

Contemporary India --8

Influence on Agriculture

India is chiefly an agricultural country. From the very beginning agriculture has been considered to be the very base of its economic system. The British Government made some changes in the agricultural setup of the country, as a result of which, India's economic system was affected immensely. The English policy affected Indian agriculture in the following ways:

Introduction of Zamindari system

The British Government had introduced Zamindari system in 1893 in order to realize the land revenue in the Indian provinces. With the development of this policy, the land of the real owners began to be divided among the money-lenders, wealthy persons, rich merchants and other influential persons. Taking advantage of the illiteracy and poverty of the village folks, some ambitious and rich persons conspired with the revenue officers and took illegal possession of the land of the poor and ignorant villagers. They took recourse to committing forgery in the revenue records and became the owners of the lands so far possessed by the poor farmers. They did not do this for the development of agriculture but just to establish their control over land and accumulate money.

Result of transfer of land

The evil result of transfer of lands soon became evident when the landlords started giving their lands on higher revenue and tried to realize the maximum tax from the peasants. If the payment of the revenue was not made in time, the landlord had the right to alienate the peasant from the right to cultivation of that particular piece of land.

Adverse impact on the rural economic structure

The Zamindari system adversely affected the rural economic structure of India. The productivity of the cultivable land began to decrease gradually because the landlords did not pay attention towards the fertility of the land. They only wanted to extract more and more money by giving the piece of land to the highest bidder. Hence, the equilibrium of the rural economic system broke down. The landlords went on becoming richer and the farmers had to fight against poverty to keep their body and soul together. As a result, a great gulf was created between the poor and the rich who could not be abridged and gave birth to social tension and class struggle.

Disturbance in the balance of economic system

As the balance of economic system was disturbed, the rural people fell victims to heavy debts. The farmers had to take loans on high rates of interest for seeds, manures, irrigation and other agricultural purposes. The autocratic and dictatorial attitude of the moneylenders made the

position of the farmers all the worse and they were forced to lead a deplorable life, at the mercy of these local exploiters.

Fatal for the peace and order of the society

The transfer of land from the real owners to the money lenders and the merchants proved fatal for the peace and order of the society. Various dissatisfied landowners who were deprived of their ancestral lands, took law and order in their hands and created chaos and confusion in the society. Litigations began between the cultivators and the landlords. All these demerits totally undermined the rural economic structure.

Impact on the Small-scale Industries

One of the drawback of the British administrative system was that it destroyed the smallscale industries. At that time the Indian small-scale industry contributed a lot to the economic system of the country. Its following effects need special mention here:

Destruction of small scale of industries

The small-scale industry of India was the pillar of its foreign trade and prosperity. As soon as the Company established its political supremacy in Bengal, it began to exploit the artisans of cotton and silk cloth. As a result, the cloth trade did not remain a source of profit for the artisans and the cloth industry of Bengal and other places of India were disintegrated.

The Charter Act of 1813

According to the Charter Act of A. D, 1813the English merchants were permitted to establish their trade relations in India. Hence, the number of exploiters multiplied which ruined the economic structure of the country.