

# **“Colonialism and the Tribal Societies”**

**Class: 8<sup>th</sup> (History)**

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**Q1. List the problems shifting cultivators did face under British Rule?**

**Ans:** For administrative and economic reasons the British were feeling uncomfortable with the shifting cultivators and wanted them to settle down and become peasant cultivators. Settled peasants were easier to control and administer than people who were always on the move. The British also wanted a regular revenue, source for the state so they introduced land settlements for the state. In fact jhum cultivators who took to plough cultivation often suffered, since their fields did not produce good yields. The new forest laws also affected the lives of shifting cultivators. Shifting or jhum cultivation is usually done on small patches of forest land. Under the forest laws the British extended their control over all forests and declared that forests were state property.

Thus, the jhum cultivators were prevented from practising Jhum Cultivation freely. Many, were forced to move to other areas in search of work and livelihood.

**Q2. How did the powers of Tribal chiefs change under colonial rule/**

**Ans:** The laws of tribal groups changed during British rule, the function and powers of the tribal chiefs changed considerably. They were allowed to keep their land titles over a cluster of villages and rent out lands. The administrative, judicial and economic powers, they

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enjoyed before the arrival of British were no longer in force. They were required to follow the British and discipline the tribal groups on behalf of the colonial masters. As a result they lost the authority they had earlier enjoyed among their people and were unable to fulfill their traditional functions.

### **Q3. Estimate the impact of the British policies on the tribal people?**

**Ans:** Impact of the British policy on the tribal people were as follows;

- According to the forest policy, the British declared the forests in India as a state property.
- The Tribes who had been using forest resources like fruits, shrubs, timber, wood etc were banned. Some forests were classified as reserved forests for they produced timber which the British wanted.
- In these forests, people were not allowed to move freely practice Jhum Cultivation. Collect fruits and hunt animals.
- Shifting agriculture was banned because it was considered dangerous and harmful for the land.
- The nomadic tribes were regarded with suspicion because these movements could not be tracked easily.

### **Q4. What was Birsa's Vision of a golden age? Why do you think such a vision appealed to the people, of the region?**

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**Ans.** Birsa talked about a golden age as satyug, an age of truth in which the tribal people would live a good life, construct embankments. Tap natural springs, plant trees and orchards and practice cultivation to earn their living. This golden age consisted of a reformed tribal society in which there was no place for liquor, uncleanness, witchcraft and sorcery, and outside forces like the missionaries, Hindu landlord's money lenders traders and Europeans.

The vision was appearing to the tribal people as all the outside forces that Birsa talked about were indeed thought of by everyone as the root causes of their misery and suffering.