

HISTORY CHAPTER-7

CLASS-7

TRIBES NOMADS AND SETTLED
COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

- Over the centuries important political, social and economic developments had taken place. But social change was not the same everywhere, because different kinds of societies evolved differently.
- In large parts of the subcontinent, society was already divided according to the rule of *varna*. *These rules, as prescribed by the Brahmanas*, were accepted by the rulers of large kingdoms.
- Under the Delhi Sultans and the Mughals, this hierarchy between social classes grew further.

Beyond Big Cities: Tribal Societies

- Many societies in the subcontinent did not follow the social rules and rituals prescribed by the Brahmanas. Nor were they divided into numerous unequal classes. Such societies are often called tribes.
- Members of each tribe were united by kinship bonds. Many tribes obtained their livelihood from agriculture. Others were hunter-gatherers or herders. Most often they combined these activities to make full use of the natural resources of the area in which they lived.
- Some tribes were nomadic and moved from one place to another. A tribal group controlled land and pastures jointly, and divided these amongst households according to its own rules.

Beyond Big Cities: Tribal Societies

- Many large tribes thrived in different parts of the subcontinent. They usually lived in forests, hills, deserts and places difficult to reach.
- But the caste-based and tribal societies also depended on each other for their diverse needs. This relationship, of conflict and dependence, gradually caused both societies to change.

Who were Tribal People?

- A few exceptions apart, tribal people did not keep written records. But they preserved rich customs and oral traditions. These were passed down to each new generation.
- In Punjab, the Khokhar tribe was very influential during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Later, the Gakkhars became more important. Their chief, Kamal Khan Gakkhar, was made a noble (mansabdar) by Emperor Akbar. In Multan and Sind, the Langahs and Arghuns.
- In many areas of present-day Bihar and Jharkhand, Chero chiefdoms had emerged by the twelfth century. Raja Man Singh, Akbar's famous general, attacked and defeated the Cheros in 1591.

TRIBALS INHABITED DIFFERENT REGIONS.

- The Mundas and Santals were among the other important tribes that lived in this region and also in Orissa and Bengal.
- The Maharashtra highlands and Karnataka were home to Kolis, Berads and numerous others.
- The large tribe of Bhils was spread across western and central India.

How Nomads and Mobile People Lived

- Nomadic pastoralists moved over long distances with their animals. They lived on milk and other pastoral products.
- They also exchanged wool, ghee, etc., with settled agriculturists for grain, cloth, utensils and other products.
- The Banjaras were the most important trader - nomads. Their caravan was called tanda. Sultan Alauddin Khalji used the Banjaras to transport grain to the city markets.
- Many pastoral tribes reared and sold animals, such as cattle and horses, to the prosperous people. Different castes of petty pedlars also travelled from village to village.

Changing Society: New Castes and Hierarchies

- As the economy and the needs of society grew, people with new skills were required. Smaller castes, or jatis, emerged within varnas.
- Jatis, rather than varna, became the basis for organising society.
- They belonged to different lineages, such as Hunas, Chandelas, Chalukyas and others.
- Gradually, with the support of the Brahmanas, many tribes became part of the caste system. But only the leading tribal families could join the ruling class.
- The unequal social order, prescribed by orthodox Hinduism, was not widely accepted in these areas.

A Closer Look-THE GONDS

- The Gonds lived in a vast forested region called Gondwana – or “country inhabited by Gonds”. They practised shifting cultivation.
- The Akbar Nama, a history of Akbar’s reign, mentions the Gond kingdom of Garha Katanga that had 70,000 villages.
- The administrative system of these kingdoms was becoming centralised. The kingdom was divided into garhs. Each garh was controlled by a particular Gond clan. This was further divided into units of 84 villages called chaurasi. The chaurasi was subdivided into barhots which were made up of 12 villages each.

THE GONDS

- The emergence of large states changed the nature of Gond society. Their basically equal society gradually got divided into unequal social classes. Brahmanas received land grants from the Gond rajas and became more influential. The Gond chiefs now wished to be recognised as Rajputs. So, Aman Das, the Gond raja of Garha Katanga, assumed the title of Sangram Shah.
- His son, Dalpat, married princess Durgawati, the daughter of Salbahan, the Chandel Rajput raja of Mahoba.
- Rani Durgawati was very capable, and started ruling on behalf of her five-year-old son, Bir Narain. Under her, the kingdom became even more extensive.

THE AHOMS

- The Ahoms migrated to the Brahmaputra valley from present-day Myanmar in the thirteenth century. They created a new state by suppressing the older political system of the bhuiyans (landlords).
- During the sixteenth century, they annexed the kingdoms of the Chhutiyas (1523) and of Koch-Hajo (1581) and subjugated many other tribes.
- The Ahoms built a large state, and for this they used firearms as early as the 1530s. By the 1660s they could even make high- quality gunpowder and cannons.

THE AHOMS

- The Ahom state depended upon forced labour. Those forced to work for the state were called paiks. A census of the population was taken. Each village had to send a number of paiks by rotation.
- Almost all adult males served in the army during war. At other times, they were engaged in building dams, irrigation systems and other public works. The Ahoms also introduced new methods of rice cultivation.
- Ahom society was divided into clans or khels. There were very few castes of artisans, so artisans in the Ahom areas came from the adjoining kingdoms. A khel often controlled several villages

THE AHOMS

- Originally, the Ahoms worshipped their own tribal gods. During the first half of the seventeenth century, however, the influence of Brahmanas increased. Temples and Brahmanas were granted land by the king. In the reign of Sib Singh (1714-1744).
- Hinduism became the predominant religion. But the Ahom kings did not completely give up their traditional beliefs after adopting Hinduism.
- Ahom society was very sophisticated. Poets and scholars were given land grants. Theatre was encouraged. Important works of Sanskrit were translated into the local language.

CONCLUSION

- Considerable social change took place in the subcontinent during the period we have been examining. Var na-based society and tribal people constantly interacted with each other.
- This interaction caused both kinds of societies to adapt and change. There were many different tribes and they took up diverse livelihoods.
- Over a period of time, many of them merged with caste-based society. Others, however, rejected both the caste system and orthodox Hinduism.

Thank you