groups debated that the conquest of Bengal was benefiting only the East India company not the whole Britain.
- A series of acts was passed by the British Parliament to regulate and control the company rule in India in the late 18th centuries. The company was compelled to produce regular reports on the administration of India to the British Parliament.

- The fifth report was one such report made by a select committee. The report used as the basis of intense parliamentary debate on the nature of the East India company's rule in India.



Andul Raj Palace The ruins of palaces are a visible sign of the end of an era. Satyajit Ray's famous film Jalshaghar, on the decline of the aristocratic zamindari style of living, was shot in Andul Raj Place.

- Fifth Report criticised the company's rule. It blustered the collapse of traditional zamindari power.
- Zamindaris were auctioned but zamindars could not be displaced every time they retained their zamindaris using their wits and tacts.

## 2. THE HOE AND THE PLOUGH

### 2.1 In the hills of Rajmahal

- Buchanan visited the Rajmahal hills in the early 19th century. He described that the hills looked untraversable. This was a dangerous region where less people go. Among them people were unwilling to talk to them (natives).
- He described that the behaviour of the people of the areas visited was not friendly they were apprehensive for the officials of the company.
- The people who lived around the Rajmahal hills were known as Paharias. They survived on the produce of the forest and used shifting cultivation.
- The Paharias collected mahua for food from the forest. Other things like silk cocoons and resin for sale and wood for charcoal productions also used to collect from the same place.
- The life of the Paharias was described in different ways, according to their work as hunters, shifting cultivators, food gatherers, charcoal producers, silkworm rearers, all these were associated to the forest.
- The Paharias claimed the whole region as their own land. They opposed the entry of others. Their heads were responsible to maintain unity of the groups and resolved the disputes among them.
- The Paharias regularly forayed the plains where settled agriculturists lived. Such raids were managed and conducted by them for their survival especially during the years of scarcity. Paharias asserted their power over the communities who had settled in the plains. By these raids negotiation, political relations without outsiders were taken place.
- Zamindars in the plain had to often pay a regular tribute to the hill heads to keep safe themselves from any harm. In the same way traders also gave a small amount to the hill folk to receive permission to pass through the ways that were controlled by them. Chiefs used to assure them for their protection.

- Peace keeping negotiations were broken in the last decades of the 18th century so the settled agriculture was extended in the eastern India. The British motivated the clearance of forest and uncultivated lands were converted into the rice fields by the zamindars and Jotedars.
- It was important for the British to increase the land revenue and production of crops of export and establish the banks of a settled and a disciplined society. So, they planned to clear the forest and setup settled agriculture. They further tamed, civilised the paharias and convinced to get rid of hunting and started to use plough.
- The area under forests and pastures started to be contracted. This acuted the conflicts between the Paharias and the settled agriculturists. The hill people increased their attacks on the settled villages regularly. They started to snatch food grain and cattle from the villages.
- The aggravated colonial officials tried their level best to control the Paharias but it was not an easy work for them.
- In the 1770s the British officials adopted the cruel policy of extirpation on the paharias down and killing them. In 1780s collector of Bhagalpur, Augustus Cleveland adopted the policy of peace. As per the norms, the Paharia chiefs to be given an allowance yearly.
- In return, they took the responsibility to control their men. Several Paharia heads refused to receive the allowance. Among them who accepted usually, they lost their authority, status in the community.
- Peace campaigns was regularly managed. In result Paharias had withdrawn deep into the hills. A setback was given by enemy forces and compelled to make struggle with outsider.
- When Buchanan visited the area during the winter season of 1810-11. The Paharias considered him as a doubtful and without trust. The experience of peace efforts and calling of previous memories of cruel suppression. It shaped their assumption of British intruding in the territory.
- Every whiteman looked to show a power that has destroyed their way of life and survival. Control was over from their forests and lands.
- In 1810-11 the Santhals arrived in the hilly areas of Rajmahal. They cleared the forests and cut the timber wood and started to grow rice and cotton by ploughing the land there. Santhals setup their settlements in the lower parts of the hills, so, Paharias had to recede deep into the Rajmahal forests.

## 2.2 The Santhals: Pioneer Settlers

- The Santhals had started to come to the Bengal around the 1780s. The zamindars hired them to make new land for cultivation and expand the agricultures British officers enticed them to inhabit in the forest of Rajmahal after cleared the area.
- Having failed to tame the Paharias and settled agriculturists, the British changed their move to the Santhals.
- The Paharias rejected for cutting the forests, not willing to use the plough. Their behaviour was tumult. The Santhals appeared to be ideal dwellers as they had no hesitation in clearing the forests and ploughed the land with strength.



Hill village in Santhal country, Illustrated London news, 23 February 1856 This village in the lower Rajmahal hills was sketched by Walter Sherwill in the early 1850s. The village appears to be peaceful, calm and idyllic. Life seems unaffected by the outside world.

- The land was given to the Santhals in the valley of Rajmahal and they became ready to settle there. By 1832 a big area of the land was marked as Damin-i-koh and declared as the land of the Santhals.

- One tenth of the area was cleared and taken under the cultivation in the first ten years. The area was surveyed and mapped and bounded by the pillars. They separated from both the world of the permanent agriculturists of the plains and the Paharias of the hills.

- After the demarcation of the Damin-i-koh, the village of the Santhals were extended fastly. In 1839 the villages of Santhals were 40 and raised upto 1473 in 1851. Population moved from 3000 to over 8200. Due to the expansion of agriculture by the santhals the amount of revenue was increased which was profitable for the company.

- Santhals set their settlement in the outer-skirts of the Rajmahal hills. Paharias opposed but they were forced to retreat deeper into the Rajmahal hills. Paharias were checked from coming down to the lower hills and valleys.

- Paharias were restricted to the rocky and more barren region of the upper hills. It had bad impact on their lives and status of living pattern.

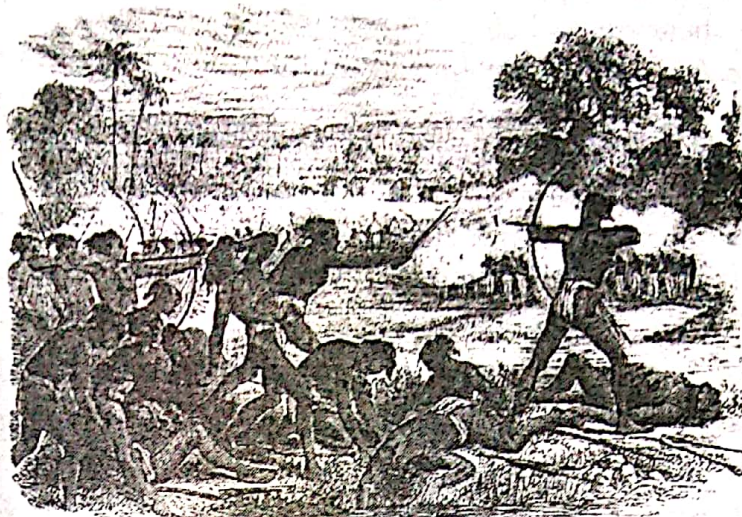
- Santhals left their nomadic life and settled it down at a place and started to grow the commercial crops for the market, dealing with traders and money lenders.

- The Santhals soon realised the land on which they had started cultivation was slipping away from their hands. Reason was cleared by them on the other hand, the money lenders (dikus) were charging high rate of interest. The loan could not be returned. Zamindars used to claim to keep their control over the Damin area.

- The Santhals revolted in 1850 against zamindars, moneylenders and colonial state. After the revolt, the Santhal Pargana was made to an area of 5,50059 mile from the Bhagalpur and Birbhum. The colonial state was in hope that santhals could be mediated through their move to create a new territory and imposing some special laws within it.

### 2.3 The accounts of Buchanan

- Buchanan was an employee of the East India company. His entire journey was borne by the East India company. His journeys were not simply inspired by the love of land scape and ambitions to find the unknown.



Santhals fight the sepoys of the British Raj, Illustrated London new, 23 February 1856 The rebellion changed the British perception of the Santhals. Village that had earlier seemed calm and peaceful now appeared to have become place of violent and savage deeds.



Burning of Santhal villages, Illustrated London News, 23 February 1856 After the rebellion was crushed, the region was searched, suspects were picked up, and villages set on fire. Images of the burning villages were shown to the public in England once again as a demonstration of the might of the British and their ability to crush rebellion and impose colonial order.

- He moved everywhere with a large army of people—draughtsmen, surveyors, palanquin bearers, coolies.
- As the company had strengthened its power and developed its commerce then it engrossed in the quest of those natural resources and overusing was prohibited.
- It surveyed the origin of revenue, organised the journey in search and to collect information and sent to geologists, geographers, botanists and physicians.
- Buchanan was an individual rich with extra ordinary observing power. His estimation was determined on modern western ideology. He was definitely critical of the way the forest dwellers lifestyle and felt that forests had to be changed into the agricultural land.

### 3. A REVOLT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE THE BOMBAY DECCAN

- Through the 19th century farmers in different parts of India became rebellious against the moneylenders and grain dealers. Such rebellion took place in the Deccan in 1875.

#### 3.1 Account books are burnt

- The revolt started at 'Supa' a big village of Poona district, was a as market centre. It was spread upto Ahmed Nagar. On 12 may 1875, ryots from neighbouring areas gathered and they attacked moneylenders, and shopkeepers. Account books (bahi khatas) were burn along with debt bonds.
- The Sahukars fled from the villages some moneylenders left their property and other things behind. To control the situation British officials set police posts in villages. Extra force was called, 951 people were arrested and many of them were convicted, but it took many months to restore peace there.

#### 3.2 A new revenue system

- After 1810 the agriculture prices were raised up, it increased the value of the produce. So, it became the source of income of zamindars of Bengal in increased mode.
- Since the demand for revenue became to consider on the permanent settlement, the colonial state could not assert for a part from the increased income.
- The colonial government was keenly interested to extent its financial resources. New Revenue settlements were made applicable in the areas that were under its control in the 19th century.
- David Ricardo was an economist and celebrated figure in England. According to him, a landowner should have a claim only to the 'average rent' that prevailed at a given time.
- Ryotwari was known as a revenue system that was introduced in Bombay Deccan. It was directly settled with the ryots. The capacity of the payment of revenue was examined and calculated on the quality of soil and proportional part of the state. The lands were resurveyed every after 30 years and rates of revenue to be increased. The demand for revenue was not permanent for long time.

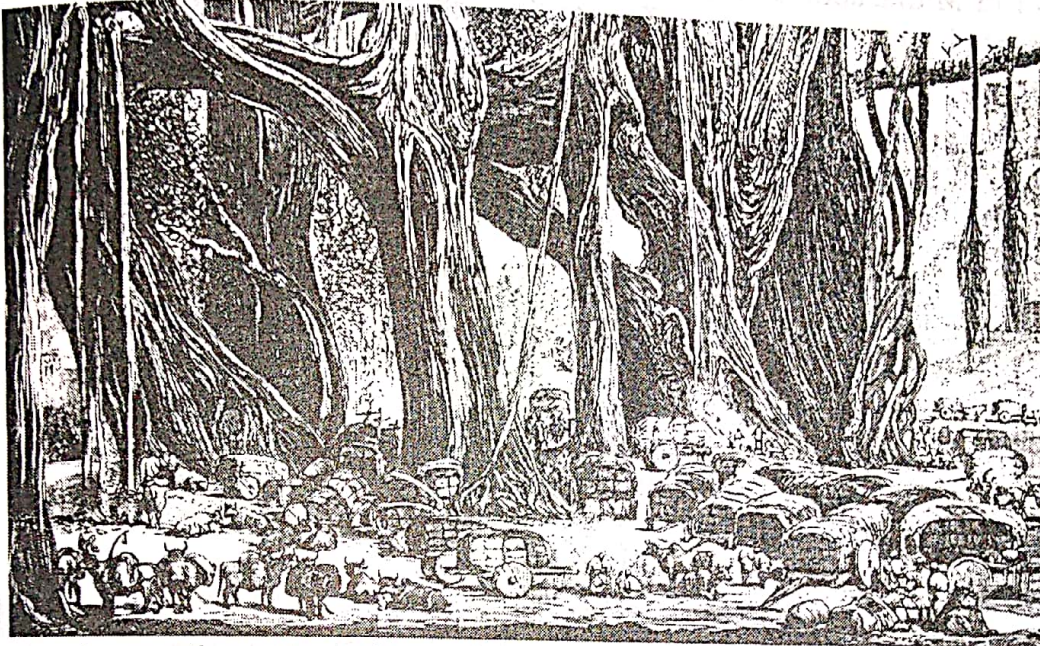
#### 3.3 Revenue demand and peasant debt

- The first revenue system was confirmed in the Bombay Deccan in the 1820s. The demands of revenue was so high. The peasants left their villages and shifted to the new areas. The problem was critical in the areas where soil had poor quality and rain was irregular. If rain was not proper, it had direct impact on harvest, it led to another problem peasants could not pay their taxes. They faced another actions taken by collection incharge. Crops used to be seized and fine to be imposed on whole village.
- After 1832, price of agricultural products fell quickly and could not regain in half of a decade. It became a cause of decline in the income of peasants.
- In the years 1832-34 the rural areas were ravaged by a famine. One third of cattle were killed in the Deccan. About half of the population died, people who survived; they had no agriculture stocks to go through at the time of risk.

- Unpaid balances of revenue were mounted Peasants were forced to take up loans from moneylenders. Loans once taken the ryot could rarely be able to pay back.
- In the mid 1840, there were the sign of an economic recovery of sorts. Several British officials has started to realise that settlement of 1820 were severe.
- Demand of revenue was medium that motivated the peasants to extend the cultivation. After 1845 agricultural prices were under control calmly. To complete their needs of plough cattle, seeds and land; peasants were turned against moneylenders for loans.

### 3.4 Then came the cotton boom

- Before 1860s. the three fourth of raw cotton imported into Britain came form America. In 1857, the cotton supply Association was setup in Britain and the Manchester Cotton Company was formed in 1859. The objective was to encourage cotton productions in various part of the world.



Carts transporting cotton halting under a banyan tree, illustrated London News, 13 December 1862

- India was observed as a country which could supply cotton to Lancashire in case of poor supply from America. Soil and Climate of India were much more helpful for the cultivation of cotton and cheap manpower.
- Civil war was broken out in America in 1861. A wave of sudden fear spread in the market of Britain. So, the exporters of Bombay made the efforts to procure the cotton in large quantity so that Britain's needs to be completed. They extended advance credits to the urban moneylenders to transfer more loans to rural people who had promised to secure the produce.
- There was a boom in the market as those who gave out loans are very much secure about the money to get back. There developments had great effect on rural areas of Deccan. The ryots in the Deccan villages suddenly got the reaches upto unlimited loans.
- Ryots were given Rs 100 as an advance loan for every acre to grow more cotton. Money lenders were ready to extend loans for long term.
- During the continuation of crisis in America the cotton production in the Bombay Deccan was expanded. The cotton acreage divided between 1860-1864. More than 90% of total of cotton in Britain, was from India. These boom years failed to boost up the richness of all the cotton producers. Some rich peasants gained but for large farmers the expansion meant to remain under the debt of loans.

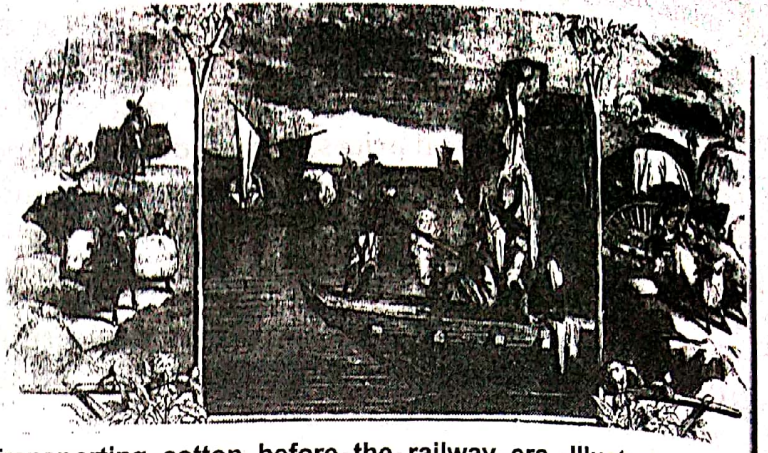


### 3.5 Credit dries up

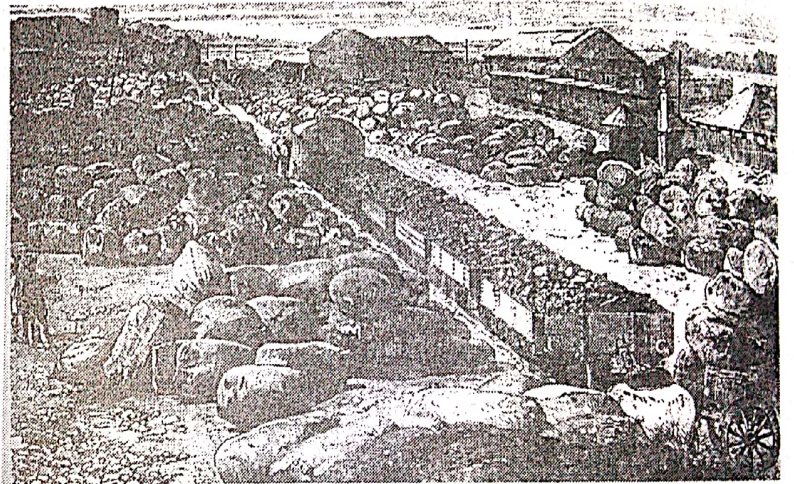
- As the boom lasted, cotton merchants of India started to make a vision of capturing of world market in raw cotton with permanently displacing America. The situation was changed during 1865. Civil war in America was ended. Production of cotton again started in America.
- The Sahukars and export merchants in Maharashtra were not interested for long term loans. The merchants and money lenders had observed the market flow and prices.
- They stopped monetary operations, advances to peasants moneylenders refused to give loans to the ryots as he had no faith and confidence in the ryots capacity to pay back.

### 3.6 The experience of injustice

- Ryot community was very angry as they were refused to extend loans by the money lenders. They came under the great debt Ryots were infuriated as money lenders were insensitive to their miserable condition.
- Before colonial rule money lending was wide spread. Moneylenders were generally very powerful. A number of customary names controlled their relations. One general norm was that the interest charged should not be more than the principal amount.
- Under the colonial rule such practices were broken. Many cases were investigated by the Deccan Riots commission as moneylenders had charged more than Rs 2000 as interest on a loan amount of Rs 100.
- The ryots came to see the moneylender as deceitful and devious. They complained that moneylenders used to manipulate the laws and were forging their accounts.
- In 1859 the British passed a limitation law. It stated that the bond of loan must be signed by money lender some ryot both and to be valid for only three years. The main objective of this law was to stop accumulation of loan for a long time.
- Moneylenders turned the law around in their own favour. They forced the peasant to sign on a new bond every three years. According to new bond the unpaid loan to be accumulated with interest and counted as principal amount.



Transporting cotton before the railway era, Illustrated London News, 20 April 1861 When cotton supplies from America were cut off during the civil war, Britain hoped that India would supply all the cotton that British industries needed. It began assessing the supply, examining the quality of cotton and studying the methods of production and marketing. This interest was reflected in the pages of the Illustrated London News.



Cotton bales lying at the Bombay terminus of the Great Indian peninsula Railway ready for shipment to England, Illustrated London News, 23 August 1862. Once the railways came up cotton supplies were not carried only on carts and boats. River traffic declined over time. But older modes of transport were not fully displaced. The loaded bullock cart in the foreground on the right is waiting to carry cotton bales from the railway station to the port.

- Entire process was examined by the Deccan Riots Commission as ryots described to them.
- Mostly Sahukars refused to provide receipts of repayment loans. They used to make entry fictitious figure in bonds to get opportunities to acquire the peasants harvest at low price and finally took the property of peasants.
- Deeds and bonds were considered as symbols of the new oppression. No record was real like the deeds. But the deed or contracts was legally enforced and had no value.
- Peasants came to relate the misery of their lives with new governance of bonds and deeds. They used to make sign and put thumb impression on documents but they were not aware what they had done. Peasants had no idea of the clauses what moneylenders placed in the bonds. They always feared with written word.
- They did not have any option, to survive, loan was essential and moneylenders were not ready to give loans without a proper bond.

#### 4. THE DECCAN RIOTS COMMISSION

- The government of Bombay set up a commission to make enquiry to investigate the causes of the riots. The report was presented to the British parliament in 1878. It was known as the Deccan Riots Report. It provides a range of sources for historians to make a deep study.