

Pastoralists in the Modern World

Question 1: Explain why nomadic tribes need to move from one place to another. What are the advantages to the environment of this continuous movement?

Answer: There were many need of nomadic tribes to move from one place to another:

- The nomadic tribes had no regular fields of their own from where they could get fodder for their cattle.
- They lived with their herd in the low hills of Himalayas from September to April because; the huge mountains or high altitudes were covered with snow during this period. In these areas the dry scrub forests provided pastures for their herds during this period.
- With the onset of summer, as the snow melted and the hill sides began to be covered with lush green with a variety of new grasses, the pastoralists started their northward march for their summer grazing grounds.
- Again with the onset of winter when the mountains began to be covered with snow and there were dearth of nutritious forage, these pastoralists on the move again, this time on their downward journey.

The movement of the nomadic pastoralists from the downward to the upward areas and vice-versa allowed sufficient time for natural restoration of vegetation grounds. Their continuous shifting provided sufficient forage to the different animals both at the high mountains and the lower hills. They also helped in maintaining the quality of the pastures.

Question 2: Discuss why the colonial government in India brought in the following laws. In each case, explain how the law changed the lives of pastoralists:

(i) Waste Land rules

Answer (i): Waste Land rules: All grazing lands were considered waste lands by the colonial rulers as they brought no revenue to them. If this land could be transformed into cultivated farmland, it would result in an increase in land revenue and production of crops such as jute, cotton and wheat. This is why the Waste Land rules were formulated. However, they sounded the death knell for pastoralists because increase in cultivated land meant an obvious decline in pastures, and a consequent loss of a means of livelihood for them.

(ii) Forest Acts

Answer (ii): Forests Acts: These were enacted to protect and preserve forests for timber which was of commercial importance. These acts changed the life of pastoralists. They were now prevented from entering many forests that had earlier provided valuable forage for their cattle. They were issued permits which monitored their entry and exit into forests. They



could not stay in the forests as much as they liked because the permit specified the number of days and hours they could spend in the forests.

(iii) Criminal Tribes Act

Answer (iii): Criminal Tribes Act: The British government eyed nomadic people with suspicion and disregard on account of their continuous movement. They could not be tracked down or placed in one particular place, unlike rural people in villages who were easy to identify and control. Hence, the colonial power viewed nomadic tribes as criminal. The Criminal Tribes Act was passed in 1871 and it further ruined the lives of the pastoralists who were now forced to live in notified settlements, and were disallowed from moving out without a government permit.

(iv) Grazing Tax

Answer (iv): Grazing Tax: It was imposed by the colonial government to expand its revenue income. Pastoralists had to pay a tax on every animal they grazed on the pastures. This right was now auctioned out to contractors. They extracted as high a tax as they could, to recover the money they had paid to the state and earn as much profit as they could. Later the government itself started collecting taxes. This created problems for the pastoralists who were harassed by tax collectors. It also became an economic burden on them.

Question 3: Give reasons to explain why the Maasai community lost their grazing lands.

Answer: The Maasais lost their grazing lands due to the following reasons:

- In 1885 itself, Maasai land was cut in half by an international boundary drawn between the two colonies—British Kenya and German Tanganyika.
- The best pastures were reserved for white settlements, and the Maasai tribes were given arid, small areas in south Kenya and north Tanzania.
- This lack of good grazing lands and a two-year drought led to loss of almost 60% cattle belonging to the Maasai tribes. Increase in cultivation and promotion of game reserves added to their woes.

Thus, with the increasing power of the colonists and their adverse impact on the Maasai's social life, this community gradually lost all its grazing lands.

Question 4: There are many similarities in the way in which the modern world forced changes in the lives of pastoral communities in India and East Africa. Write about any two examples of changes which were similar for Indian pastoralists and the Maasai herders.

Answer: There are many similarities in the way in which the modern world forced changes in the lives of pastoral communities in India and East Africa. Here are two examples of changes which were similar for Indian pastoralists and the Maasai herders:

- All uncultivated land was seen as wasteland by colonial powers. It produced neither revenue nor agricultural produce. This land was brought under cultivation. 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 both for Indian pastoralists and the Maasai.
- From the 19th century onwards, the colonial government started imposing restrictions on the pastoral communities. They were issued permits which allowed them to move out with their stock and it was difficult to get permits without trouble and harassment. Those found guilty of disobeying the rules were severely punished.