

Peasant, Zamindar and the state

Multiple Choice Type Questions

1. Who wrote Ain-i-Akbari?
(a) Abul Fazal
(b) Al-Biruni
(c) Ibn Battuta
(d) Abdur Razzaq
2. _____ was the court historian of Akbar.
(a) Al-Biruni
(b) Abul Fazl
(c) Bernier
(d) Ibn-Battuta
3. _____ was an important Jins-i-Kamil of Central India.
(a) Cotton
(b) Sugarcane
(c) Oil Seeds
(d) All of these
4. Ahom kings belonged to _____.
(a) Madhya Pradesh
(b) Andhra Pradesh
(c) Orissa
(d) Assam
5. There are _____ daftars (parts) of Ain.
(a) Three
(b) Four
(c) Five
(d) Six

Answer

1. (a) 2. (b) 3. (d) 4. (d) 5. (c)

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Describe the results of India's overseas trade under the Mughals. (C.B.S.E. 2008 (O.D.))
Answer: During the Mughal period, there was a great expansion of land and overseas trade. In response to the many items that were exported from India, Asia had an inflow of a large quantity of silver. A large part of silver reached India which was a creditable thing for India because it had no natural reserve of silver. As a result, the main currency in India was made of silver between the 16th and 18th centuries. There was economic stability in the country as the currency of silver was available in abundance.
2. Assess the role played by women in the Mughal imperial household. (C.B.S.E. 2008)
Answer: In the Mughal families, the king had wives, deputy wives, maid-servants and slaves.
1. **Except wives**, the Mughal families had many women, slaves. They also performed minor jobs besides jobs requiring tact, wisdom and intelligence. There were also slave Khwajasars.

They were agents of women who had an interest in trade. They also served as servants and bodyguards both inside and outside the family.

2. After Noor Jahan, Mughal queens and princesses started having control on financial matters. Jahan Ara and Roshan Ara, the daughters of Shah Jahan, got a high salary just like high mansabdars. Besides Jahan Ara got revenue from the city of Surat. This port city was an important centre of trade.

3. As the women had control over important financial resources, the important women of the Mughal family got constructed buildings and gardens. Jahan Ara took part in the architectural projects in the new capital of Shah Jahan at Shahjahanabad (Delhi). It also had a double-story caravan Sarai which had a vast compound and a beautiful garden.

4. The design of Chandini Chowk, the main attraction of Shahjahanabad was prepared by Jahan Ara.

5. We get a glimpse of the family life of the Mughals from Humayunama which was written by Gulbadan. Gulbadan Begum was the daughter of Babur and the sister of Humayun. She could even write serials in Turkish and Arabic.

3. Explain the role of village artisans in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. (C.B.S.E. 2008 (O.D.))

Answer: A large number of sculptors lived in the villages in the 16th and 17th centuries. From the Marathi documents and the British surveys, it is clear that in many villages, the sculptors amounted to 25% of the total population of the village.

Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish between the sculptors and the farmers. It was so because there were many groups which performed both the functions. The farmers also did many other jobs like designing of cloth, pottery and repair and the making of agricultural instruments. Besides potters, iron-smiths, weavers and barbers also rendered their service to the village.

They got either a piece of land or a part of the crop for the service rendered by them. In the 18th century, the zamindars, the iron-smiths, the weavers and the gold-smiths of Bengal used to get a daily allowance for food in respect of their services. It was called the Jajmani System.

4. Why did Abul Fazl describe the land Revenue as 'remuneration of sovereignty'? Explain. (C.B.S.E. 2009 (D))

Answer: Abul Fazl described the land revenue as remuneration of sovereignty because only by giving land revenue to the government, they were actually provided security by the government. They were free to work in their fields according to their wish. They were even free from the fear of any external aggression or internal revolt because then it was the duty of the government to provide them with every type of security.

If any land-related problem would have come in front, then they were allowed to approach the concerned officials. This land revenue was the main source of State's income with which army and security of the peasants could be maintained.

5. Describe three factors that accounted for the constant expansion of agriculture during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (C.B.S.E. 2012 (O.D.))

Answer: 1. Abundance of land, availability of labourers and mobility of peasants were major causes of the continuous expansion of agriculture because* primary objective of agriculture was to feed the people.

2. Like modern days, the monsoon was considered as the backbone of India agriculture during the Mughal period. But the crops for which additional water was required, artificial means of irrigation were developed.

3. State's help was also available for the development of means of irrigation. For example, State in north India undertook digging of new canals and also repaired a few old canals. Shah Canal of Punjab during the reign of Shah Jahan is an example of such repair.

LONG ANSWER QUESTION

1. Describe the Land Revenue System of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar.

Answer: Akbar was a great and able ruler. He laid special emphasis on the land revenue system. For this purpose, he followed the policy initiated by Sher Shah Suri. But this policy had certain defects in it. That is why Akbar began works from the start. Main features of his land revenue system are given below:

1. Following policy initiated by Sher Shah: In the beginning, Akbar followed the policy of land revenue initiated by Sher Shah. During the reign of Sher Shah, the average value was determined by measuring agricultural land. It was determined on the average production of produce. Later on, Akbar felt that it needed a lot of time to fix the market price. It was also a cause of worry for the peasants. Hence, Akbar again started the policy of yearly assumption.

2. Determination of Tax: Akbar followed the following policies for fixing land revenue:

(a) Zabt System: This policy was the creation of Raja Todar Mai. Under this system of revenue, the tax was fixed by measuring the land. This system was implemented in Gujarat, Lahore, Malwa, Allahabad, etc.

(b) Ten Years System: This system was a developed form of Zabt system. According to this, an average of the last ten years of production of crops and their value was taken out. One-third of that average produce was taken as revenue. This revenue could have been taken in the form of cash or produce.

(c) Batai or Galla Bakshi System: In this system, the whole of the total produce was divided in definite proportion among peasant and the State. Honest officials were

required for the success of this system.

(d) Nasik or Kangoot System: Record of agricultural tax was kept in this system.

3. **Measurement of Land:** During the reign of Akbar, the land was measured with a proper method. With this, state and the peasant came to know about how much peasants will have to pay and how much revenue will be collected for the state.
4. **Keeping in mind the fertility of the soil:** Fertility of the soil was always kept in mind while determining land revenue. That land was called as 'Polaj' which was cultivated every year and that land was called as Tarauti' which was not cultivated every year. All in all, a tax was fixed on the basis of fertility and the produce.
5. **Facilities to Peasants:** Special facilities were also given to peasants in case of famine or drought. They were given certain facilities in paying taxes in case of natural calamity. They were also given loans for tools, implements and animals.

Actually, land revenue system of Akbar was prepared while keeping in mind the interests of the people.

2. While explaining the contribution of women in labour based agrarian society, clarify that what was their position in society? Also, give a proper example.

Or

discuss the role of women in the agrarian society in Mughal India. (C.B.S.E. 2008 (D))

Or

examine the status and role played by the women in the agrarian society during the Mughal period. (C.B.S.E. 2016 (O.D.))

Answer: Men and women both performed certain specific roles in the production process. Women had to work shoulder to shoulder with men in the fields. Men used to till and plough the land whereas women sowed, weeded, threshed and winnowed the harvest. With the development of small rural units and individual agriculture of peasants, labour and resources of the entire household became the basis of production. Naturally, gendered segregation was not possible between home (for women) and the world (for men).

Artisanal works like sifting and kneading clay for pottery, spinning yarn and embroidery were some of the works which depended upon female labour. The more commercialized the product, the greater the demand on women's labour to produce it. Actually peasant, artisan women not only worked in the fields but also went to houses of their employers and even to markets if required. Females were seen as an important source in agrarian society because they were child-bearers in a society which was dependent on labour.

Status of women in society: The position of the women in society was of mixed nature.

1. **There was a high mortality rate among women.** That is why married women were less in

number. It helped in the emergence of social customs in artisan and peasant society which were different from the customs of elite groups. In many rural communities, the male had to pay bride price instead of dowry to the bride's family. Remarriage was legally sanctioned for both divorced and widowed women.

2. According to popular traditions, the male was head of the family. In this way, females remained under the control of males and the family. If any female was coming under the scanner of misconduct then she was strictly punished by society.
3. Amongst the landed gentry, women had the right to inherit property. We have found certain examples from Punjab which show that women (including widows) actively participated in the rural land market as sellers of property inherited by them. They were free to sell or mortgage their land.

3. What aspects of the Mughal period are highlighted by Abul Fazl's 'Ain-i-Akbari'?

Answer: 'Ain-i-Akbari' was written by Abul Fazl in the year 1598 C.E. It was a part of the project of the writing of history under the orders of Akbar. That is why it is also known as Akbar-Nama. It is a compendium of imperial regulations and a gazette of the Mughal Empire.

This book gives detailed information about various facts of life during the Mughal period :

1. It is a comprehensive analysis of the court, administration and army.
2. It depicts the literary, cultural and religious traditions of the people.
3. It gives a physical layout of the provinces of Akbar's empire.
4. It enumerates the sources of revenue.
5. It tells us about various customs and practices of the Mughal period.
6. It also gives a short biographical sketch of imperial officials such as mansabdars.

In fact, the real purpose of the book was to facilitate Emperor Akbar in the governance of its empire. It was not a reproduction of official papers but an authentic attempt to present quantitative data at one place. It was an extraordinary document of its times and provides a fascinating peep into the glimpses of the structure and organization of the Mughal Empire.

4. Make a critical evaluation of the- significance and limitations of Ain-i-Akbari.

Or

Explain why Ain-i-Akbari remains an extraordinary document of its times even today.
(C.B.S.E. 2008 (D))

Or

"In spite of the limitations, the Ain-i-Akbari remained an extraordinary document of its time." Explain the statement. (C.B.S.E. 2016 (D))

Or

examine the strengths and weaknesses of Ain-i-Akbari. (C.B.S.E. 2016 (O.D.))

Answer: Penned by Abul Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari was written to facilitate Akbar in the governance of his empire. It was written in 1598 C.E. Abul Fazl was so cautious about this book that he

revised it five times. He tried his best to leave no scope for any transcriptional error. It is an authentic mine of information about the Mughal Empire.

Abul Fazl did not believe oral testimonies. He verified and cross-checked them before their inclusion in the book. He wanted to make his book factual rather than informative. In the quantitative sections, he presented all the numerical data in words so as to minimize the chances of any subsequent transcriptional errors. In other words, the Ain is a record of information about the people and society during the Mughal regime.

❖ In spite of the best efforts of Abul Fazl, the book is not without problems or limitations. There are many limitations which can be studied as follows:

1. There are many errors in total. It has been considered that these might be simple arithmetic errors of transcription by Abul Fazl's assistants. Even then these errors were very simple which hardly reduces the authenticity of data at a wider level.
2. Another limitation of Ain is the skewed nature of the quantitative data. Uniform data was not collected from all provinces. Wide information was collected about the caste of zamindars from many provinces but these information are not available for Bengal and Orissa.
3. Fiscal data from the provinces is quite remarkable but equally important information like prices and wages from these areas are not as well documented.

Conclusion: Ain remained an extraordinary document of its times even after certain limitations. Abul Fazl achieved a major breakthrough in the tradition of medieval chroniclers who wrote mostly about wars, conquests, political machinations and dynastic turmoil. It was one of the greatest achievements of Abul Fazl.

5. How agriculture was organized around two major seasonal cycles's during the 16th and 17th centuries? Was it only for subsistence or otherwise? Explain. (C.B.S.E. 2011 (O.D.))

Or

explain how during 16th and 17th centuries agriculture was organized around two major seasonal cycles by giving examples of different crops. (C.B.S.E. 2008 (D))

Answer: Seasonal cycles: During the 16th and 17th centuries, agriculture was organized mainly during two seasonal cycles-Kharif (autumn) and Rabi (spring). Minimum two crops were grown at most of the places except most arid or inhospitable land. Even three crops were also grown where rainfall or other means of irrigation were easily available.

Different types of Crops: There is a mention of word Jins-i-Kamil in historical sources available to us which means perfect crops. Mughal state also used to encourage farmers to grow those crops with which the State could earn more revenue. Cotton and sugarcane were such crops.

Cotton was mainly grown on large pieces of land spread over central India and the Deccan Plateau. Bengal was known for its sugar made from sugarcane. Different types of oilseeds (like mustard) and lentils were also included in cash crops. This shows that subsistence and commercial production were closely related with an average peasant's holding.

Objectives: Major objective of agriculture during the 16th and 17th centuries was only for subsistence. That is why mainly rice, wheat and barley were grown. But this agriculture was not alone for subsistence. Till then, the nature of agriculture was changed a bit.

- Agriculture was mainly organized for two seasons.
- The commercial production and subsistence were closely related to an average present holding.