

Chapter – 5: Tribes, Nomads and Settled Communities

- Chapters 2, 3, 4 – kingdoms developed and destroyed
- Along with this – new arts, crafts, production – developed in towns and villages
- Over centuries – imp. political, social, economic changes
- BUT – social change – not same everywhere – different societies developed differently
- Most parts – society divided according to *varnas* – rules made by Brahmanas – accepted by rulers
- Difference between – rich and poor, high and low – increased – grew further during Delhi Sultans and Mughals

Beyond Big Cities – Tribal Societies

- Other kinds of societies – developed
- Many societies – did not follow rules set by Brahmanas – did not divide into unequal classes
- These societies – tribes
- Members of tribes – united by relationship (kinship)
- Some tribes – agriculture – others – hunters-gatherers
- Most often – combined these activities – full use of natural resources
- Some tribes – nomadic – moved from place to place
- Tribal group – controlled all the land and pastures (cattle food) – divided into households – own rules
- Many large tribes existed – usually lived in places – hard to reach – forests, hills, deserts
- Sometimes – tribes clashed (fight) with more powerful caste-based societies
- Tribes – preserved their separate culture
- Caste-based and tribal societies – depended on each other – various needs
- This relation – conflict and dependence – changed both the societies

Who were Tribal People?

- Older historians and travelers – give very less info about tribes
- Tribals – no written records – BUT – customs and oral traditions preserved – passed down to new generations
- Present day historians – use these oral traditions – write tribal histories
- Tribal people – found everywhere
- Area they controlled – vary – time to time
- Punjab – Khokhar tribe – very imp. – 13th and 14th centuries – LATER – Gakkhars – more imp. – Kamal Khan Gakkhar (chief) – became *mansabdar* – under emperor Akbar
- Multan and Sind – Langahs and Arghuns – very imp. – LATER – controlled by Mughals
- North-west – Balochis – another imp. tribe – divided into smaller clans – different chiefs
- Western Himalayas – Gaddis – shepherd tribe
- North-eastern part – imp. tribes – Nagas, Ahoms and many others
- Present day Bihar and Jharkhand – Cheros – very imp. – starting 12th century – Raja Man Singh – defeated Cheros in 1591 – collected lots of wealth – BUT – not controlled completely – LATER – Aurangzeb's forces – captured Chero fortresses and controlled them

- Orissa and Bengal – Mundas and Santhals – imp. tribes
- Maharashtra and Karnataka – Kolis, Berads and many other tribes – Kolis – also lived in Gujarat
- Further South – Koragas, Vetars, Maravars and many others – large tribal populations
- Western and central India – Bhils – very large tribe – late 16th century – many became settled farmers and zamindars – BUT – many remained hunter-gatherers
- Present day Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh – Gonds – large populations

How Nomads and Mobile People Lived?

- Nomadic Pastoralists – people travel from place to place – searching grazing land and water – survived on milk and other pastoral products – products obtained from cattles and other animals
- Exchanged – pastoral products with settled farmers – for grains, cloth, utensils, etc
- Banjaras – most imp. trader-nomads – caravan – *tanda*
- Sultan Alauddin Khalji – used Banjaras – transport grain to city market
- Emperor Jahangir – wrote in his books – Banjaras carried grains on bullocks – sold in towns
- Banjaras – transported food grain for Mughal army – large armies – there could be 100,000 bullocks
- Many tribes – reared (took care) and sold animals – cattle and horses
- Many types of pedlars (*ferriwala*) – travelled village to village – sold items – ropes, reeds, straw matting, etc
- Many people – entertainers – performed in villages and towns

Changing Society – New Castes and Hierarchies

- Economy and needs – increased – people – new skills – required – smaller castes (*jatis*) developed within *varnas*
- Brahmanas – new castes developed among them
- Many tribes – taken into caste-based society – status of new *jatis*
- Special artists – smiths, carpenters, masons – recognized as separate *jatis*
- *Jatis* – became the basis of organizing society
- Among Kshatriyas – new Rajput clans – became imp. – 11th and 12th centuries
- Different families (lineages) – Hunas, Chandelas, Chalukyas
- Many clans – known as Rajputs – replaced older rulers
- New developed societies – becoming more common – rulers – used wealth – create powerful states
- Rise of Rajput clans – tribal people followed
- Support of Brahmanas – many tribes – part of caste system
- Leading tribal families – joined ruling classes – many others – joined the lower *jatis*
- Many imp. tribes – Punjab, Sind, North-West – adopted (accepted) Islam – very early
- These tribes – rejected caste system – unequal social order not accepted here

A Closer Look

The Gonds

- Live in large forest region – Gondwana
- Practiced – shifting cultivation

- Larger Gond tribe – divided into smaller clans
- Each tribe – their own raja or *rai*
- Delhi sultans' powers – started decreasing – larger Gond kings – controlled smaller Gond chiefs
- *Akbar Nama* – history of Akbar's rule – mentions Gond Kingdom – Garha Katanga – 70,000 villages
- Administrative system – centralized – controlled by a central party
- Kingdom – divided into *garhs* – controlled by Gond clans
- *Garhs* – divided into groups of 84 villages – *chaurasi*
- *Chaurasi* – divided into groups of 12 villages – *barhots*
- Large sates – developed – Gond society changed – equal society divided into unequal classes
- Brahmanas – received land grants – became more powerful
- Gond chiefs – wanted to be recognized as Rajputs
- Aman Das – Gond raja – Garh Katanga – took the title – Sangram Shah – his son – Dalpat – married to princess Durgawati – daughter of Salbahan – Chandel Rajput raja – Mahoba
- Dalpat – died early – Rani Durgawati – ruled on behalf of 5-year-old son – Bir Narain
- Kingdom – became larger – 1565 – Asaf Khan (Mughal) attacked Garh Katanga
- Durgawati – fought with them – defeated – chose to die instead of surrender – her son died soon after
- Garh Katanga – rich state – earned wealth – exporting wild elephants to other kingdoms
- Mughals defeated Gonds – captured – lots of coins and elephants
- Took some part of the kingdom – granted the rest to Chandra Shah – uncle of Bir Narain
- Fall of Garh Katanga – Gond kingdom – became weaker – taken over by Bundelas and Marathas

The Ahoms

- Migrated to Brahmaputra valley from Myanmar – 13th century
- Created new state – controlling the older system of landlords
- 16th century – took control – Chhutiyas (1523), Koch-Hajo (1581)
- Built large kingdoms – used firearms – even in 1530s
- By 1660s – they could make high-quality gunpowder and cannons
- Lots of invasion from south-west
- 1662 – Mir Jumla (Mughal) – attacked Ahoms – defeated Ahoms – direct Mughal control – cannot last long
- Depended on forced labour – *paiks* – each village – provided some *paiks* by rotation
- Census (counting) of population taken – people in high population area – shifted to low population area
- All adult males – served in the army during war
- Other times – built dams, irrigation systems, other public works
- Introduced new methods of rice cultivation
- Kingdom – divided into clans or *khels* Artists – various castes – settled from different kingdoms
- *Khel* – controlled several villages – farmer – given land by village community – even king cannot take it away
- Originally – Ahoms – worshipped – their own tribal gods
- 1st half of 17th century – Brahmanas became more powerful – given gifts by kings
- Rule of Sib Singh (1714-1744) – Hinduism – more dominant religion
- Ahom society – complicated – poets and scholars – given land as gifts – theatre encouraged – Sanskrit translated to local language
- Historical work – *buranjis* – written in Ahom and then in Assamese