

Chapter 7 Tribes, Nomads And Settled Communities

1. Match the following:

Garh	khel
Tanda	chaurasi
Labourer	caravan
Clan	Garha Katanga
Sib Singh	Ahom state
Durgawati	paik

Answer:

Garh	chaurasi
Tanda	caravan
Labourer	paik
Clan	khel
Sib Singh	Ahom state
Durgawati	Garha Katanga

2. Fill in the blanks:

- The new castes emerging within varnas were called _____.
- _____ were historical works written by the Ahoms.
- The _____ mentions that Garha Katanga had 70,000 villages.
- As tribal states became bigger and stronger, they gave land grants to _____ and _____.

- Answer:** (a) The new castes emerging within varnas were called **jatis**.
(b) **Buranjis** were historical works written by the Ahoms.
(c) The **Akbar Nama** mentions that Garha Katanga had 70,000 villages.
(d) As tribal states became bigger and stronger, they gave land grants to **poets** and **scholars**.

3. State whether true or false:

- Tribal societies had rich oral traditions.
- There were no tribal communities in the northwestern part of the subcontinent.
- The chaurasi in Gond states contained several cities.
- The Bhils lived in the north-eastern part of the subcontinent.

- Answer:** (a) True
(b) False
(c) False
(d) False

4. What kinds of exchanges took place between nomadic pastoralists and settled agriculturists?

Answer: Nomadic pastoralists moved over long distances with their animals and lived on milk and other pastoral products. They exchanged wool, ghee, etc., with settled agriculturists for grain, cloth, utensils and other products.

5. How was the administration of the Ahom state organised?

Answer: In 1662, the Mughals under Mir Jumla attacked the Ahom kingdom and despite their brave defence, the Ahoms were defeated. The Ahom state depended upon forced labour and those forced to

work for the state were called paiks. Each village had to send a number of paiks by rotation and people from heavily populated areas were shifted to less populated places, thus breaking up the Ahom clan. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the administration became quite centralised and almost all adult males served in the army during war. They were engaged in building dams, irrigation systems and other public works and also introduced new methods of rice cultivation. The Ahom society was divided into clans or khels. A Khel often controlled several villages. The peasant was given land by his village community and even the king could not take it away without the community's consent.

6. What changes took place in varna-based society?

Answer: Considerable changes took place in varna-based society during this period. Varna-based society and tribal people constantly interacted with each other. This interaction caused both kinds of societies to adapt and change and many different tribes took up diverse livelihoods. Over a period of time, many of them merged with caste-based society. Others rejected both the caste system and orthodox Hinduism. Some tribes established extensive states with well-organised systems of administration and became politically powerful. As a result, this brought them into conflict with larger and more complex kingdoms and empires.

7. How did tribal societies change after being organised into a state?

Answer: The rise of the Rajput clans to the position of rulers had set an example for the tribal people to follow. With the support of the Brahmanas, many tribes became part of the caste system. But only the leading tribal families were allowed to join the ruling class. A large majority joined the lower jatis of caste society. Originally, some of the tribes such as the Ahoms worshipped their own tribal gods. During the first half of the seventeenth century, however, the influence of Brahmanas increased. During the reign of Sib Singh (1714-1744), Hinduism became the predominant religion although the Ahom kings did not completely give up their traditional beliefs after adopting Hinduism. Varna-based society and tribal people constantly interacted with each other. This interaction caused both kinds of societies to adapt and change and many different tribes took up diverse livelihoods. Over a period of time, many of them merged with caste-based society. Others rejected both the caste system and orthodox Hinduism. Some tribes established extensive states with well-organised systems of administration and became politically powerful. As a result, this brought them into conflict with larger and more complex kingdoms and empires.

8. Were the Banjaras important for the economy?

Answer: The Banjaras were the most important trader nomads. The caravan of the banjaras was called tanda. Sultan Alauddin Khalji used the Banjaras to transport grain to the city markets. They carried grain on their bullocks from different areas and sold it in towns. They transported food grain for the Mughal army during military campaigns. They bought grains where it was cheaply available and carried it to places where it is dearer and later, again reloaded their oxen with anything that can be profitably sold in other places.

9. In what ways was the history of the Gonds different from that of the Ahoms? Were there any similarities?

Answer: Both the Gonds and the Ahoms were the tribal communities that had centralised administration. They were divided into clans or jatis. But both these communities were different in several aspects. The Gonds lived in a vast forested region called Gondwana – or “country inhabited by Gonds” and practised shifting cultivation. While the Ahoms migrated to the Brahmaputra valley from present-day Myanmar in the thirteenth century and 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. When the Delhi Sultans was declining, a few large Gond kingdoms were beginning 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.

