

Chapter 4 Tribals, Dikus and the Vision of a Golden Age

1. Fill in the blanks:

- (a) The British described the tribal people as _____.
- (b) The method of sowing seeds in jhum cultivation is known as _____.
- (c) The tribal chiefs got _____ titles in central India under the British land settlements.
- (d) Tribals went to work in the _____ of Assam and the _____ in Bihar.

Answer.

- (a) The British described the tribal people as **wild and savage**.
- (b) The method of sowing seeds in jhum cultivation is known as **broadcasting**.
- (c) The tribal chiefs got **land** titles in central India under the British land settlements.
- (d) Tribals went to work in the **tea plantations** of Assam and the **coal mines** in Bihar.

2. State whether true or false:

- (a) Jhum cultivators plough the land and sow seeds.
- (b) Cocoons were bought from the Santhals and sold by the traders at five times the purchase price.
- (c) Birsa urged his followers to purify themselves, give up drinking liquor and stop believing in witchcraft and sorcery.
- (d) The British wanted to preserve the tribal way of life.

Answer.

- (a) Jhum cultivators plough the land and sow seeds - False
- (b) Cocoons were bought from the Santhals and sold by the traders at five times the purchase price - True
- (c) Birsa urged his followers to purify themselves, give up drinking liquor and stop believing in witchcraft and sorcery - True
- (d) The British wanted to preserve the tribal way of life - False

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

Answer.

British always had problems with shifting cultivators as they were always moving for pasture lands. Shifting cultivators were wanted to become peasant cultivators. The British thought it is easier to control and administer peasant cultivators than shifting cultivators. Hence, shifting cultivators faced problems when the company planned the land revenue system.

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

Answer.

Under British rule, the functions and powers of the tribal chiefs changed considerably. They were allowed to keep their land titles over a cluster of villages and rent out lands, but they lost much of their administrative power and were forced to follow laws made by British officials in India. They also had to pay tribute to the British, and discipline the tribal groups on behalf of the British. 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?

Answer.

Tribals were not happy with dikus who were considered as 'outsiders' by them. Tribals wanted to be shifting cultivators and not peasant cultivators. The dikus were settling in the tribals' lands wanting the latter to sell their lands or rent their lands on very high-interest rates. This made tribals unhappy. Also, the tribal chiefs lost their administrative powers under British rule. Later, tribals were evacuated from their lands and they had to look for another 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?**Answer.**

Birsa's vision of golden age was to have their land free of dikus. He considered that age to be the age of truth. According to Birsa, in golden age, the tribal sirdars will be able to rule among themselves and no one will be there to dictate terms to them. His golden age vision was to have an age with no vices like liquor, witchcraft, sorcery and uncleanness. He wanted to no role of outsider participants like missionaries, Hindu landlords, moneylenders, traders and Europeans.