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Colonialism and Tribal Societies

Lesson Plan

Contents

- ▶ An overview of the impact of British colonial rule on Indian tribal societies
- ▶ Understanding the revolts of the tribals in India against British rule

Objectives

- ▶ To understand the life of tribals and the influences brought in by the British on the their lives and society
- ▶ To learn about the effect of British colonialism on tribals in India and their response
- ▶ To know who the tribals were, their life and the attempts of the British to change their lives and society
- ▶ To appreciate the rebellions of the tribals against British interference

■ Teacher's Aids

- ▶ Globe
- ▶ Pictures, charts, atlas and wall maps
- ▶ Blackboard
- ▶ Internet

■ Tips for Teacher

- ▶ Explain who the tribals were, using the Internet, and what their lifestyle, social and traditional customs were.
- ▶ Explain how the British violated the traditions and customs of the tribals and their response against the British.
- ▶ Students should be encouraged to know places, locations and their placement on the maps.

■ Background and Reading

- ▶ Read the lesson aloud and explain, sharing the aids, etc., pausing to examine and explain the data in the boxes.

- ▶ Particularly focus on the impact of British interference on the lives, society and customs of the tribals.

Who were the Tribals

- ▶ The British took over large areas for cultivation – political power and expansion policy – encroached on the natural habitat of tribals – used them for cultivating indigo, jute and poppy – disturbed and angered the tribals – resulted in widespread revolts.
- ▶ Tribals – adivasis – groups of people united by a common name and language – live isolated from society – share a common territory and culture – lot of tribes living in hills and forests – landless so forced to become labourers at very low wages – further exploited by moneylenders who forced them to work as coolies in mines and factories.
- ▶ Tribals enjoyed freedom – objected to any move to restrict their freedom and rights – East India Company took away forest lands and introduced the tribals to traders – tribals depending on forests, saw the destruction of forests – loss of livelihood and identity – ruthless British policies made them revolt – The tribals can be listed as follows:
 - Bhils – Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra
 - Mundas – Bihar
 - Kols – Maharashtra, Bihar, Bengal and Odisha
 - Gonds and Khands – Odisha
 - Meos – Rajasthan
 - Khasis – Meghalaya
 - Santhals – Bihar and Bengal

Sources of Information

- ▶ Challenge for historians to gather information and study about tribals – they lead isolated lives – many literary books make passing reference to them – folklore and ballads passed through generations are the most important sources – also official documents like records of administrative proceedings, reports of judgements of enquiry commissions, newspapers and biographies of those times.

The Santhal Rebellion

- ▶ Santhals – Birbhum, Bankura, Hazaribagh, and Rohas in Jharkhand [formerly Bihar] – associated with their land and forest both culturally and by religion.
- ▶ The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 – deprived Santhals of ownership of land – forced to pay revenue to British – rigid revenue assessment led to zamindars taking control of land – Santhals imprisoned if they failed to pay.
- ▶ Christians interfered with their lives – added to misery – Santhals opposed the activities of the moneylenders, the zamindars and the Christian missionaries – finally led to Santhal Rebellion of 1855.
- ▶ Kanhu, Bairo, Sidhu, and others led the rebellion – support of potters, weavers, blacksmiths, etc. – attacked police stations, railway lines, post offices, etc., using tactics of guerrilla warfare.

- ▶ British launched military campaign against them–suppressed them in 1856–Santhal leaders arrested and movement ended [many were executed].

The Munda Rebellion

- ▶ Mundas–region around Ranchi–one of the most important tribal movements led by Birsa Munda–in the south of Ranchi–called Ulgulan or the Great Tumult–aimed at establishing Munda Raj.
- ▶ Birsa Munda led tribals to prevent eviction by moneylenders–had been forced by them to become labourers on their own land–revolt spread in Chota Nagpur–attacked public offices and missionaries–Birsa captured–movement lost force.
- ▶ Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908 passed by government–reduced grievances of Mundas–banned forced labour.

Tribal Movements in Assam

- ▶ Assam–Revenue collection raised by 50-70% in Kamrup and Darrang districts–when people refused to pay, British seized lands from peasants–peasants expressed resentment by holding mass assemblies–British suppressed them brutally.
- ▶ Manipur–British declared war on 27th April 1891–due to a misunderstanding between the British and the princes of Manipur–Surchandra, eldest son succeeded to the throne after king’s death–family fight in which he was defeated and sought British help–British arrested new king, Tikendrajit and his supporters–event commemorated later by construction of Bir Trikendrajit Park.

The Meghalaya Revolt

- ▶ British trying to link Brahmaputra and Surma valleys–had to construct link through the Khasi hills–imposed house tax, resented by locals–but rebellion suppressed immediately.
- ▶ 1860–income tax levied–further revolt was stronger, led by U Kiand Nangbah–British brought in seven regiments to suppress it–Nangbah was captured and hanged publicly.
- ▶ 1872–another revolt in Garo hills–again British sent in troops–people led by Pa Togan Sangma not equipped to fight the British army–had only crude weapons–finally defeated.

Other Revolts

- ▶ Karwar or Sapha Har Movement in 1857–led by Bhagirath Manjhi–popularised the concept of one God–brought social reform–attacked British police.
- ▶ 1914–26000 tribals in the movement–leader Jatra Oraon–advised people to give up animal sacrifices, drinking and other social evils–organised people for a non-violent protest against moneylenders and the British–he advised the tribals to oppose taxes–British suppressed this revolt too.

Oral Assignment

- A. Ask for answers at random from the students. Confirm the right answers. Let them write down the correct answers if they like in their books.

Written Assignment

- B–D. The teacher has two options—(i) Either do these exercises orally first and then ask the students to write them down. OR (ii) Ask the students to write the answers on their own. Then the teacher can announce the correct answers to the students and they can ask their partners to cross-check them.

In either case, the answers can be written as homework and the teacher can check them in the class.

Think Tank

- E. **HOTS questions:** Discuss the questions in the class and let the students write the answers to E and F as homework. Teacher should assess individual work.