

Chapter-5
Pastoralists in the Modern
World

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⇒ Pastoralists → The goats, sheep or cattle farmers are known as pastoralists.

⇒ Pastoral Nomads and their movements

In the Mountains

The Gujjar Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir

- They are pastoral nomads who move in groups called 'kafila'.
- Their movements are governed by cold and snow.
- In winters when the high mountains are covered with snow these Gujjars move down to the low hills of the Shivalik range.
- On the onset of summer, when the snow melts and the mountain became lush and green, these pastoralists move back to the mountains.

The Gaddi Shepherds of Himachal Pradesh

- They also spend the winter on the low Shivalik hills and the mountain summer in Lahul and Spiti.

The Gujjar Cattle herders of Kumaon and Garhwal.

- They spend their summers in the 'bugyals' and their winters in the 'bhabar'.

The Bhotias, Sherpas and Kinnauri

- They follow the cyclic movement which helps them to adjust to seasonal changes and make best use of pastures.

⇒ on the plateaus, plains and deserts

The Dhangars of Maharashtra

- The Dhangars stay in the central plateau of Maharashtra during Monsoon.
- This is a semi-arid region.
- By October they begin their movement towards Konkan.
 - Here their cattle helps to manure the fields and hence they are welcomed by the Konkani peasant.
 - As soon as the monsoon sets in, they retreat back to the semi-arid land of Maharashtra.

The Gollas and Kurumas and Kurubas of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

- The Gollas herded cattle.
- The Kurumas and Kurubas reared sheep and goats and sold woven blankets.
- They live near the woods and in the dry periods they move to the coastal tracts.

The Banjaras of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra

- They moved over long distance in search of good pastureland for their cattle.

⇒ Raikas in the desert of Rajasthan

- The rainfall in the region was meagre and uncertain.
- They combine cultivation with pastoralism.
→ When their grazing grounds become dry they move to new and greener pastures.

⇒ Pastoral life was sustained by:

- Their sense of judgement to know how long one must stay in an area.

- To know where they could find Food and water
- To assess and calculate the timings of their movement
- Their ability to set up a relationship with the Farmer so that the herds could graze on the harvested fields.

⇒ colonial Rule and pastoral life.

- Under colonial rule the life of pastoralists changed completely.

How?

- All grazing land became cultivated farms.
- Forests Act restricted movements of pastoralists in the forests
 - Some customary rights were granted to them.
 - Forests were marked as protected and Reserved.
 - British officials were suspicious of these pastoral groups.
 - The Criminal Tribe Act was passed in 1871.
- Taxes were imposed on cattle which went up rapidly.

⇒ How did these changes Affect the life of Pastoralists?

- Natural Restoration of pastoral growth stopped.
- cattle died due to the scarcity of Fodder.
- A serious shortage of pastures.

⇒ How did the pastoralists cope with these changes?

- Some reduced the number of cattles in their herds.
- Some discovered new pastures when movement to old grazing ground became difficult
- over the years some richer pastoralists began buying land and settling down, giving up their nomadic life.

⇒ Pastoralism in Africa

- Over half the world pastoral population lives in Africa.

The Maasai - change in their way of life

- Maasai lives primarily in east Africa.
- Before colonial times, Maasailand stretched over a vast area from north Kenya to the Steppes of northern Tanzania.
- In the late nineteenth century, European imperial powers cut Maasailand into half.
- The best grazing lands were gradually taken over for white settlement and the Maasai were pushed into arid zone with uncertain rainfall and poor pastures.

⇒ Land cultivation

- In pre-colonial period the Maasai pastoralists dominated the agriculturist both economically and politically, the British colonial government encouraged local peasants to cultivate land.

⇒ The Borders are closed

- From the late nineteenth century, the colonial government began imposing various restriction on the mobility of African pastoralists.

⇒ Not all were Equally Affected

- The Maasai Society was divided into two social categories - elders and warriors.
 - The elders formed the ruling group while warriors consisted of younger people who defended the community and organized cattle raids.
- British appointed chiefs of different sub-groups of Maasai, who were made responsible for the affairs of the tribe.
- The chiefs appointed by the colonial government often accumulated wealth over time.
 - They had both pastoral and non-pastoral income, and could buy animals when their stock was depleted.
- However the poor pastoralists who depended only on their livestock did not have the resources to tide over bad times.
 - In times of war and famine, they lost nearly everything.

