



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Change and Development in Rural Society

(GRADE XII) Question Bank

Main Sub-topics in this chapter:

- Agrarian structure: caste and class in rural India
- The impact of land reforms (colonial period and independent India)
- The Green Revolution & its Social consequences
- Transformations in rural society after independence
- Circulation of Labour
- Globalization, Liberalization and rural society



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1. What are the various occupations followed in rural society? (2mks)

Ans: Although **agriculture is the single most important source of livelihood** for the majority of rural population, many other activities that support agriculture and rural life are also a source of livelihood for people in rural India. For example, potters, carpenters, weavers, ironsmiths and goldsmiths. Rural life also supported many **specialists** such as story tellers, astrologers, priests, oil pressers and water-distributors.

2. What does the term 'begar' mean? (2mks)

Ans: 'Begar' or **free labour** was prevalent in many parts of northern India. Members of **low ranked caste groups** had to provide labour **for a fixed number of days per year** to the **village zamindar or landlord**. Although such practices have been **abolished legally**, they continue to exist in many areas.

3. Explain the agrarian structure of Rural society. (4mks)

Ans: The term agrarian structure is often used to refer to **structure or distribution of land holding**. Agricultural land is the single most **important resource and form of property in rural society**. There is **no straightforward relationship between caste and class in rural India**.

The points below highlight the main components of the agrarian structure in rural society:

Large and medium landowners: Own large amount of land, earlier known as zamindars.

Small and marginal landowners: these are small farmers who have less land. They are only able to produce grains for their family's consumption. They do not have additional products to sell in the market.

Tenants: These are the cultivators who lease the land from landowners.

Landless agricultural labourers: Have no land of their own, work for others.

Status of women: Law gives equal land rights to women. But the women's name is only a formality as men have authority over the land.

4. Examine the caste and class relationship in rural society (4mks)

- Ans: The relationship between caste and class in agrarian society is complex and not always directly correlated.
- Higher castes generally have more land and income, but Brahmins, despite being the highest caste, usually are not major landowners.
- Major landowners typically come from one or two dominant upper castes in each region, who hold economic, political, and social power.
- Examples of dominant landowning castes include Jats and Rajputs in U.P, Vokkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka, Kammas and Reddis in Andhra Pradesh, and Jat Sikhs in Punjab.

5. What is the 'Raiyatwari system'? (2mks) Ans: Areas that were directly under the British rule had the 'Raiyatwari' system of land settlement (raiya means cultivator in Telugu). In this system, the 'actual cultivators' (who were themselves often landlords and not cultivators) rather than the zamindars were responsible for paying the tax. Because the colonial government dealt directly with the farmers or landlords, rather than through overlords, the burden of taxation was less and cultivators had more incentive to invest in agriculture. As a result, these areas became relatively more productive and prosperous.

6. What was the condition of Indian agriculture after independence? (2mks)

Ans: The condition of Indian agriculture was dismal after independence. It was marked by:

- low productivity
- dependence on imported food grains and
- intense poverty of a large section of the rural population.

7. **What are 'benami transfers'? (2mks)**

Ans: There were many loopholes and other strategies through which most landowners were able to escape from having their surplus land taken over by the state under the Land ceiling Act. While some very large estates were broken-up, in most cases landowners managed to divide the land among relatives and others, including servants, in so-called 'benami transfers'-which allowed them to keep control over the land (in fact not in name).

8. **How did the Green Revolution benefit Indian agriculture initially? (2mks)**

Ans: The Green Revolution was a government programme of agricultural modernization. Initially it benefitted the Indian agriculture by: **increased agricultural productivity due to the new technology and self- sufficiency in food grain production for the first time in decades.**

9. **Why have areas like eastern UP and Telangana witnessed inter-caste violence in recent years? (2mks)**

Ans: A negative outcome of the Green Revolution strategy was the worsening of regional inequalities. The areas that underwent this technological transformation became more developed while others stagnated. As a result, we find agriculture in states such as Bihar and eastern UP, and in dry regions such as Telangana to be relatively undeveloped. The sharp caste and class inequalities together with exploitative labour relations, in these regions have given rise to various types of inter-caste violence in recent years.

10. **Differentiate between peasants and farmers (2mks)**

Ans: Peasants- are agriculturists who primarily produce for themselves and unable to produce for the market. Farmers are those agriculturists who are able to produce surplus over and above the needs of the family and are linked to the market.

11. **Mention the loopholes found in the implementation of the land ceiling Act (4mks)**

Ans: While the Land Ceiling Act was implemented to bring about certain reforms after independence, there were certain loopholes mentioned below:

- Most landowners were able to escape from having their surplus land taken over by the state.
- Some very large estates were broken up and in most cases, landowners managed to divide the land among relatives and others, including servants, in so-called 'benami transfers' which allowed them to keep control over the land (in fact not in name).

- In some places, some rich farmers actually divorced their wives (but continued to live with them) in order to avoid the provisions of the Land Ceiling Act which allowed a separate share for unmarried women but not for wives.

13. What were the major land revenue systems followed by the British in India? (2mks)

Ans: During the colonial period most, rural areas were administered through one of the two systems explained below:

- **Zamindari system:** In this system the landlord was considered the owner of the land. The farmer did not have direct contact with the government but the land tax was paid to the government through the landlords.
- **Raiyatwari system:** The word 'raiya' means farmer and in this system the land tax was directly paid to the government by the farmers. In this system the landlords were removed between the government and the farmers.

14. Discuss the emergence of new regional elites in rural society. (4mks)

Ans: In 1960's and 1970's India witnessed the enrichment of medium and large farmers who adopted new technologies and benefitted from the Green Revolution.

- In agriculturally rich regions, farmers belonging to dominant caste began to invest their profits in other ventures.
- There was a surge of new entrepreneurial groups and regional elites who became economically as well as politically dominant
- Spread of higher education and an increase in private and professional colleges in rural areas allowed them to educate their children
- Most of the children of farmers who had access to this education joined professional white-collar occupations and started business. This led to the expansion of urban middle class.

15. Explain Jan Breman's concept of 'Foot loose labour'. (4mks)

Ans: A significant change in rural society that is linked to the commercialization of agriculture has been the growth of migrant agricultural labour.

As a livelihood strategy, men migrate out periodically in search of work and better wages, while women and children are often left behind in their village with elderly grandparents. Migrant workers come mainly from drought-prone and less productive regions, and they go to work for part of the year on farms in Punjab and Haryana, or on brick kilns in U.P or construction sites such as New Delhi or Bangalore. These migrant workers have been termed as 'footloose labour' by Jan Breman, but this does not imply freedom.

16. Explain the 'Green Revolution' program (4mks)

Ans: The Green Revolution was a government programme implemented in 1960's and 70's that aimed at modernization of agriculture.

-It was largely funded by international agencies that provided high yielding variety (HYV) or hybrid seeds along with pesticides, fertilizers and other inputs to farmers.

-The Green Revolution programme was introduced only in areas that had assured irrigation, because sufficient water was necessary for the new seeds and methods of cultivation.

-It was targeted mainly in the wheat and rice-growing areas. Hence only certain parts of India such as the Punjab, western U.P, coastal Andhra Pradesh and parts of Tamil Nadu received the first wave of the Green Revolution package.

Agricultural productivity increased sharply because of the new technology and the green Revolution has been considered a major achievement of the government and of the scientists who contributed to the effort.

17. Explain the regional inequalities created due to the Green Revolution programme (6mks)

Ans: On the one hand while agricultural productivity increased because of the new technology introduced as part Green Revolution, on the other hand the social consequences of this program heightened the regional inequalities in the agrarian structure of rural society in India. These can be understood through the following points:

1. Beneficiaries of Green Revolution: Mainly medium and large farmers benefited due to the high cost of inputs; small and marginal farmers could not afford them.
2. Market Surplus Advantage: Farmers producing surplus for the market gained the most
3. Increasing Inequalities: In the 1960's and 1970's, new technology widened rural inequalities, favouring richer farmers. The Green Revolution led to differentiation- rich farmers grew richer, while many poor farmers stagnated or became poorer.
4. Displacement of Service Castes: Machinery like tractors and harvestors displaced traditional service caste groups, increasing rural- urban migration.
5. Uneven regional Development: Western and southern states benefited more; eastern states like Bihar and dry regions like Telangana lagged behind.
6. Feudal Agrarian Structure: Underdeveloped regions retained feudal structures with landlords dominating lower castes, landless workers and small farmers.

7. Resulting Violence: Sharp caste and class inequalities and exploitative labour relations in these areas led to increased caste- related violence,

18. Explain the various factors behind the increasing farmer's suicide in India (6mks)

Ans: While farmers in India for centuries have periodically faced distress due to drought, crop failures, or debt, the phenomenon of farmers' suicides appears to be new. Sociologists have attempted to explain this phenomenon by looking at the structure and social changes that have been occurring in agriculture and agrarian society. Such suicides have become 'matrix events' that is, a range of factors coalesce to form an event.

Many farmers who have committed suicides were marginal farmers, who were attempting to increase their productivity primarily by practicing Green Revolution methods. However, undertaking such production meant facing several risks:

- Cost of production has increased tremendously due to decrease in agricultural subsidies
- Markets are not stable
- Many farmers borrow heavily in order to invest in expensive inputs and improve production
- The loss of either the crop (due to spread of disease and pests, excessive rainfall, or drought), and in some cases, lack of an adequate support or market price means that farmers are unable to bear the debt burden or sustain their families.
- Such distress is compounded by the changing culture in rural areas, in which increased incomes are required for marriages, dowries and to sustain new activities and expenses, such as education and medical care.

THE SAME ANSWER, IF ASKED FOR 4mks CAN BE WRITTEN LIKE THIS:

Farmers' suicides in India have emerged as a complex issue driven by multiple interrelated factors affecting marginal farmers trying to adopt Green Revolution techniques. The key reasons include:

1. Dramatic increase in production costs due to reduced agricultural subsidies.
2. Unstable and unpredictable market conditions for farm produce.
3. Heavy borrowing by farmers to afford expensive inputs for higher productivity.
4. Crop failures caused by pests, diseases, drought, or excessive rainfall leading to financial losses.
5. Inadequate support mechanisms and fair market prices, making debt repayment impossible.
6. Rising social and economic pressures in rural areas, such as the costs of marriages, dowries, education, and healthcare.

19. What are various factors behind Kerala's 'mixed economy'? (2mks)

Ans: Political mobilization, redistributive measures and linkages to an external economy (primarily the Gulf countries) have brought about substantial transformation of the rural countryside. Far from the rural being primarily agrarian, the rural in Kerala is a mixed economy that integrates some agriculture with a wide network of retail sales and services, where a large number of families are dependent on remittances from abroad.

20. What do you mean by 'feminization of agriculture'? (2mks)

Ans: In poor areas where male family members spend much of their time working outside, cultivation has become primarily a female task. Women are also emerging as the main source of agricultural labor leading to the 'feminization of agricultural labor force'.

21. Why do farmers commit suicides and what are the various government schemes aimed at helping farmers in distress? (2mks)

Ans: The Suicides of farmers are basically associated with debt, as well as, natural disasters, resulting in the failure of agricultural produce.

Listed below are some of the schemes of the government of India which may provide unifies help to farmers all over the country:

- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana,
- Gram Udyog se Bharat Uday Abhiyan and
- National Urban Mission
- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture
- Kissan Credit card

These schemes are also helpful in providing quality life to rural India.

Competency-Based MCQs

1. Which term was used by sociologist M.N. Srinivas to describe the numerically important and economically powerful landowning groups in a region?

- A) Elite Caste B) Dominant Caste C) Proprietary Caste D) Zamindar Caste

2. The practice of 'begar', which was prevalent in parts of northern India until recently, refers to:

A) Hereditary bonded labour B) Sharecropping at high rent

C) Free or forced labour provided to landlords

D) Seasonal migration for work

3. According to the 2011 Census, what percentage of India's population lives in rural areas?

A) 50 per cent B) 60 per cent C) 69 per cent D) 75 per cent

4. The 'halpati' system in Gujarat and the 'jeeta' system in Karnataka are historical examples of:

A) Advanced irrigation techniques B) Land ceiling redistribution methods

C) Hereditary labour relationships or bonded labour D) New Year harvest festivals

5. Which of the following is a harvest festival celebrated in Assam?

A) Pongal B) Baisakhi C) Ugadi D) Bihu

6. Why did agricultural production generally stagnate or decline in areas under the Zamindari system during the colonial period?

A) The British provided too much incentive for industrialization.

B) Zamindars extracted maximum produce to meet heavy land revenue demands.

C) Cultivators were given direct ownership rights by the British.

D) The monsoon was consistently poor in those specific regions.

7. In contrast to the Zamindari system, the Raiyatwari system was associated with higher productivity because:

A) The state dealt directly with cultivators, reducing the tax burden.

B) It abolished the caste system in rural areas.

C) It prohibited the use of agricultural labour.

D) It was only implemented in areas with no rainfall.

8. Which land reform legislation was considered the most effective in weakening the economic and political power of intermediaries?

A) Land Ceiling Acts B) Tenancy Abolition Acts

C) Abolition of the Zamindari system D) The Green Revolution Act

9. The 'Land Ceiling Acts' were intended to redistribute surplus land to landless families. However, they often proved 'toothless' because:

- A) There was no surplus land available in India.
- B) Landowners used loopholes and strategies to escape the law.
- C) The productivity of the land was too low to redistribute.
- D) The SC and ST families refused to accept the land.

10. How does the patrilineal kinship system typically affect rural women's access to land in India?

- A) It grants them equal ownership rights in practice.
- B) It excludes them from land ownership despite legal provisions for equality.
- C) It ensures they are the primary decision-makers in agriculture.
- D) It provides them with land only if they belong to a dominant caste.

11. The emergence of 'footloose labour' in the context of rural change refers to:

- A) Farmers who have become wealthy enough to stop working.
- B) Labourers who are no longer tied to a single landlord and migrate for work.
- C) Artisans who have successfully transitioned to factory work in villages.
- D) Women who have gained ownership of land through recent reforms.

12. Analyze the relationship between irrigation and agrarian structure. Regions with assured irrigation (like river deltas) typically developed:

- A) The most equal distribution of land among all castes.
- B) A decline in the need for agricultural labour.
- C) Highly unequal structures with a large proportion of landless bonded labour.
- D) A complete shift away from agriculture to non-farm activities.

13. What is a significant social consequence of the 'commercialisation' of agriculture and the shift towards cash crops?

- A) A return to traditional hereditary labour relationships.

B) Increased security for small farmers against market fluctuations.

C) Greater dependence of farmers on global market prices and institutional credit.

D) The total disappearance of the dominant caste system.

14. The term 'underemployment' in the agrarian context specifically describes a situation where:

A) Workers are employed in high-paying non-farm jobs.

B) Daily-wage workers do not have work for many days of the year.

C) Tenants pay more than 75 per cent of their crop as rent.

D) Women work on family farms without any legal recognition.

15. How has the increasing interconnection of rural and urban economies impacted the diversity of occupations in villages?

A) It has forced all rural residents to become agricultural labourers.

B) It has led to a decline in all non-farm activities like the postal service.

C) It has created diverse livelihoods in government services, factories, and the army.

D) It has strengthened the traditional 'service' caste system exclusively.

Assertion-Reasoning Challenges

In the following questions, a statement of **Assertion (A)** is followed by a statement of **Reason (R)**. Choose the correct option from the following:

A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.

B. Both A and R are true, but R is NOT the correct explanation of A.

C. A is true, but R is false.

D. A is false, but R is true.

1. Assertion (A): In rural India, there is a close connection between agriculture and culture.

Reason (R): Many Indian festivals, such as Pongal, Bihu, and Baisakhi, are celebrated to mark the harvest season.

2. Assertion (A): The distribution of landholdings in most regions of India is highly unequal.

Reason (R): In many regions, the former 'Untouchable' or Dalit castes were historically not allowed to own land.

3. Assertion (A): The Raiyatwari system of land settlement generally led to higher agricultural productivity than the zamindari system.

Reason (R): Under the raiyatwari system, the colonial government dealt directly with the cultivators, providing them more incentive to invest in land.

4. Assertion (A): Land Ceiling Acts were largely successful in redistributing surplus land to the landless Scheduled Castes and Tribes across India.

Reason (R): Most landowners used loopholes, such as transferring land to relatives or 'benami' transfers, to escape the ceiling limits.

5. Assertion (A): The Green Revolution led to an increase in the use of agricultural laborers in regions where it was successful.

Reason (R): The shift from mono-cropping to multi-cropping and the need for intensive cultivation increased the demand for seasonal labor.

6. Assertion (A): Dominant castes, as described by M.N. Srinivas, are always the highest-ranked castes in the ritual hierarchy (Brahmins).

Reason (R): Dominant castes are those that are numerically significant and own a large portion of the land in a particular region.

7. Assertion (A): Women in rural India often have only limited rights and access to land in reality.

Reason (R): Prevailing patrilineal kinship systems and modes of inheritance exclude women from ownership, despite legal provisions for equal shares.

8. Assertion (A): The abolition of the zamindari system was the most effective of all land reform laws passed after independence.

Reason (R): It removed the layer of intermediaries between the state and the cultivators, weakening the economic and political power of superior landlords.

Answer Key and Explanations

1. **B) Dominant Caste** — Rationale: M.N. Srinivas used this term to identify castes that are numerically large and hold significant economic and political power in a region.
2. **C) Free or forced labour provided to landlords** — Rationale: Begar was a traditional practice where low-ranked caste members were forced to provide unpaid labour to landlords for a fixed number of days.
3. **C) 69 per cent** — Rationale: This specific figure is cited in the text based on the 2011 Census of India.

4. **C) Hereditary labour relationships or bonded labour** — Rationale: These systems represent historical forms of tied labour where workers were dependent on landed classes for support.
5. **D) Bihu** — Rationale: The text explicitly lists Bihu as the harvest festival celebrated in the region of Assam.
6. **B) Zamindars extracted maximum produce to meet heavy land revenue demands.** — Rationale: The heavy tax burden imposed by the British forced zamindars to exploit cultivators, leaving no surplus for agricultural investment.
7. **A) The state dealt directly with cultivators, reducing the tax burden.** — Rationale: By removing the intermediary (zamindar), the raiyatwari system gave actual landholders more incentive to invest in their land.
8. **C) Abolition of the Zamindari system** — Rationale: This legislation was the most effective because it removed the top layer of intermediaries and weakened their local political power.
9. **B) Landowners used loopholes and strategies to escape the law.** — Rationale: Strategies like 'benami' transfers (transferring land to relatives) allowed owners to keep land above the legal limit.
10. **B) It excludes them from land ownership despite legal provisions for equality.** — Rationale: Social practices of patrilineal inheritance mean land usually passes to men, leaving women with only limited access through male heads of household.
11. **B) Labourers who are no longer tied to a single landlord and migrate for work.** — Rationale: This term describes the shift from bonded, hereditary labour to a mobile, commercialised workforce.
12. **C) Highly unequal structures with a large proportion of landless bonded labour.** — Rationale: Intensive cultivation in irrigated areas required more labour, which historically led to more exploitative and unequal social structures.
13. **C) Greater dependence of farmers on global market prices and institutional credit.** — Rationale: Commercialisation integrates local farmers into wider markets, making them vulnerable to price fluctuations and debt.
14. **B) Daily-wage workers do not have work for many days of the year.** — Rationale: Underemployment refers to the seasonal nature of agricultural work where labour is not needed year-round.
15. **C) It has created diverse livelihoods in government services, factories, and the army.** — Rationale: The text notes that rural residents now earn livings through various non-agricultural activities due to urban-rural interconnections.

ASSERTION REASON TYPE QUESTIONS

1. **A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.** *Explanation:* The harvest festivals are a direct cultural manifestation of the agricultural cycle, proving the deep link between the two.
2. **A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.** *Explanation:* Historical caste-based restrictions on land ownership for 'Untouchable' groups are a primary cause of the current unequal distribution of land.
3. **A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.** *Explanation:* The direct relationship between the state and the farmer in the raiyatwari system reduced exploitation compared to the zamindari system, fostering productivity.
4. **D. A is false, but R is true.** *Explanation:* The Assertion is false because the Land Ceiling Acts were largely 'toothless' and unsuccessful; the Reason correctly identifies the loopholes that caused this failure.
5. **A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.** *Explanation:* The Green Revolution's intensive farming methods required more frequent and consistent labour, leading to an increased demand for seasonal workers.
6. **D. A is false, but R is true.** *Explanation:* The Assertion is false because dominant castes are often middle-ranked (like Jats or Vokkaligas), not necessarily the highest ritual rank (Brahmins).
7. **A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.** *Explanation:* The patrilineal system is the underlying social mechanism that prevents women from exercising their legal rights to land ownership.
8. **A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.** *Explanation:* The effectiveness of the law stemmed directly from its ability to remove the intermediaries (zamindars) who previously controlled the agrarian structure.
