

Colonial Forest Policies

Chapter 4: Forest Society and Colonialism · Topic 1

Key Concept

The British introduced the Indian Forest Act, classifying forests into categories like reserved, protected, and village forests, restricting local communities' traditional access and rights.

Forests were increasingly used for commercial purposes, like timber for railways and shipbuilding, often leading to large-scale deforestation and changes in local ecosystems.

Shifting cultivation, a traditional farming method used by many forest communities, was banned or restricted, disrupting the livelihoods of communities dependent on this practice.

These colonial policies often caused conflict with forest-dependent communities, who resisted restrictions that limited their access to resources they had traditionally used freely.

Quick Revision Notes

- The British introduced the Indian Forest Act.
- Forests were classified as reserved, protected or village forests.
- This restricted local communities' traditional access.
- Forests were increasingly used for commercial purposes.
- Timber was used for railways and shipbuilding.
- This led to large-scale deforestation.
- Shifting cultivation was banned or restricted.
- These policies caused conflict with forest communities.

Practice Questions

- 1 Research the Indian Forest Act and its classifications.
- 2 Discuss why the British restricted forest access.
- 3 Explain what shifting cultivation means.
- 4 Discuss why banning shifting cultivation caused hardship.
- 5 Research a conflict between forest communities and colonial policy.
- 6 Discuss the lasting impact of colonial forest policies.