

CBSE Notes Class 7 Social Science History Chapter 7

Tribes, Nomads and Settled Communities

Beyond Big Cities: Tribal Societies

Societies in the subcontinent-not follow the social rules-nor rituals prescribed by the Brahmanas-not divided into numerous unequal classes-called tribes-Members of each tribe united by kinship bonds-tribes obtained their livelihood from agriculture-some were hunter-gatherers or herders- combined these activities to make full use of the natural resources of the area in which they lived-some were nomadic and moved from one place to another-tribal group controlled land and pastures jointly and divided these amongst households according to its own rules-Many large tribes thrived in different parts of the subcontinent- lived in forests, hills, deserts and places difficult to reach-clashed with the more powerful caste-based societies-tribes retained their freedom and preserved their separate culture-caste-based and tribal societies also depended on each other for their diverse needs.-relationship, of conflict and dependence caused both societies to change.

Who were Tribal People?

Contemporary historians and travellers give very scanty information about tribes-tribal people did not keep written records-they preserved rich customs and oral traditions-were passed down to each new generation- Present day historians use such oral traditions to write tribal histories- found in almost every region of the subcontinent-area and influence of a tribe varied at different points of time-powerful tribes controlled large territories-In Punjab, the Khokhar tribe very influential during the 13th and 14th centuries-Later, the Gakkhars became more important-chief, Kamal Khan Gakkhar was made a noble (mansabdar) by Emperor Akbar-In Multan and Sind, the Langahs and Arghuns dominated extensive regions- they were subdued by the Mughals-Balochis-large and powerful tribe in the north-west- divided into many smaller clans under different chiefs-In the western Himalaya lived the shepherd tribe of Gaddis-The distant north-eastern part of the subcontinent entirely dominated by tribes – the Nagas, Ahoms and many others. In many areas of present-day Bihar and Jharkhand, Chero chiefdoms emerged by the 12th century-Raja Man Singh, Akbar's famous general, attacked and defeated the Cheros in 1591-large amount of booty taken from them, but were not entirely subdued-Under Aurangzeb, Mughal forces captured many Chero fortresses-subjugated the tribe-The Mundas and Santals among the other important tribes that lived in this region and also in Orissa and Bengal-Maharashtra highlands and Karnataka were home to Kolis, Berads and numerous others-Kolis lived in many areas of Gujarat-Further south there were large tribal populations of Koragas, Vetars, Maravars and many others- large tribe of Bhils was spread across western and central India-By the late 16th century, many of them had become settled agriculturists and some even zamindars-Many Bhil clans, nevertheless, remained hunter-gatherers-The Gonds were found in great numbers across the present-day states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

How Nomads and Mobile People Lived

Nomadic pastoralists-moved long distances with their animals-lived on milk and other pastoral products-exchanged wool, ghee, etc., with settled agriculturists for grain, cloth, utensils and other products-bought and sold these goods as they moved from one place to another, transporting them on their animals-Banjaras the most important trader nomads-caravan was called tanda-Sultan Alauddin Khalji used the Banjaras to transport grain to the city markets-Emperor Jahangir wrote in his memoirs that the Banjaras carried grain on their bullocks from different areas and sold it in towns- transported food grain for the Mughal army during military campaigns-With a large army, there could be 100,000 bullocks carrying grain-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- made and sold wares such as ropes, reeds, straw matting and coarse sacks-mendicants acted as wandering merchants-were castes of entertainers who performed in different towns and villages for their livelihood.

Changing Society: New Castes and Hierarchies

Economy and the needs of society grew-people with new skills were required-Smaller castes, or jatis, emerged within varnas-new castes appeared amongst the Brahmanas- many tribes and social groups were taken into caste-based society and given the status of jatis-Specialised artisans (smiths, carpenters and masons) were recognised as separate jatis by the Brahmanas-Jatis, rather than varna, became the basis for organising society- Among the Kshatriyas, new Rajput clans became powerful by the 11th and 12th centuries-belonged to different lineages, such as Hunas, Chandelas, Chalukyas and others-Many of these clans regarded as Rajputs- gradually replaced the older rulers, especially in agricultural areas-a developed society was emerging-rulers used their wealth to create powerful states-rise of Rajput clans to the position of rulers set an example for the tribal people to follow- with the support of the Brahmanas, many tribes became part of the caste system-only the leading tribal families could join the ruling class-large majority joined the lower jatis of caste society-many dominant tribes of Punjab, Sind and the North-West Frontier had adopted Islam quite early-continued to reject the caste system-unequal social order, prescribed by orthodox Hinduism not widely accepted in this areas-emergence of states closely related to social change amongst tribal people.

A Closer Look

The Gonds

The Gonds-vast forested region called Gondwana-or "country inhabited by Gonds"-practised shifting cultivation-tribe was further divided into much smaller clans-Each clan had its own raja or rai-when the power of the Delhi Sultans was declining, a few large Gond kingdoms began to dominate the smaller Gond chiefs-The Akbar Nama, a history of Akbar's reign mentions the Gond kingdom of Garha Katanga that had 70,000 villages-administrative systems of these kingdoms became centralised- kingdom divided into garhs-Each garh controlled by a particular Gond clan-further divided into units of 84 villages called chaurasi-chaurasi was subdivided into barhots made up of 12 villages each-emergence of large states changed the nature of Gond society-basically equal society gradually got divided into unequal social classes-Brahmanas received land grants from the Gond rajas-became more influential-The Gond chiefs

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-Dalpat died early- Rani Durgawati was capable-started ruling on behalf of her 5-year-old son, Bir Narain-Under her, the kingdom became even more extensive-In 1565, the Mughal forces under Asaf Khan attacked Garha Katanga- Strong resistance was put up by Rani Durgawati-She was defeated-preferred to die rather than surrender-Her son, too, died fighting.

Garha Katanga a rich state-earned much wealth by trapping and exporting wild elephants to other kingdoms-When the Mughals defeated the Gonds, they captured a huge booty of precious coins and elephants-annexed part of the kingdom-granted the rest to Chandra Shah, an uncle of Bir Narain-Despite the fall of Garha Katanga, Gond kingdoms survived for some time-they became much weaker-later struggled unsuccessfully against the stronger Bundelas and Marathas.

The Ahoms

Ahoms -migrated to the Brahmaputra valley from present-day Myanmar in the 13th century-created a new state by suppressing the older political system of the bhuiyans (landlords)-During the 16th century annexed the kingdoms of the Chhutiyas (1523) and of Koch-Hajo (1581)-subjugated many other tribes-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 faced many invasions from the south-west-In 1662, the Mughals under Mir Jumla attacked the Ahom kingdom-Despite their brave defence, were defeated-direct Mughal control over the region could not last long-Ahom state depended upon forced labour-Those forced to work for the state were called paiks- census of the population taken-Each village had to send a number of paiks by rotation-People from heavily populated areas shifted to less populated places-Ahom clans were thus broken up-By the first half of the 17th century, administration became quite centralised-all adult males served in the army during the war-they were also engaged in building dams, irrigation systems and other public works-also introduced new methods of rice cultivation-Ahom society divided into clans or khels-very few castes of artisans, so artisans in the Ahom areas came from the adjoining kingdoms- A khel controlled several villages-The peasant was given land by his village community-Even the king could not take it away without the community's consent-Originally, the Ahoms worshipped their own tribal gods-During the first half of the 17th century the influence of Brahmanas increased-Temples and Brahmanas granted land by the king-In the reign of Sib Singh (1714-1744), Hinduism became the predominant religion-Ahom kings did not completely give up their traditional beliefs after adopting Hinduism- society was very sophisticated-Poets and scholars were given land grants-Theatre encouraged-Important works of Sanskrit translated into the local language-Historical works, known as buranjis, were written – first in the Ahom language and then in Assamese.