

ATOMIC ENERGY EDUCATION SOCIETY

STUDY MATERIAL

CLASS: VIII

SUBJECT: HISTORY

LESSON - 4 TRIBALS, DIKUS AND THE VISION OF A GOLDEN AGE

MODULE 2/2

IMPORTANT POINTS

The British rule changed the life of the tribal life.

The British never liked those tribal groups who moved about and did not have a fixed home. They wanted these tribal groups to settle down. Settled peasants were easier to control and administer than people who were always on move.

The British also wanted a regular revenue income for the state. Hence they introduced land settlements – that is, they measured the land, defined the rights of each individual of that land and fixed the revenue demand for the state.

The British effort to settle jhum cultivators was not successful.

The British brought several changes in forest laws. Some forests were classified as reserved forests the British declared that forests were state property. The people were not allowed to move properly and practice jhum cultivation. As a result, jhum cultivators moved to other areas. Now, the British faced a problem of shortage of labour. Hence they decided that they would give jhum cultivators small patches of land in the forest and allowed them to cultivate these on the condition that those who lived in the villages would have to provide labour to the forest department.

Many tribal groups reacted against the colonial forest laws.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, traders and money lenders began to come into the forest. They offered cash loan to the tribal people and asked them to work for wages.

The case of silk growers is worth mentioning in this regard. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Indian silk was in demand in European markets. Hence, the East India company encouraged silk production to meet the demand.

The Santhals of Hazaribagh reared cocoons. The silk traders sent in their agents who gave loans to them to collect the cocoons. The growers were paid three to four rupees for a thousand cocoons. These were then exported to Burdwan or Gaya where they were sold at five times the price, thus the silk growers earned a very little.

Many tribal groups saw the market and traders as their main enemies. The plight of the tribals who had to go far away from their homes was even worse.

Tribals were recruited in large numbers to work in the tea plantations in Assam and coal mines in Jharkhand. ILLUSTRATION from SLIDE 8

Finally, the tribal groups in different parts of the country rebelled against the British. The movement led by Birsa Munda is worth mentioning here.

Birsa Munda himself declared that God had appointed him to save his people from trouble, free them from the slavery of Dikus .

The political aim of the Birsa movement was to drive out missionaries , money lenders, and Hindu land lords . This movement aimed to set up a Munda Raj with Birsa as its head. ( Illustration from slide 12-18)

As the movement spread , the British arrested Birsa in 1895.

In 1897, he was released. Afterwards, he toured the villages to gather support .He urged people to destroy Ravana(Dikus and Europeans) and establish a Kingdom under his leadership.

Birsa died in 1900 and the movement initiated by him faded out , But its significance can not be undermined.

## FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE MODULE 1/2 FEW OF THE QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED HERE: (slide 20)

What was the main activity of Santhals of Hazaribagh?

ANS: REARING SILKWORM

Who Were considered as enemies for the tribals.?

ANS: TRADERS AND MONEY LENDERS

Name any two tribal revolts which happened in the 19th century

. ANS ; KOLS REBELLION AND BASTAR REBELLION

What was the aim of Birsa?

ANS: TO ESTABLISH MUNDA RAJ

**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 be peasant cultivators.

The dikus were settling in at the tribals' lands, wanting the latter to sell their lands or rent their lands on very high-interest rates.

This made the tribals unhappy. Also, the tribal chiefs lost their administrative powers under British rule.

Later, the tribals were evacuated from their lands and they had to look for other livelihood options.

**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 golden age to be the 'age of truth'

According to Birsa, in the golden age, the tribal 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 evils like liquor, witchcraft, sorcery and uncleanness.

He did not want any role of outsider participants like missionaries, Hindu landlords, moneylenders, traders and Europeans.