

# Lesson 13

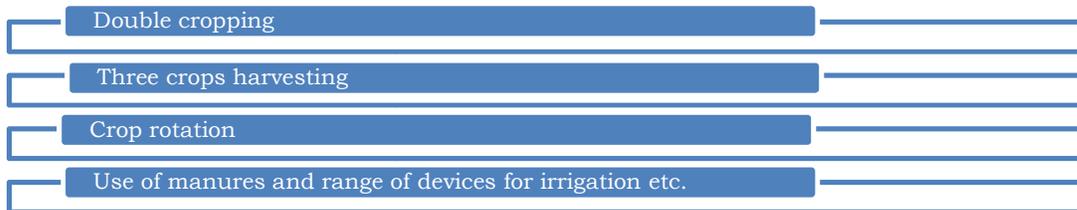
## Economy

### Summary

The people in medieval India pursued diverse range of economic activities to earn their basic livelihood. The sphere of their works varied from agricultural to artisanal production, trade and commerce and associated commercial and financial services. These activities underwent various changes throughout the course of this period. The state mobilized its resources through collection of different types of taxes for its survival and expansion. In this lesson, you will learn about various ways and means of production, mobilization of resources by the state and the trade and commercial activities.

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

#### Crop Pattern



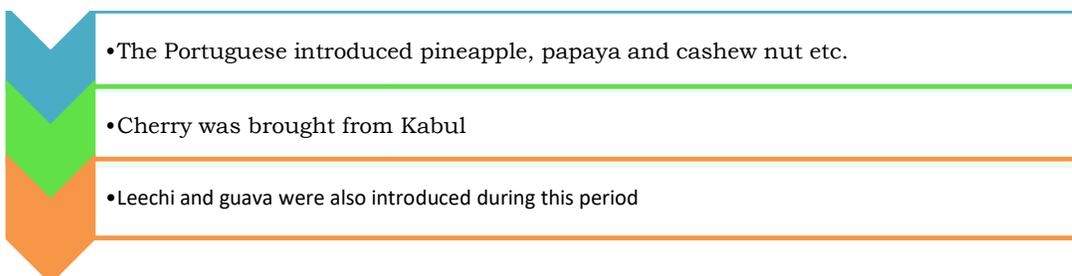
#### Food crops



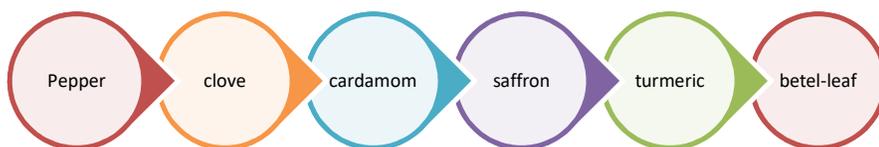
#### Cash crops



#### Fruits and Vegetables



## Spices



## Means and Methods of Irrigation

- ☐ The Indian agriculture has always depended on various sources of water both natural and artificial, for its irrigational requirements, viz - rain, wells, river, tanks, canals, lakes, etc.
- ☐ The *Persian wheel* which began to be used in India from the Sultanate period.
- ☐ The Delhi Sultans, in particular, promoted canal irrigation.

## LAND REVENUE ASSESSMENT AND MAGNITUDE OF THE LAND REVENUE DEMAND

- During the medieval period different methods of revenue assessment and collection were used.
- The simplest and basic method was crop sharing or **batai**.
- Three types of crop sharing were in practice.
- These were - first, division of crop at threshing floor after the grain was obtained; second, **Khet-batai**, i.e. division of field when the crop was standing; and third, the **Langbatai** in which the crop was cut and stacked in heaps without separating grain. The share of the state was decided in this form.
- In the second method known as Kankut
- In this method land was first measured.
- After measurement the productivity of land was estimated to fix the revenue demand per unit of measured area.
- This Third method was called Zabt since the assessment was done on the basis of

measurement. Based on yields the share of the state was decided.

- Under Akbar the method was further refined. All the territories were divided into the revenue circles or dasturs.
- According to Ain-i-Dahsala or ten years revenue rates, the average of the rates of last ten years was taken as cash revenue rate for particular crop.

### Classification of land

- After the measurement, the cultivable land was classified, on the basis of the fertility of land, into three categories- good, middling and bad.
- Land was further classified into four categories viz -**polaj, parati, chachar** and **banjar**, on the basis of continuity of cultivation.

### Patta and Qabuliat

- Each cultivator was given a document by the state called **patta** (title deed) which gave all the details of the various categories of land held by the

cultivator and rate of land revenue payable by him on different crops.

- A deed agreement called **Qabuliat**
- According to which the cultivator made a promise to pay a particular amount of land revenue to the state, was taken from the cultivator.

### **ROLE OF LANDED INTERMEDIARIES IN REVENUE COLLECTION**

- During the Sultanate period, landed intermediaries continued to play an important role in revenue collection. **Khuts** (small landlords), **Muqaddams** (village headmen) and a group of intermediaries, such as, **rai, rana, rawats** etc., enjoyed superior rights overland as compared to an average peasant.
- During the Mughal period **rais, ranas, rawats** and other such intermediaries are referred as **zamindar**.
- The **zamindars** claimed a direct share in the peasants produce. Their share varied from 10% to 25% in different parts of the country.

### **BURDEN ON PEASANTRY**

- Peasants formed the overwhelming majority of the population in medieval India.
- An average peasant always found himself subsisting on margins owing to the regressive nature of land tax, the extensive burden of interaction on loans taken, frequent famine, disease and epidemic
- The peasant hardships and resentments, occasionally, culminated in protests and revolts

### **ARTISANAL (NON-AGRICULTURAL) PRODUCTION**

#### **Prominent Crafts**

- Textile, pottery making, dyeing, sugar making, metal works, paper making, wood work, arms and armour manufacturing, ship-building, chemical works etc.

#### **Organisation of Production**

- Craft production was organised in villages as well as **qasbas**.
- There also existed imperial **Karkhanas**.
- Artisans were part of the village social network called the **jajmani** system.
- Royal workshop (**karkhana**) was another unit of craft production
- Karkhana produced commodities for the consumption of the royal household and the court, Generally, expensive and luxury items were produced here.

### **TRADE AND COMMERCE**

- India had a fairly developed external and internal trade during the medieval period.
- The internal trade developed along local, regional and inter-regional levels.
- Trade relations with regions like China, Arabia, Egypt, Central Asia, Afghanistan were maintained on land routes.
- It carried its overseas trade with the Persian Gulf, the South China sea, the Mediterranean and the Red sea.

- The advent of European trading companies - the Portuguese, British, Dutch and French intensified trading activities in the Indian subcontinent.

### **Inland Trade**

- Trade at the local level was also conducted through periodic markets known as **Hats** or **Penths**, which were held on fixed days in a week.
- In these local markets, commodities like food grain, salt, wooden and iron equipments, coarse cotton textile etc. were available.

### **Foreign Trade**

- During the Sultanate period, India had trade relations with Central Asia, Afghanistan, the Persian gulf and the Red sea. India mainly exported food grains, textile, slaves, indigo, precious stones etc. whereas it imported precious metals like gold and silver, horses, brocade and silk stuff etc

### **The Mercantile Community**

- The mercantile community played an important role in the contemporary economy and society.
- During the Sultanate period, **Karwanis** or **Nayakas** were merchants, who specialised in carrying grains from the rural areas.
- Mercantile classes during the Mughal period were Banjaras, Bohras, Chettis, Kling, Komati
- Sarrafs another community engaged in monetary transactions
- Brokers Known as dalal, it was another important commercial class

### **Commercial Practice**

- Hundi or bills of exchange was a medieval commercial practice.
- A hundi was essentially a paper document promising payment of money after a fixed period of time at a certain place
- **Insurance:** This practice became widespread, especially during the Mughal period.
- Certain insurance firms (mostly dominated by **sarrafs**) developed which took upon themselves the responsibility of safe passage and delivery of commercial goods.

### **THE CURRENCY SYSTEM**

- The silver and copper coins were mainly in circulation for cash transactions.
- The **jital** and **dang** were copper coins.
- Under Sher Shah for the first time the purity of metals in coinage of gold, silver and copper was established. The **rupaya** of silver came to be used as the basic coin for transactions.
- The copper **dam** of the Mughals was 323 grains.

### **Evaluate Yourself**

- Q. Differentiate between Kankut and Zabti.
- Q. Explain the method of crop sharing or batai.
- Q. Differentiate between Patta and Qabuliat.