

Chapter 4 Tribals, Dikus and the Vision of a Golden Age

Fill in the blanks:

1. The British described the tribal people as
2. The method of sowing seeds in jhum cultivation is known as
3. The tribal chiefs got titles in central India under the British land settlements.
4. Tribals went to work in the of Assam and the in Bihar.

Answer:

1. savage
2. broadcast
3. land
4. tea plantations, coal mines

Question 2.

State whether true or false:

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

Answer:

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. False

Question 3.

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.

Question 4.

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

Answer:

Change in the Powers of the Tribal Chiefs under Colonial Rule

- Before the arrival of the British in India, tribal chiefs were important people.
- They had economic power.

- They had the right to administer and control their territories.
- In some areas, they had their own policy.
- They decided on the local rules of land and forest management.

The British changed their functions and powers considerably.

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

Question 5.

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:

1. The land policies of the British were destroying their traditional land system.
2. Hindu landlords and moneylenders were taking over their land.
3. Missionaries were criticising their traditional culture.

Question 6.

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.

Question 7.

Find out from your parents, friends or teachers, the names of some heroes of other tribal revolts in the twentieth century. Write their story in your own words.

Answer:

Students are suggested to do this work themselves.

Question 8.

Choose any tribal group living in India today. Find out about their customs and way of life, and how their lives have changed in the last 50 years.

Answer:

Students are suggested to visit a neighbouring tribal area and collect information regarding their customs and way of life and other things.

Class 8 History Chapter 4 Tribals, Dikus and the Vision of a Golden Age Exercise Questions

Question 1.

Choose the correct option:

(i) The Khonds belonged to

- (a) Gujarat
- (b) Jharkhand
- (c) Orissa
- (d) Punjab

(ii) British officials saw these settled tribal groups as more civilised than hunter-gatherers

- (a) Gortds
- (b) Sahthals
- (c) Khonds
- (d) Both (a) and (b)

(iii) Vaishnav preachers were the worshippers of

- (a) Shiva
- (b) Durga
- (c) Krishna
- (d) Vishnu

(iv) Kusum and Palash flowers were used to

- (a) prepare medicines
- (b) make garlands
- (c) color clothes and leather
- (d) prepare hair oil

(v) The Gaddis of Kulu was

- (a) shepherds
- (b) cattle herders
- (c) fruit gatherers
- (d) hunters

Answer:

(i) (c), (ii) (d), (iii) (d), (iv) (c), (v) (a).

Question 2.

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words to complete each sentence.

1. The lives of shifting cultivators depended on free movement within
2. The were not ready to work as laborers.
3. The British wanted tribal groups to and become cultivators.
4. The British declare that forests were property.
5. Birsa was born in a family of a tribal group that lived in
6. The Santhals of Hazaribagh reared

Answer:

1. forests
2. Baigas
3. settle down, peasant
4. state
5. Mundas, Chottanagpur
6. cocoons

Question 3.

State whether each of the following statements is True or False.

1. The traders and moneylenders never deceived the tribal people.
2. The silk growers earned huge amount of wealth and therefore enjoyed a happy life.
3. Many tribal groups did not like the colonial forest laws and therefore revolted.
4. The jhum cultivators in north-east India stopped their traditional practice.
5. The tribal Chiefs lost their authority under the British rule.

Answer:

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True

Question 4.

Match the items given in Column A correctly with those given in Column B.

Column A	Column B
(i) <i>Baigas</i>	(a) <i>Punjab</i>
(ii) <i>Van Gujjars</i>	(b) <i>Andhra Pradesh</i>
(iii) <i>Gaddis</i>	(c) <i>Jharkhand</i>
(iv) <i>Labadis</i>	(d) <i>Central India</i>
(v) <i>Santhals</i>	(e) <i>Kulu</i>

Answer:

- (i) (d)
- (ii) (a)
- (iii) (e)
- (iv) (b)
- (v) (c)

Very Short Answer Questions

Question 1.

Mention different types of activities of the tribal people.

Answer:

1. Some practiced jhum cultivation,
2. Some were hunter-gatherers.

3. Some herded animals.
4. Some took to settled cultivation.

Question 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.

Question 3.

Why did the British introduce land settlements?

Answer:

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

Question 4.

Why were some forests classified as Reserved Forests?

Answer:

These forests produced timber which the British wanted.

Question 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.

Question 6.

Why did the Forest Department establish forest villages?

Answer:

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

Question 7.

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

Answer:

They viewed them as their main enemies.

Question 8.

Who was Birsa?

Answer:

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

Question 9.

What did people say about him?

Answer:

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

Question 10.

What problems did Birsa set out to resolve?

Answer:

- The familiar ways of tribals seemed to be disappearing.
- Their livelihoods were under threat.
- The religion appeared to be in danger. Birsa set out to resolve these problems.

Question 11.

Who were the outsiders being referred to as dikus? [Imp.]

Answer:

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

Question 12.

On what charges was Birsa convicted?

Answer:

Birsa was convicted on the charges of rioting.

Question 13.

When did Birsa die and how?

Answer:

He died of cholera in 1900.

Question 14.

When and where was the forest satyagraha staged?

Answer:

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

Short Answer Type Questions

Question 1.

What were the main activities of the Khonds living in the forests of Orissa?

Answer:

The Khonds were basically hunter-gatherers. They regularly went out on collective hunts and then divided the meat amongst themselves. They ate fruits and roots collected from the forest and cooked food with the oil they extracted from the seeds of the sal and mahua. They used many forest shrubs and herbs for medicinal purposes and sold forest produce in the local markets. All their activities were based on forests.

Question 2.

How did traders and moneylenders exploit the tribal people?

Or

How were traders and moneylenders cause of the tribals' misery? [V. Imp.]

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.

Question 3.

How did the British officials view settled tribal groups and those who moved about from place to place?

Answer:

The British officials saw settled tribal groups such as the Gonds and Santhals as more civilised than

hunter-gatherers or shifting cultivators. These tribal groups lived in the forests and kept on moving. They did not have a fixed home. The British considered them wild and savage and therefore they needed to be settled and civilised.

Question 4.

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:

- the British measured the land, defined the rights of each individual to that land, and fixed the revenue demand for the state.
- some peasants were declared landowners, other tenants. The tenants were to pay rent to the landowner who in turn paid revenue to the state.

Question 5.

Why was the British effort to settle jhum cultivators not very successful?

Answer:

(a) It is usually difficult to carry on settled plough cultivation in areas where water is scarce and the soil is dry.

(b) Jhum cultivators who took to plough cultivation often suffered since their fields did not preclude good yields. Hence, the jhum cultivators in north-east India insisted on continuing with their traditional practice.

(c) The British faced widespread protests. Therefore, they allowed them to carry on shifting cultivation in some parts of the forest.

Question 6.

What problem did the British face after they brought changes in forest laws? How did they solve this problem?

Answer:

The British stopped the tribal people from living inside forests by introducing some changes in forest laws. This created a problem. They lost labour force because most of the jhum cultivators moved to other areas in search of work. Who would cut trees for railway sleepers and transport logs?

Colonial officials solved this problem by giving jhum cultivators small patches of land in the forests and allowing them to cultivate these on the condition that these who lived in villages would have to provide labour to the Forest Department and look after the forests. The Forest Department established forest villages in many regions to ensure a regular supply of cheap labour.

Question 7.

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.

- The Kols rebelled in 1831-32.
- The Santhals rose in revolt in 1855.
- The Bastar Rebellion in central India broke out in 1910.

- The Warli Revolt in Maharashtra in 1940.
- Birsa Munda also led one such movement.

Question 8.

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.

Question 9.

In what ways was the Birsa movement significant?

Answer:

The Birsa movement was significant in two ways:

1. It forced the colonial government to introduce laws so that the land of the tribals could not easily be taken over by dikus.
2. 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.

Long Answer Type Questions

Question 1.

How did different tribal groups live? Describe in brief.

Answer:

Tribal people were involved in many different types of activities:

Some tribal people practised jhum cultivation also known as shifting cultivation. This was done on small patches of land, mostly in forests. The cultivators cleared off small patches of land. They then burnt the vegetation and spread the ash from the firing, which contained potash to fertilize the soil. They used equipment like ax and hoe for preparing the soil for cultivation. Then they scattered the seeds on the field. Once the crop was ready and harvested, they moved to another field. Shifting cultivators were found in the hilly and forested tracts of north-east and central India.

Some tribal groups were engaged in hunting animals and gathering forest produce, hence known as "hunter-gatherers". They saw forests as essential for survival. The Khonds was such a community living in the forests of Orissa. They regularly went out on collective hunts and then divided the meat amongst themselves. They ate fruits and roots and cooked food with the oil they extracted from the seeds of the sal and mahua. They got rice and other grains in return for their valuable forest produce. Sometimes they did odd jobs in the villages like carrying loads, etc.

Some tribal groups lived by herding and rearing animals. They were pastoralists who moved with their herds of cattle or sheep according to the seasons. For example, the Victim Gujjars of Punjab hills, and the Labadis of Andhra Pradesh were cattle herders, the Gaddis of Kulu were shepherds and the Bakarwals of Kashmir reared goats.

Some tribal community took to settled cultivation. They cultivated their fields in one place year after year, instead of moving from place to place. They began to use the plough and gradually got rights over the land they lived on.

Question 2.

Give a brief life sketch of Birsa Munda.

Answer:

Birsa was born in the mid-1870s in a family of Mundas, a tribal group that lived in Chottanagpur. He grew up around the forests of Bohanda, grazing sheep, playing flute, and dancing in the local akharas. As an adolescent, Birsa heard tales of the Munda uprisings of the past and saw sirdars (leaders) of the community urging the people to revolt. Birsa took great interest in the sermons of missionaries because they inspired the Mundas to attain their lost rights. He also enjoyed the company of a prominent Vaishnav preacher. He wore the sacred thread and began to value the importance of purity and piety.

He decided to reform tribal society. He urged the Mundas to give up all their bad practices like drinking liquor, etc. Here, it is worth mentioning that Birsa also turned against missionaries and Hindu landlords. He urged his followers to restore their glorious past. He talked of a golden age in the past when Mundas lived a very good life. They did not kill their brethren and relatives. Birsa wanted to see these qualities again in the tribal society.

British officials got terrified to visualise the political aims of Birsa Munda. As the movement spread, the government arrested him in 1895, convicted him on the charges of rioting. He has also jailed for two years.

After Birsa was released in 1897, he began to tour the villages to gather support. He urged his supporters to destroy dikus and the Europeans. In 1900, he died of cholera and the movement faded out. But it proved significant in the long run.