



LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Question 1. How did different tribal groups live? Describe in brief.

Answer: Tribal people were involved in many different types of activities:

(a) Some tribal people practised jhum cultivation also known as shifting cultivation. This was done on small patches of land, mostly in forests. The cultivators cleared off small patches of land. They then burnt the vegetation and spread the ash from the firing, which contained potash to fertilise the soil. They used equipments like axe and hoe for preparing the soil for cultivation. Then they scattered the seeds on the field. Once the crop was ready, and harvested, they moved to another field. Shifting cultivators were found in the hilly and forested tracts of north-east and central India.

(b) Some tribal groups were engaged in hunting animals and gathering forest produce, hence known as “hunter-gatherers”. They saw forests as essential for survival. The Khonds were such a community living in the forests of Orissa. They regularly went out on collective hunts and then divided the meat amongst themselves. They ate fruits and roots and cooked food with the oil they extracted from the seeds of the sal and mahua. They got rice and other grains in return for their valuable forest produce. Sometimes they did odd jobs in the villages like carrying loads, etc.

(c) Some tribal groups lived by herding and rearing animals. They were pastoralists who moved with their herds of cattle or sheep according to the seasons. For examples, the Vicm Gujjars of Punjab hills, and the Labadis of Andhra Pradesh were cattle herders, the Gaddis of Kulu were shepherds and the Bakarwals of Kashmir reared goats.

(d) Some tribal community took to settled cultivation. They cultivated their fields in one place year after year, instead of moving from place to place. They began to use the plough and gradually got rights over the land they lived on.

Question 2. Give a brief life sketch of Birsa Munda.

Answer:

- Birsa was born in the mid-1870s in a family of Mundas, a tribal group that lived in Chottanagpur. He grew up around the forests of Bohanda, grazing sheep, playing flute and dancing in the local akharas. As an adolescent Birsa heard tales of the Munda uprisings of the past and saw sirdars (leaders) of the community urging the people to revolt.
- Birsa took great interest in the sermons of missionaries because they inspired the Mundas to attain their lost rights. He also enjoyed the company of a prominent Vaishnav preacher. He wore the sacred thread and began to value the importance of purity and piety.
- He decided to reform tribal society. He urged the Mundas to give up all their bad practices like drinking liquor, etc. Here, it is worth-mentioning that Birsa also turned against missionaries and Hindu landlords.
- He urged his followers to restore their glorious past. He talked

of a golden age in the past—when Mundas lived a very good life. They did not kill their brethren and relatives. Birsa wanted to see these qualities again in the tribal society.

- The British officials got terrified to visualise the political aims of Birsa Munda. As the movement spread, the government arrested him in 1895, convicted him on the charges of rioting. He was also jailed him for two years.
- After Birsa was released in 1897, he began to tour the villages to gather support. He urged his supporters to destroy dikus and the Europeans. In 1900, he died of cholera and the movement faded out. But it proved significant in the long run.

***** END *****