

# HISTORY

## Chapter 2: Tribals, Dikus and the Vision of a Golden Age



## Important Questions

### Multiple Choice Questions-

1. Tribals who saw themselves as people of forest and could only live on the produce of forest:
  - a. Baigas
  - b. Van Gujjars
  - c. Khonds
  - d. Palash
2. The tribals who reared goats and from Kashmir:
  - a. Gaddis
  - b. Van Gujjars
  - c. Baigas
  - d. Bakarwals
3. The Khonds community used Sal and Mahua seeds for:
  - a. Prepare hair oil
  - b. Making garlands
  - c. Obtaining food
  - d. For preparing food
4. The man seen roaming the forests and villages of Chottanagpur in Jharkhand in 1895 was:
  - a. Birsa
  - b. Dikus
  - c. Santhal
  - d. Chiefs
5. Outsiders were being referred to as:
  - a. Gonds
  - b. Krishra
  - c. Palash
  - d. Dikus

6. The cultivators who practised shifting cultivation were:
- Khonds
  - Khanda
  - Jhum
  - Mundas
7. For what purpose Kusum and Palash flowers are used?
- Extracting oil from the seeds
  - Coloring clothes and leather
  - Cooking and making food
  - All of them
8. Who was Baigas from central India?
- Were reluctant to work for others
  - Considered themselves as the people of the forest
  - Was below their dignity to work as labor
  - All of them
9. What were the Santhals of Hazaribagh?
- Cultivated small patches of land
  - Reared silkworm
  - Herders of village
  - None of these
10. Most tribal like Khonds of Orissa?
- Practiced shifting cultivation
  - Practiced subsistence farming
  - Collected and sold forest products
  - All of these
11. Bewar is used for which purpose in Madhya Pradesh?
- Shepherds
  - Cattle herders
  - Shifting cultivation

d. Traders and money lenders

12. What do you mean by the term Mahua?

- a. Animal
- b. Plant
- c. Flower
- d. None of these

13. Name the four geographic regions where Adivasis predominantly live?

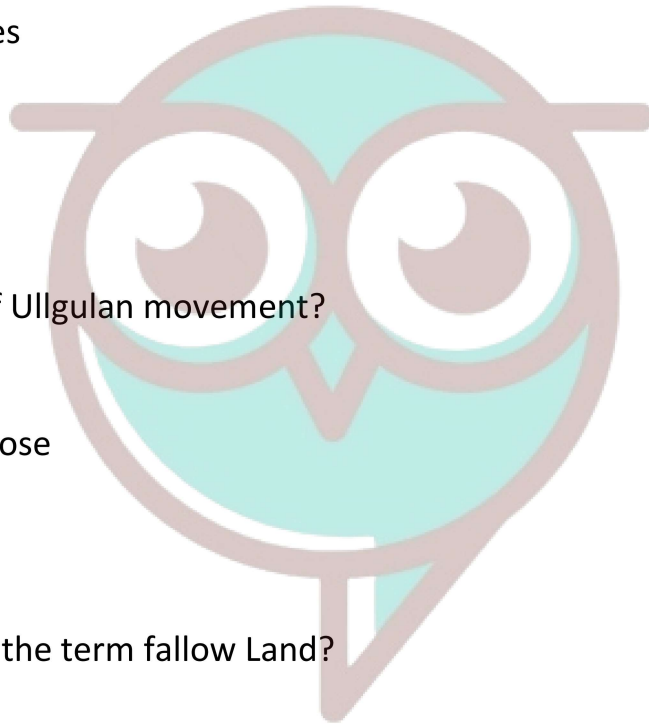
- a. North-eastern states
- b. Central India
- c. South India
- d. All of these

14. Who was the leader of Ullgulan movement?

- a. Mahatma Gandhi
- b. Subhash Chandra Bose
- c. Birsa Munda
- d. All of these

15. What do you mean by the term fallow land?

- a. Cultivated land
- b. Field left uncultivated
- c. Land for sale
- d. None of these



*Swotters*

### Very Short:

1. Mention different types of activities of the tribal people.
2. Why did the British want tribal groups to settle down and become peasant cultivators?
3. Why did the British introduce land settlements?
4. Why were some forests classified as Reserved Forests?
5. What problem did the British face after they stopped the tribal people from living inside forests?
6. Why did the Forest Department establish forest villages?
7. How did the tribal groups view the market and the traders?

8. Who was Birsa?
9. What did people say about him?
10. What problems did Birsa set out to resolve?
11. Who were the outsiders being referred to as dikus?

### Short Questions:

1. What were the main activities of the Khonds living in the forests of Orissa?
2. How did traders and moneylenders exploit the tribal people?
3. How did the British officials view settled tribal groups and those who moved about from place to place?
4. Describe land settlements introduced by the British.
5. Why was the British effort to settle jhum cultivators not very successful?
6. How did Birsa resume his movement after his release in 1897?
7. In what ways was the Birsa movement significant?

### Long Questions:

1. What problem did the British face after they brought changes in forest laws? How did they solve this problem?
2. Give a brief history of the revolts by different tribal groups in the country.
3. Write a short note on 'shifting cultivation'.
4. How did different tribal groups live? Describe in brief.
5. Give a brief life sketch of Birsa Munda.

### Answer Key:

#### MCQ

1. (a) Baigas
2. (d) Bakarwals
3. (d) For preparing food
4. (a) Birsa
5. (d) Dikus
6. (c) Jhum
7. (b) Coloring clothes and leather
8. (d) All of them
9. (b) Reared silkworm

- 10.(c) Collected and sold forest products
- 11.(c) Shifting cultivation
- 12.(c) Flower
- 13.(d) All of these
- 14.(c) Birsa Munda
- 15.(b) Field left uncultivated

### Very Short Answer:

1. (a) Some practised jhum cultivation
- (b) Some were hunter-gatherers.
- (c) Some herded animals.
- (d) Some took to settled cultivation.
2. It was because settled peasants were easier to control and administer than people who were always on the move.
3. They did so in order to get a regular revenue source for the state.
4. These forests produced timber which the British wanted.
5. They faced the problem of shortage of labour.
6. It did so in order to ensure a regular supply of cheap labour.
7. They viewed them as their main enemies.
8. Birsa belonged to a family of Mundas, a tribal group that lived in Chottanagpur.
9. People said that he had miraculous powers. He could cure all diseases and multiply grain.
10. (a) The familiar ways of tribals seemed to be disappearing.
- (b) Their livelihoods were under threat.
- (c) The religion appeared to be in danger. Birsa set out to resolve these problems.
11. Traders, moneylenders, missionaries, Hindu landlords and the British were the outsiders being referred to as dikus.

### Short Answer:

**Ans: 1.** 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 forest.

**Ans: 2.** 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 the tribal people. It is therefore the tribals- saw them as evil outsiders and the cause of their misery.

**Ans: 3.** The British officials saw settled tribal groups such as the Gonds and Santhals as more civilized 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 civilized.

**Ans: 4.** 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.

**Ans: 5.** (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 produce 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.

**Ans: 6.** 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 targeting 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.

**Ans: 7.** The Birsa movement was significant in two ways:

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

(b) 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:

**Ans: 1.** 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.

**Ans: 2.** 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.

**Ans: 3.** In shifting cultivation a plot of land is cleared by felling the trees and burning them. Small patches of land in forests were used for this kind of cultivation. The cultivators cut the treetops to allow sunlight to reach the ground. The ashes of burnt trees were mixed with the soil to fertilize it. The tribals used the axe to cut trees and the hoe to scratch the soil in order to prepare it for cultivation. They scattered the seeds on the field instead of ploughing the land and sowing the seeds. Once the crop was ready it was harvested.

After the soil lost its fertility, the land was abandoned, and the cultivator moved to a new plot. Shifting cultivation is also known as 'slash and burn' agriculture.

Shifting cultivation usually starts with cutting trees and a fire which clears a spot for crop production. In the ideal case, shifting cultivation is a cycle where farmers come back to the original place after a couple of years

**Ans: 4.** Tribal people were involved in many different types of activities:

(a) Some tribal people practiced 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 fertilise the soil. They used equipments like axe 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.

(b) 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 were 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.

(c) 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 examples, the Vicm 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.

(d) 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.

**Ans: 5.** 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.

The 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 was also jailed him 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.