



CHAPTER- 14

SOCIAL CHANGE: MOBILE AND SETTLED COMMUNITIES

NOTES:

- Any society in any part of the world at a given time has not remained static. Many changes have taken place and the individuals living in any society try to bring changes in all the aspects of life.
- Caste system which originated since vedic times had remained in the Indian social structure but with much changes taking place within.

A SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN ANCIENT INDIA:

- The caste system started with the advent of the Aryans, who were of fair complexion differentiated themselves on the basis of the colour of the skin (varna) with the indigenous people of India who were of dark complexion.
- The society came to be divided into four – fold caste division on the basis of the occupations. The Brahmanas (priestly class) on the top next the Kshatriyas (warriors), the Vaishyas (the producer class) and lastly the Sudras (servant class).
- The condition of women in the early period was good.
- During Gupta times, Indian society came to be composed of many smaller and sub – groups called Jatis which means birth and each Jati associated with a traditional job or occupation in the Hindu society.

B SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA:

- During the period of Rajputs, the Brahmanas became very powerful and they enjoyed many privileges and exemptions.
- A large number of castes and sub- caste like the weavers, fishermen, smiths, cowherd, carpenters etc emerged.

- The condition of women worsened and polygamy became very common .They practiced Jauhar, a mass suicide to escape defilement in the hands of the enemy who had occupied the kingdom.
- The practice of Satidah or Sati along with many other practices came into existence in the medieval Indian Society

(i) IMPACT OF ISLAM:

- The advent of Islam ushered a sense of social equality in the Indian society as they opposed worship of many gods and believed in one god- Allah.
- But on the basis of religion the distinctions came and the non muslims were imposed taxes.
- The condition of women also worsened.

(ii) INDIAN SOCIETY UNDER THE MUSLIM RULE:

- During the rule of Sultans of Delhi, two main caste remained in India- the Hindus and the Muslims.
- According to Ibn Battutah, the Moroccan traveler in the court of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the society was divided into four classes- the aristocrats, priests, the towns people and the peasants.
- During the Mughal rule, mostly because of Akbar's new religion Din-I-Illahi, the Hindus and the Muslims came closer as it tried to accommodate the sectarian differences among the subjects.
- Bhakti saints like Guru Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Ramananda etc have denounced the caste system.
- Mirabai was the greatest woman saint of the time.

C.GROWTH OF TRIBES, NOMADS AND ITINERANTS:

- The Indian society was already divided with the rules of varna but there were other kinds of societies who did not follow the social rules of the varna system, and the tribal society was one among them.

Who are the tribes?

- The existence of the tribes was mentioned in Mahabharata and also in the edicts of king Ashoka. In the Mauryan times they are mentioned as forest dwellers.
- The tribes lived in the forest and lived on the produces of the forest and each member was united with the kinship bond. They were into farming, hunting, gathering or herding.
- The most distinctive characteristic of the tribes was that everything was community owned or jointly owned.
- There are no written records about the tribes, but their oral traditions and rich customs help in reconstructing their history.
- The khokar and Gakkars were powerful tribes at Punjab side during thirteenth and fourteenth century and also the Langals and Arghuns at Multan and Sind.
- In the north east the Nagas ,Ahoms ,Mizos and others were some of the important tribes .
- The Chero in Bihar ,the Mundas and Santhals were very important tribes in Bengal and Orissa.
- The koli tribe in Maharashtra and Karnataka and the Gonds are found in present day states of Chattisgarh, Maharashtra Madhyapradesh and Andhra pradesh.

D.TheGond : A case study

- Gondwana means the land inhabited by the Gonds and they are famous and important tribes of India who are known for their unique customs and traditions and they are mainly nomadic tribe.
- Akbarnama mentions a Gond kingdom of Garha Katanga which had 70,000 villages.
- The Gonds had egalitarian society and their main language is Gondi but they also speak hindi.
- The Gonds had a special skill which had been passed through the generations and that is the secrets of the medicinal plants.
- They had a centralized administration system and the kingdom was divided into Garhs and each Garh controlled by a Gond clan.

- The Gonds struggled against the more powerful kingdoms of the Bundellas and the Marathas but without much success.

E THE AHOMS : A CASE STUDY

- The Ahoms also known as Tai-Ahoms are the descendants of the ethnic Tai or Shan people who came along with their prince Sukaphaa into Assam.
- Sukaphaa founded the Ahom kingdom (1228- 1826) with their capital at Charaideo, present day Sibsagar in Assam.
- While the Ahom kings were engaged in expanding and consolidating their kingdom, they brought many tribes like Morani, Chutiya, Nagas, Boranis, Bodos ,Kaccharisetc under their subjugation.
- Suhungmung (1497-1539) was the first Ahom king to adopt a Hindu name Swarga Narayan.
- In 1682 in the Battle of Itakuli , the Ahoms prevented the Mughal expansion.
- The Ahoms became a puppet government after the Burmese invasion but in the first Anglo – Burmese war (1824- 1826) the Burmese were defeated and as a result of the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed in 1826.
- The treaty of Yandaboo converted Ahom kingdom into a principality.
- One very important custom of the Ahoms was that they do not burn bodies but keep it inside a box and it was known as Maidam



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