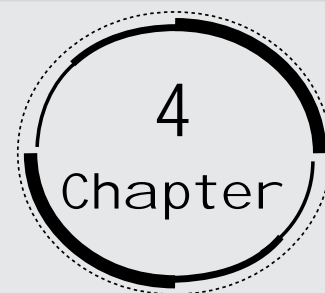


Tribals, Dikus and the Vision of a Golden Age



1. Fill in the blanks:

(a) The British described the tribal people as _____.

Ans: The British described the tribal people as uncivilized or wild nomads.

(b) The method of sowing seeds in jhum cultivation is known as _____.

Ans: The method of sowing seeds in jhum cultivation is known as Shifting Cultivation.

(c) The tribal chiefs got _____ titles in central India under the British land settlements.

Ans: The tribal chiefs got sirdar titles in central India under the British land settlements.

(d) Tribals went to work in the _____ of Assam and the _____ in Bihar.

Ans: Tribals went to work in the tea gardens of Assam and the indigo farms in Bihar.

2. State whether true or false:

(a) Jhum cultivators plough the land and sow seeds.

Ans: False

(b) Cocoons were bought from the Santhals and sold by the traders at five times the purchase price.

Ans: True

(c) Birsa urged his followers to purify themselves, give up drinking liquor and stop believing in witchcraft and sorcery.

Ans: True

(d) The British wanted to preserve the tribal way of life.

Ans: False

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

Ans: The shifting cultivators were forced to follow the pattern of settled cultivation. But they were revoked of their access to forests and due to land and water scarcity, they could not make adequate production. So, they used to move on to other areas in search of work.

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

Ans: The functions and powers of the tribal chiefs changed a lot under British rule. They lost most of their administrative powers and consequently their authority. They had to pay large tributes to the British and were forced to oppress their own people in the name of discipline. Hence, the colonial rule they lost the authority they had earlier enjoyed amongst their people and were unable to fulfil their traditional functions.

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

Ans: There are a number of reasons for anger of the tribals against the dikus:

- i. The tribals had been practicing shifting cultivation but the British officials forced them to follow a pattern of settled agriculture and also introduced land settlements which were not well received by them.
- ii. The outside traders and landlords used to occupy their lands and forests which the tribals had worshipped for a long time. They also interfered into their financial systems by making them take loans at very high interests so they were considered to be evil.
- iii. The tribal chiefs had lost most of their authority and had difficulties in fulfilling their necessary duties as the chiefs, Thus, they went aggressively against the British.
- iv. The British removed the locals from their own lands, as a result of which they became homeless and went out in search of work and livelihood.

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

Ans. Birsa talked about a golden age which was to be an age of truth in which the tribal people would have access to development. This took place at a time when the Mundas had no enemies or dikus. They wanted to restore the ancestral rights of their communities as they had been in the past. The golden age was supposed to be a reformed society where people would be away from intoxication, sorcery and also outside influences such as the Christian Missionaries and other foreigners who wanted to change their tribal culture. Thus, this vision had appealed a lot to the tribals of the region.

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.

Ans. Rani Gaidinliu was a freedom fighter and was born in Manipur state. She participated in the freedom struggle with the leader of the Naga tribe, Hasipau Jodonang. He started a movement to expel the British from Manipur state and due

to this, they captured and hanged him till death. After the death of her Guru, Gaidinliu herself took over the leadership of the movement. The British tried to suppress her actions but she continued and would often go underground. She was arrested in 1932 but was released after Independence. Later on, she received the Padma Bhushan and passed away in 1993.

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.

Ans. The Sentinelese tribe lives on the North Sentinel Island in the Andaman Sea. They are the dwellers of the place since prehistoric times and have not been exposed to the outside world. They still practise their own traditions and live like prehistoric humans. They do not interact with modern humans and live on hunting. The civilians are not allowed to go to the North Sentinel Islands and they have been left with full autonomy by the Government of India.