

## Chapter 5 Pastoralists in the Modern world

### Question-1

Explain why nomadic tribes need to move from one place to another. What are the advantages to the environment of this continuous movement?

#### Solution:

People who moved from one place to another, as a community, with all their belongings, were called nomads. These nomads moved from place to place in search of food and a livelihood. The nomadic pastoralists had herds of goats and sheep, or camels and cattle. Finding pasture for their herds was the main purpose of their constant movement.

The nomads moved between their summer and winter grazing grounds. In winter they usually lived on the low hills and the dry scrub forests provided pasture for their herds. They lived on the low hills during winter as the high mountains were snow-covered. During summer, that is, by the end of April the nomads packed their belongings, round up their herds and start trekking towards the northern mountains. As the snow melted the mountains were converted into carpets of lush green grass.

This provides ample pasture for their herds. The nomadic pastoralists thus moved annually between their summer and winter grazing grounds. When the pasture was exhausted or unusable in one place they moved their herds and flock to new areas. The continuous movement of the nomads with their grazing herds ensured that the natural pastures were not overused. The movement allowed the grass and foliage to grow again and this preserved the environment.

### Question-2

Discuss why the colonial government in India brought in the following laws. In each case, explain how the law changed the lives of pastoralists:

#### Solution:

##### Waste Land Rules

Uncultivated land was taken over by the colonial government and given to selected individuals. This rule was called Waste Land rules. It was brought into force during the mid-nineteenth century. Some of the individuals, who were given this land, by the government, were made headmen. This assured the colonial government their loyalty and support.

The wastelands that were taken over, were actually grazing tracts, used by the nomadic pastoralists. When this wasteland was brought under cultivation by the new owners, the pastoralists lost their grazing grounds and were put to a lot of hardship

##### Forest Acts

The colonial government passed the Indian Forest Acts in 1865. This Act was amended in the year 1878. Under this amendment the forests were divided into 3 categories, - reserved, protected and village forests.

The reserved forests were usually forests which produced commercially valuable timber. The Forest Act ensured that the total wealth of these forests could be enjoyed by the colonists alone, as no one was allowed access to these forests.

Under this Act nomads were not allowed to graze their cattle in these forests. They had to

get permit to graze their cattle in a few of these forests. If they overstayed their permit period they were fined or punished. This left the nomads with no pasture for their herds.

### Criminal Tribes Act

The colonial government in India passed the Criminal Tribes Act in the year 1871. The Act earmarked communities of craftsmen, traders and pastoralists as Criminal Tribes. These communities were forced to live only in notified village settlements, when this Act came into force. They needed a permit to move out of this specified village. The village police also kept a continuous watch over them. The moving nomads disturbed the colonists. They wanted the natives in fixed places with fixed rights so that they could be easily controlled.

The Criminal Tribes Act was a great insult to the honest hardworking nomads. Their entire way of life was affected .Grazing Tax

Pastoralists had to pay taxes for the animals they grazed on the pastures. This was called the Grazing Tax.

The colonial government wanted to increase its revenue. Tax was imposed on land, on canal water, on salt, on trade goods, on animals and even on grazing. In the mid-nineteenth century, grazing tax was introduced in most pastoral tracts of India.

The pastoralists had to show a pass and pay tax to enter a grazing tract. He had to pay tax according to the number of cattle heads he had .This taxation was a terrible burden on the poor pastoralists.

### Question-3

Give reasons to explain why the Maasai community lost their grazing lands.

#### **Solution:**

The Maasais were a community of cattle herders. They lived primarily in East Africa. There were 300, 000 Maasais in Southern Kenya and 150,000 in Tanzania. The Maasais occupied a vast stretch of land from North Kenya to the steppes of Northern Tanzania. The lush green grass of the steppes provided ample fodder for their herds.

In the nineteenth century, European imperial powers captured Africa and scrambled for territorial possessions. They drew up boundaries and took over the land that was hitherto occupied by the Maasais. The Maasai lost about 60 per cent of their pre-colonial lands. They were restricted to a dry zone with uncertain rainfall and poor pastures. The Maasais faced continuous loss of their grazing lands and this affected their lives in times of drought and even reshaped their social relationships. The British colonial government in East Africa encouraged the local peasant communities to expand cultivation. Soon pasturelands were turned into cultivated fields and the Maasai community yet again lost its grazing fields.

The colonist also converted grazing land into Game Reserves. The pastoralists were not allowed to enter these reserves. Thus the grazing grounds of the Maasais was once again confiscated. The Maasais were soon restricted to small areas. They could not hunt or graze their animals in the reserved areas. Due to the restriction to small areas, fodder became scarce. Large numbers of Maasai cattle died of starvation and disease. The loss of the finest grazing lands and water resources created a lot of hardship for the Maasais.

#### Question-4

There are many similarities in the way in which the modern world forced changes in the lives of pastoral communities in India and East Africa. Write about any two examples of changes which were similar for Indian pastoralists and the Maasai herders.

#### Solution:

(a) In India, by the mid-nineteenth century, various forest acts were passed. Through these acts some forests which produced commercially valuable timber like deodar and sal were declared 'reserved'. No pastoralist was allowed access to these forests.

In protected forests some customary rights of the pastoralists were granted but their movement was restricted. In Maasailand, large areas of grazing land were turned into game reserves. Pastoralists could not enter the reserves, they could neither hunt animals nor graze their herds.

(b) Forest Acts changed the lives of the pastoralists. They could not enter many forests, which had earlier provided forage for their cattle. They needed a permit for entry, their entry and departure was specified and the number of days they could spend in the Forest was limited. The pastoral groups in Africa were forced to stay within the limits of the reserves. They could not move out with their stock without special permits. It was difficult to get permits.