

Ch 5 Pastoralists in the Modern World

1) Trace the movements of pastorals of India in the mountains?

The Gujjar Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir are great herders of goat and sheep. Many of them migrated to this region in the nineteenth century in search of pastures for their animals. In winter, when the high mountains were covered with snow, they lived with their herds in the low hills of the Siwalik range. The dry scrub forests here provided pasture for their herds. By the end of April they began their northern march for their summer grazing grounds. Several households came together for this journey, forming what is known as a *kafila*. With the onset of summer, the snow melted and the mountainsides were lush green. The variety of grasses that sprouted provided rich nutritious forage for the animal herds. By end September the Bakarwals were on the move again, this time on their downward journey, back to their winter base.

The Gaddi shepherds of Himachal Pradesh had a similar cycle of seasonal movement. By April they moved north and spent the summer in Lahul and Spiti. By September they began their return movement. On the way they stopped once again in the villages of Lahul and Spiti, reaping their summer harvest and sowing their winter crop.

Then they descended with their flock to their winter grazing ground on the Siwalik hills. Next April, once again, they began their march with their goats and sheep, to the summer meadows. In Garhwal and Kumaon, the Gujjar cattle herders came down to the dry forests of the *bhabar* in the winter, and went up to the high meadows - the *bugyals* - in summer. This pattern of cyclical movement is common to Bhotiyas, Sherpa's and Kinnauris.

2) What is meant by kafila?

In winter, when the high mountains were covered with snow, the pastoralists lived with their herds in the low hills of the Siwalik range. The dry scrub forests here provided pasture for their herds. By the end of April they began their northern march for their summer grazing grounds. Several households came together for this journey, forming what is known as a *kafila*.

3) Trace the movement of pastoral nomads of India on the plateaus.

i) Dhangars were an important pastoral community of Maharashtra. Most of them were shepherds, some were blanket weavers, and still others were buffalo herders. The Dhangar shepherds stayed in the central plateau of Maharashtra during the monsoon.

ii) Nothing but dry crops like *bajra* could be sown here. In the monsoon this tract became a vast grazing ground for the Dhangar flocks. By

October they move to Konkan. This was a flourishing agricultural tract with high rainfall and rich soil. Here the shepherds were welcomed by Konkani peasants.

iii) After the *Khariff* harvest was cut at this time, the fields had to be fertilized and made ready for the *rabi* harvest. Dhangar flocks manured the fields and fed on the **stubble**. The Konkani peasants also gave supplies of rice which the shepherds took back to the plateau where grain was scarce. With the onset of the monsoon the Dhangars left the Konkan and the coastal areas with their flocks and returned to their settlements on the dry plateau. The sheep could not tolerate the wet monsoon conditions.

iv) In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh the Gollas herded cattle. The Kurumas and Kurubas reared sheep and goats and sold woven blankets.

v) Unlike the mountain pastoralists, it was not the cold and the snow that defined the seasonal rhythms of their movement: rather it was the alternation of the monsoon and dry season that determined their movement.

vi) In the dry season they moved to the coastal tracts, and left when the rains came. Only buffaloes liked the swampy, wet conditions of the coastal areas during the monsoon months. Other herds had to be shifted to the dry plateau at this time.

4) Trace the movement of pastoralist nomads in the plains.

i) Banjaras were well-known group of graziers. They were to be found in the villages of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In search of good pastureland for their cattle, they moved over long distances, selling plough cattle and other goods to villagers in exchange for grain and fodder.

5) Trace the movement of nomads of India in the desert.

i) In the deserts of Rajasthan lived the Raikas. Over vast stretches no crop could be grown. So the Raikas combined cultivation with pastoralism. During the monsoons, the Raikas stayed in their home villages, where pasture was available. By October, when these grazing grounds were dry and exhausted, they moved out in search of other pasture and water, and returned again during the next monsoon. One group of Raikas - known as the Maru (desert) Raikas - herded camels and another group reared sheep and goat.

6) The life of the pastoral groups was sustained by a careful consideration of a host of factors. Explain.

i) They had to judge how long the herds could stay in one area. Know where they could find water and pasture.

ii) They needed to calculate the timing of their movements, and ensure that they could move through different territories.

- iii) They had to set up a relationship with farmers on the way, so that the herds could graze in harvested fields and manure the soil.
- iv) They combined a range of different activities – cultivation, trade, and herding – to make their living.

7) How did the ‘waste land rules’ affect the life of pastoralists in India?

- i) To colonial officials all uncultivated land appeared to be unproductive: it produced neither revenue nor agricultural produce. It was seen as ‘waste land’ that needed to be brought under cultivation.
- ii) From the mid-nineteenth century, Waste Land Rules were enacted in various parts of the country. By these Rules uncultivated lands were taken over and given to select individuals. These individuals were granted various concessions and encouraged to settle these lands. Some of them were made headmen of villages in the newly cleared areas. In most areas the lands taken over were actually grazing tracts used regularly by pastoralists. So expansion of cultivation inevitably meant the decline of pastures and a problem for pastoralists.

8) How did forest acts affect the life of pastoralists in India?

- i. By the mid-nineteenth century, various Forest Acts were being enacted in the different provinces. Through these Acts some forests which produced commercially valuable timber like *deodar* or *sal* were declared ‘Reserved’.
- ii. No pastoralist was allowed access to reserved forests. Other forests were classified as ‘Protected’. In protected forests, some **customary** grazing rights of pastoralists were granted but their movements were severely restricted.
- iii. These Forest Acts changed the lives of pastoralists. They were now prevented from entering many forests that had earlier provided valuable forage for their cattle.
- iv. Even in the areas they were allowed entry, their movements were regulated. They needed a permit for entry. The timing of their entry and departure was specified, and the number of days they could spend in the forest was limited.
- v. Pastoralists could no longer remain in an area even if forage was available, they had to move because the ‘Forest Department permits’ that had been issued to them now ruled their lives. The permit specified the periods in which they could be legally within a forest. If they overstayed they were liable to fines.

9) How did criminal tribes act affect the life of pastoralists in India?

- i) British officials were suspicious of nomadic people. They distrusted mobile craftsmen and traders who sold their goods in villages, and pastoralists who changed their places of residence every season, moving in search of good pastures for their herds.
- ii) The colonial government wanted to rule over a settled population. Such a population was easy to identify and control and collect taxes.
- iii) Those who were settled were seen as peaceable and law abiding; those who were nomadic were considered to be criminal.
- iv) In 1871, the colonial government in India passed the Criminal Tribes Act. By this Act many Communities of craftsmen, traders and pastoralists were classified as Criminal Tribes.
- v) They were stated to be criminal by nature and birth. Once this Act came into force, these communities were expected to live only in notified village settlements. They were not allowed to move out without a permit. The village police kept a continuous watch on them.

10) How did grazing tax affect the life of pastoralists in India?

- i. Tax was imposed on land, on canal water, on salt, on trade goods, and even on animals. Pastoralists had to pay tax on every animal they grazed on the pastures. In most pastoral tracts of India, grazing tax was introduced in the mid-nineteenth century.
- ii. The tax per head of cattle went up rapidly and the system of collection was made increasingly efficient.
- iii. The right to collect the tax was given to contractors.
- iv. By the 1880s the government began collecting taxes directly from the pastoralists. Each of them was given a pass. To enter a grazing tract, a cattle herder had to show the pass and pay the tax. The number of cattle heads he had and the amount of tax he paid was entered on the pass.

11) How did colonial acts affect the lives of pastoralists?

- (1) It led to a serious shortage of pastures. When grazing lands were taken over and turned into cultivated fields, the available area of pastureland declined.
- (2) The reservation of forests meant that shepherds and cattle herders could no longer freely pasture their cattle in the forests.
- (3) This led to continuous intensive grazing of these pastures.
- (4) When restrictions were imposed on pastoral movements, grazing lands came to be continuously used and the quality of pastures declined.
- (5) This in turn created a further shortage of forage for animals and the deterioration of animal stock.

12) How did pastoralists cope with changing rules/colonial rules?

- i. Pastoralists reacted to the changes in a variety of ways. Some reduced the number of cattle in their herds, since there was not enough pasture to feed large numbers.
- ii) Others discovered new pastures when movement to old grazing grounds became difficult. After 1947, the camel and sheep herding Raikas, for instance, could no longer move into Sindh and graze their camels on the banks of the Indus, as they had done earlier. The new political boundaries between India and Pakistan stopped their movement. So they had to find new places to go. They have been migrating to Haryana where sheep can graze on agricultural fields after the harvests are cut.
- iii) Over the years, some richer pastoralists began buying land and settling down, giving up their nomadic life. Some became settled peasants cultivating land, others took to more extensive trading.
- iv) Many poor pastoralists, on the other hand, borrowed money from moneylenders to survive. At times they lost their cattle and sheep and became labourers, working on fields or in small towns.
- v) Pastoralists not only continue to survive, in many regions their numbers have expanded over recent decades. When pasturelands in one place was closed to them, they changed the direction of their movement, reduced the size of the herd, combined pastoral activity with other forms of income and adapted to the changes in the modern world.

13) How did the pastoral communities earn a living in Africa?

- i) Most of them lived in the semi-arid grasslands or arid deserts where rain-fed agriculture is difficult. They raise cattle, camels, goats, sheep and donkeys; and they sell milk, meat, animal skin and wool.
- ii) Some also earn through trade and transport, others combine pastoral activity with agriculture; still others do a variety of odd jobs to supplement their meagre and uncertain earnings from pastoralism.

14) What were the problems faced by the Massai people during the colonial period?

- i) One of the problems the Maasais have faced is the continuous loss of their grazing lands. European imperial powers scrambled for territorial possessions in Africa, slicing up the region into different colonies.
- ii) The best grazing lands were gradually taken over for white settlement and the Maasai were pushed into a small area in south Kenya and north Tanzania.

iii) The British colonial government in east Africa also encouraged local peasant communities to expand cultivation. As cultivation expanded, pasturelands were turned into cultivated fields.

iv) Maasai pastoralists had dominated their agricultural neighbours both economically and politically. Grazing land were also turned into game reserves like the Maasai Mara and Samburu National Park in Kenya and Serengeti Park in Tanzania.

v) Pastoralists were not allowed to enter these reserves; they could neither hunt animals nor graze their herds in these areas. Very often these reserves were in areas that had traditionally been regular grazing grounds for Maasai herds. The Serengeti National Park, for instance, was created over 14,760 km. of Maasai grazing land.

15) What was the impact of colonial rule on the Massai community?

i) The loss of the finest grazing lands and water resources created pressure on the small area of land that the Maasai were confined within. Continuous grazing within a small area inevitably meant a deterioration of the quality of pastures. Fodder was always in short supply. Feeding the cattle became a persistent problem.

16) How did the closing of borders affect the life of pastoralists?

i) They were forced to live within the confines of special reserves. The boundaries of these reserves became the limits within which they could now move.

ii) They were not allowed to move out with their stock without special permits. And it was difficult to get permits without trouble and harassment. Those found guilty of disobeying the rules were severely punished.

iii) Pastoralists were also not allowed to enter the markets in white areas. In many regions, they were prohibited from participating in any form of trade. White settlers and European colonists saw pastoralists as dangerous and savage.

iv) Closing of borders adversely affected both their pastoral and trading activities. Earlier, pastoralists not only looked after animal herds but traded in various products. The restrictions under colonial rule did not entirely stop their trading activities.

17) What was the impact of frequent droughts in the pasture land?

i) Drought affected the life of pastoralists everywhere. When rains fail and pastures are dry, cattle are likely to starve unless they can be moved to areas where forage is available.

ii) Since they could not shift their cattle to places where pastures were available, large numbers of Maasai cattle died of starvation and disease in the years of drought.

iii) The Maasai in Kenya possessed 720,000 cattle, 820,000 sheep and 171,000 donkeys. In just two years of severe drought, 1933 and 1934, over half the cattle in the Maasai Reserve died.

18) Who were the elders and the warriors in the Maasai Society? OR How was Maasai society divided in the pre-colonial period?

i) In pre-colonial times Maasai society was divided into two social categories - elders and warriors. The elders formed the ruling group and met in periodic councils to decide on the affairs of the community and settle disputes.

ii) The warriors consisted of younger people, mainly responsible for the protection of the tribe. They defended the community and organised cattle raids. Raiding was important in a society where cattle was wealth. It is through raids that the power of different pastoral groups was asserted.

iii) Young men came to be recognized as members of the warrior class when they proved their manliness by raiding the cattle of other pastoral groups and participating in wars. They, however, were subject to the authority of the elders.

19) What were the measures introduced by the British to administer the affairs of the Maasai?

i) They appointed chiefs of different sub-groups of Maasai, who were made responsible for the affairs of the tribe.

ii) The British imposed various restrictions on raiding and warfare.

iii) Consequently, the traditional authority of both elders and warriors was adversely affected.

20) Why were the chiefs appointed by the British not affected by war or drought in Maasai land?

The chiefs appointed by the colonial government often accumulated wealth over time. They had a regular income with which they could buy animals, goods and land. They lent money to poor neighbours who needed cash to pay taxes. Many of them began living in towns, and became involved in trade. Their wives and children stayed back in the villages to look after the animals. These chiefs managed to survive the devastations of war and drought. They had both pastoral and non-pastoral income, and could buy animals when their stock was depleted.

21) What are the two levels by which social changes occurred in Maasai society?

First, the traditional difference based on age, between the elders was disturbed though it did not break down completely. Second, a new distinction between the wealthy and poor pastoralists developed.

22) How did pastoralists adapt to new situations?

They change the paths of their annual movement, reduce their cattle numbers, press for rights to enter new areas, exert political pressure on the government for relief, subsidy and other forms of support and demand a right in the management of forests and water resources.

23) Differentiate between Indian and Maasai pastoralists.

- i) In India all pastoralists were affected but in Africa elders and warriors were not affected by colonial rules
- ii) In India forests were taken but in Africa they were pushed to certain areas.
- iii) Wealthy pastoralists can be seen in Africa but not in India.

24) New laws and new borders affect the patterns of the movement of the pastoralists. Explain.

Pick out points from answer 12 and 16

25) Environmentalists and economists have increasingly come to recognize that pastoral nomadism is a form of life that is perfectly suited to many hilly and dry regions of the world. Why?

Pastoral nomadism allows such communities to survive at bad times and avoid crisis. They adopted all measures to protect the environment including forests and wild life because they knew that their life is depended on the environment. Since they move from one place to another, overgrazing by animals could be prevented which further prevented soil erosion.

Pastoral nomadism allowed time for natural restoration of vegetation growth.

They combine a range of activities like cultivation, trade and herding to make their living, thus make all efforts to adjust with the environment.