

CLASS-8

HISTORY

CH-4

Tribals, Dikus and the Vision of a Golden Age

(A) **IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGIES**

Dikus : Outsiders or foreigners

Jhum Cultivation: In this type of cultivation, the cultivators clear off a Patch of land, burn the vegetation and spread the ash from the firing, which contains potash to fertilise the soil. Then they prepare the soil for cultivation. They scatter the seeds on the field. Once the crop is ready they move to another land.

Fallow: A field left uncultivated for a while so that the soil recovers fertility.

Mahua: A flower that is eaten or used to make alcohol.

Bewar: It is a term used in Madhya Pradesh for shifting cultivation.

Sleeper: The horizontal planks of wood on which railway lines are laid.

Akhara: Wrestling ground

Sirdars: Leaders

Vaishnav: Worshippers of Vishnu

Satyug : The age of truth

(A) Fill in the blanks:

1. The British described the tribal people as ... *savage*
2. The method of sowing seeds in jhum cultivation is known as ...
broadcast
3. The tribal chiefs got ...***land***... titles in central India under the British land settlements.

4. Tribals went to work in the **tea plantations** of Assam and the ... **coal mines** in Bihar.

(B) State whether true or false:

1. Jhum cultivators plough the land and sow seeds. **False**
2. Cocoons were bought from the Santhals and sold by the traders at five times the purchase price. **True**
3. Birsa urged his followers to purify themselves, give up drinking liquor, and stop believing in witchcraft and sorcery. **True**
4. The British wanted to preserve the tribal way of life. **False**

(C) VERY SHORT QUESTIONS:

1. Mention different types of activities of the tribal people.

Answer:

- (a) Some practiced jhum cultivation,
- (b) Some were hunter-gatherers.
- (c) Some herded animals.
- (d) Some took to settled cultivation.

2. Why did the British want tribal groups to settle down and become peasant cultivators?

Answer:

It was because settled peasants were easier to control and administer than people who were always on the move.

3. Why did the British introduce land settlements?

Answer:

They did so in order to get a regular revenue source for the state

4. Why were some forests classified as Reserved Forests?

Answer:

These forests produced timber which the British wanted.

5. What problem did the British face after they stopped the tribal people from living inside forests?

Answer:

They faced the problem of shortage of labour.

6. Why did the Forest Department establish forest villages?

Answer:

It did so in order to ensure a regular supply of cheap labour.

7. How did the tribal groups view the market and the traders?

Answer:

They viewed them as their main enemies.

8. Who was Birsa?

Answer

Birsa belonged to a family of Mundas, a tribal group that lived in Chottanagpur.

9. What did people say about him?

Answer:

People said that he had miraculous powers. He could cure all diseases and multiply grain.

10. What problems did Birsa set out to resolve?

Answer:

(a) The familiar ways of tribals seemed to be disappearing.

(b) Their livelihoods were under threat.

(c) The religion appeared to be in danger. Birsa set out to resolve these problems.

11. Who were the outsiders being referred to as dikus?

Answer:

Traders, moneylenders, missionaries, Hindu landlords, and the British were the outsiders being referred to as dikus.

12. On what charges was Birsa convicted?

Answer:

Birsa was convicted on the charges of rioting.

13. When did Birsa die and how?

Answer:

He died of cholera in 1900.

14. When and where was the forest satyagraha staged?

Answer:

The forest satyagraha occurred in the 1930s in the Central Provinces.

(D) SHORT QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

1. How did traders and moneylenders exploit the tribal people?

Or

How were traders and moneylenders cause of the tribals' misery?

Answer:

Tribal groups often needed to buy and sell in order to be able to get the goods that were not produced within the locality. This led to their dependence on traders and moneylenders. Traders came around with things for sale. They sold the goods at high prices.

Moneylenders used to give loans with which the tribals met their cash needs, adding to what they earned. But the interest charged on the loans was very high. Thus, both traders and moneylenders always exploited tribal people. It is therefore the tribals- saw them as evil outsiders and the cause of their misery.

2. Describe land settlements introduced by the British.

Answer:

The British introduced land settlements to ensure a regular revenue source for the state. Under these settlements:

- (a) the British measured the land, defined the rights of each individual to that land, and fixed the revenue demand for the state.
 - (b) some peasants were declared landowners, other tenants. The tenants were to pay rent to the landowner who in turn paid revenue to the state.
3. Give a brief history of the revolts by different tribal groups in the country.

Answer:

Several tribal groups in different parts of the country were unhappy with the changes they were experiencing and the problems they were facing under the British rule. Finally, they rebelled against the changes in laws, the restrictions on their practices, the new taxes they had to pay, and the exploitation by traders and moneylenders.

- (a) The Kols rebelled in 1831-32.
 - (b) The Santhals rose in revolt in 1855.
 - (c) The Bastar Rebellion in central India broke out in 1910.
 - (d) The Warli Revolt in Maharashtra in 1940.
 - (e) Birsa Munda also led one such movement.
4. How did Birsa resume his movement after his release in 1897?

Answer:

Birsa was released in 1897. Now he began touring the villages to gather support. He used traditional symbols and language to rouse people, urging them to destroy dikus and the Europeans and establish a kingdom under his leadership. Birsa's followers began targetting the symbols of dikus and European power. They attacked police stations and churches and raided the property of moneylenders and zamindars. They raised the white flag as a symbol of Birsa Raj.

5. In what ways was the Birsa movement significant?

Answer:

The Birsa movement was significant in two ways:

- (a) It forced the colonial government to introduce laws so that the land of the tribals could not easily be taken over by dikus.
- (b) It showed once again that the tribal people had the capacity to protest against injustice and express their anger against colonial rule. They did this in their own specific way, inventing their own rituals and symbols of struggle.

(E) EXERCISE QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

1. What problems did shifting cultivators face under British rule?

Answer:

The life of shifting cultivators was directly connected to the forest. So, when the British brought changes in forest laws, their life was badly affected. The British extended their control over all forests and declared that forests were state property. Some forests were classified as Reserved Forests for they produced timber which the British wanted. In these forests, people were not allowed to move freely and practice jhum cultivations. As a result, many jhum cultivators had to move to other areas in search of work.

2. How did the powers of tribal chiefs change under colonial rule?

Answer:

Change in the Powers of the Tribal Chiefs under Colonial Rule

- (a) Before the arrival of the British in India, tribal chiefs were important people.
- (b) They had economic power.
- (c) They had the right to administer and control their territories.
- (d) In some areas, they had their own policy.
- (e) They decided on the local rules of land and forest management.

The British changed their functions and powers considerably.

- (a) They were allowed to keep their land titles over a cluster of villages and rent outlands.
- (b) They were divested of their administrative power.
- (c) They were forced to follow laws made by the British in India.
- (d) They also had to pay tribute to the British, and discipline the tribal groups on behalf of the British.
- (e) They lost the authority they had earlier enjoyed amongst their people.
- (f) Now they were unable to fulfill their traditional functions.

3. What accounts for the anger of the tribals against the dikus?

Answer:

The tribals wanted to drive out the dikus—missionaries, moneylenders, Hindu landlords, and the government because they saw them as the cause of their misery. The following facts account for their anger against the dikus:

- (a) The land policies of the British were destroying their traditional land system.
- (b) Hindu landlords and moneylenders were taking over their land.
- (c) Missionaries were criticising their traditional culture.

4. What was Birsa's vision of a golden age? Why do you think such a vision appealed to the people of the region?

Answer:

Birsa was deeply influenced by many of the ideas he came in touch within his growing-up years. The movement that he led aimed at reforming tribal society. He urged the Munda to give up drinking liquor, clean their village, and stop believing in witchcraft and sorcery. He often remembered the golden past of the Mundas, when they lived a good life, constructed embankments, tapped natural springs, planted trees and orchards, practiced cultivation to earn their living. They did not kill their brethren and relatives. They lived honestly.

Birsa wanted to restore this glorious past. Such a vision appealed to the people of the region because they were very much eager to lead a free life. They had got fed up with the colonial forest laws and the restrictions that were imposed on them.

Map Skills (HOME ASSIGNMENT)

Question 1.

On an outline political map of India, mark the location of the following tribal groups in India:

- (a) Gaddis
- (b) Gonds
- (c) Santhals
- (d) Baigas
- (e) Mundas
- (f) Khonds