



Pastoralists in the modern world (Easy notes for class 9th)

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## Introduction:

In this chapter, we delve into the lives of nomadic pastoralists, a group often overlooked in history textbooks. These wanderers, found in various parts of India, lead a mobile existence with their herds. This narrative aims to shed light on their significance in societies, exploring their past, the impact of [colonialism](#), and their resilience in the face of modern challenges.

## 1 Pastoral Nomads and their movements:

### In the Mountains

## Gujjar Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir:

- These herders have been taking care of goats and sheep since the 1800s.
- They move between summer and winter grazing areas, dealing with challenges like crossing the Pir Panjal passes.
- In winter, they stay in the lower hills, and in April, they travel together to green valleys in Kashmir for the summer. They come back in September.

## Gaddi Shepherds of Himachal Pradesh:

- Gaddi shepherds follow a similar plan, spending winters in the Shivalik range's low hills and summers in higher meadows.
- In September, on their way down, they stop to shear sheep, making sure they are clean before winter.

## Gujjar Cattle Herders in Garhwal and Kumaon:

- Gujjar cattle herders move between the dry forests of bhabar in winter and high meadows in summer.
- This cyclical movement not only benefits the herders and their animals but also allows pastures to recover, preventing overuse.

## Common Themes:

- All these groups move with the seasons to find the best pastures, taking good care of their animals.
- This traditional way of life has been happening for a long time, and it also helps the land stay healthy.

## Historical Insight:

- Going back to the 1850s, people described the Gujjars as mainly herders, relying on the sale of milk, ghee, and other products from their herds.

## On the Plateaus, Plains and Deserts

Pastoralists weren't limited to the mountains; they thrived in plateaus, plains, and deserts across India.

## Plateau Pastoralists – Dhangars in Maharashtra:

- Maharashtra's Dhangars, a significant pastoral community, were involved in shepherding, blanket weaving, and buffalo herding.
- During the monsoon, they stayed in the semi-arid central plateau, using it as a vast grazing ground.
- Harvesting bajra by October, they journeyed westward to the Konkan, collaborating with Konkani

peasants, and returned before the wet monsoon.

### Plains Pastoralists – Gollas, Kurumas, Kurubas in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh:

- In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, herders like Gollas, Kurumas, and Kurubas managed cattle, goats, and sheep, adapting to the shift between rainy and dry seasons.
- Unlike mountain herders, they went where the seasons led, moving to coastal areas when it was dry and coming back to the dry plateau when it rained.

### Desert Pastoralists – Raikas in Rajasthan:

- In the arid deserts of Rajasthan, the Raikas practiced a combination of cultivation and pastoralism due to uncertain rainfall.
- During the monsoons, they stayed in their home villages, moving in search of pasture and water by October and returning during the next monsoon.

### Wandering Graziers – Banjaras Across States:

- Banjaras, graziers wandering across states like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, engaged in trade, selling plough cattle and goods in exchange for grain and fodder.

### Insight from Travelers and Historical Accounts:

- Travelers like Buchanan provided glimpses into the lives of pastoral groups, settling on the edges of forests, cultivating small patches of land, attending to flocks, and engaging in trades sustaining their livelihoods.

### Sustainable Practices and Varied Livelihoods:

- The lives of these pastoral groups were shaped by considerations like the duration of stay, water and pasture availability, and interactions with farmers.
- Their livelihoods combined cultivation, trade, and herding, reflecting a careful balance of diverse activities.

## 2 Colonial Rule and Pastoral Life:

- **Shrinking Grazing Lands:** Grazing lands dwindled as colonial authorities sought to convert them into farms, affecting pastoralists who depended on these areas for grazing. The mid-nineteenth-century Waste Land Rules facilitated this change.
- **Forest Restrictions:** Forest Acts limited pastoralists' access, declaring some forests "Reserved," completely barring them, while others were labeled "Protected" with restricted grazing rights. These regulations altered traditional pastoral movements.

- **Nomadic Distrust:** Suspicion of nomadic lifestyles led to the 1871 [Criminal Tribes Act](#), categorizing communities as “*criminal by nature and birth*.” Confined to village settlements, pastoralists faced strict permits and continuous police surveillance.
- **Taxation Challenges:** Colonial taxation, including grazing tax, impacted pastoralists. Introduced in the mid-nineteenth century and initially auctioned, it later shifted to direct government collection. Pastoralists required passes for entry, and taxes were based on the number of cattle heads, altering their traditional way of life.

## How did these changes affect the lives of Pastoralists?

- Changes like *converting grazing lands* into cultivated fields and *reserving forests* led to a severe shortage of pastures.
- Pastoralists faced *restrictions*, hindering them from freely pasturing cattle in forests, causing continuous intensive grazing on remaining lands.
- *Pasture quality declined*, causing further forage shortages, *deteriorating animal stock*, and contributing to substantial cattle losses during scarcities and famines.

## How did the Pastoralists cope with these changes?

- Some pastoralists *reduced herd sizes* due to insufficient pasture, while others sought new grazing areas when movement to traditional grounds became challenging.
- Post-1947, *Raikas adapted by migrating to Haryana*, where sheep could graze on agricultural fields after harvests, providing essential manure.
- *Richer pastoralists settled down*, transitioning to cultivation or extensive trading, while *poorer ones borrowed money* and, at times, became laborers.
- Despite challenges, pastoralists adapted by changing movement directions, *reducing herd sizes*, *diversifying income sources*, and *embracing modern changes*.
- In various regions, pastoralist numbers expanded as they adjusted to closed pasturelands, showcasing the resilience (ability to recover) and adaptability of pastoral communities.

Similar transformations worldwide compelled (forced) pastoral communities to modify lives in response to new laws and settlement patterns without skipping informative elements.

## 3 Pastoralism In Africa:

- 22 million Africans rely on pastoralism in challenging environments like semi-arid grasslands.
- Communities like Bedouins, Berbers, Maasai, and others raise animals for income.
- Pastoralists sell milk, meat, and more, diversifying income through trade, transport, and odd jobs.

Let's take the Maasai community in Africa as an example to learn about the changes and their impact on the lives of pastoralists.

### About Maasai Community:

- For generations, the Maasai, a community of cattle herders, roamed across a vast African landscape.
- The Maasai community was comprised of approximately 300,000 individuals in southern Kenya and 150,000 individuals in Tanzania.
- The people of Maasai community lived their lives without issue until the colonial powers restricted their movement.

Now let's discuss about the restrictions and impact of colonial powers in their lives.

## Where have the Grazing Lands Gone? – Impact on Maasai Pastoralists:

- In the 19th century, European powers established colonies in Africa, leading to the division of Kenya and Tanganyika.
- Subsequently, they made several changes to the system and policies which resulted in a reshaping of social relationships among pastoral communities.

### – Changes and impacts during the Colonial Rule:

#### 1. Colonial Agricultural Expansion:

- British colonial government encouraged the local peasants to expand cultivation. As a result, the valuable pastureland was converted into cultivated fields.
- Earlier, the Maasai Community dominated in both economic and political power. However, its power declined with expansion of colonial government policies.

#### 2. Creation of Game Reserves:

- British colonial policies converted extensive grazing land into game reserves such as *Maasai Mara*, *Samburu National Park* (Kenya), and *Serengeti Park* (Tanzania).
- Pastoralists faced restrictions, being explicitly prohibited from entering these reserves.
- This restriction severely limited their ability to hunt or graze their herds in these areas.
- The creation of Serengeti National Park, spanning over 14,760 km of Maasai grazing land, is a notable example of this transformation.
- Many reserves were established in regions that had traditionally served as regular grazing grounds for Maasai herds.
- This exemplifies how the once-open spaces for Maasai livelihoods became inaccessible due to the establishment of these reserves.

#### 3. Police Surveillance:

- Police monitored pastoralists, preventing entry into white areas.
- *Example* from Namibia emphasized strict permit control even in exceptional circumstances.

### Challenges Faced by Pastoralists:

1. The Maasai community encountered **difficulties due to the loss of grazing lands** and water resources.
2. Continuous grazing within a confined area led to the **deterioration of pasture quality**.

3. **Persistent shortages in fodder** posed challenges in sustaining Maasai cattle, impacting the community's livelihood.

### Similar Struggles Beyond Maasailand:

1. Pastoral communities elsewhere in Africa, like **Kaokoland herders** in Namibia, faced comparable challenges due to new territorial boundaries.
2. Territorial restrictions disrupted traditional movements, affecting trade activities and livelihoods.
3. Kaokoland herders voiced their struggles, expressing imprisonment and the inability to access essential resources.

## The Borders are closed:

In the nineteenth century, African pastoralists enjoyed vast mobility in search of pastures. However, during this time, the colonial government initiated restrictions on their movements, altering their way of life significantly.

### – Some other changes during Colonial Rule:

#### 1. Colonial Restrictions:

- Authorities confined pastoralists to special reserves, requiring permits for movement.
- Getting permits was hard, and if they broke the rules, they usually got punished.
- Reserves functioned as strict boundaries, reshaping the pastoralists' traditional nomadic way of life.

#### 2. Market Exclusion and Stereotyping:

- Colonial rules prevented pastoralists, like the Maasai, from entering markets in white areas.
- White settlers, perceiving them as dangerous, limited their involvement in trade activities.
- Despite restrictions, pastoralists played a crucial role in constructing roads and towns, as their labor was essential for these endeavors (works).

#### 3. Impact on Pastoral and Trading Activities:

- Colonial restrictions affected both pastoral and trading activities.
- Pastoralists had difficulties, but they still managed to do some trading despite the new rules.

## When Pastures Dry:

Colonial times brought significant changes to the traditional way of life for the Maasai pastoralists.

#### 1. Nomadic Lifestyle Under Threat:

- Traditionally, Maasai moved in search of pastures during dry periods.
- However, colonial policies restricted their nomadic practices, compelling (forced) them to settle in fixed reserves.

#### 2. Impact of Fixed Settlements:

- Confined within reserves, Maasai were cut off from their nomadic way of life.



- Moreover, they were made to live in a place that doesn't get much rain, which makes the challenges even harder.

### 3. Drought's Devastating Consequences:

- The inability to shift cattle to better pastures during droughts resulted in widespread starvation and disease.
- The 1930 inquiry highlighted significant livestock ownership, but severe droughts in 1933 and 1934 caused a drastic reduction.

## Not all were Equally Affected

The colonial period had differing effects on various groups in Maasailand's pastoralist society.

- In the past, Maasai society had two main groups: elders and warriors.
- Elders settled disputes, while warriors protected the tribe and raided for cattle.

### 1. Challenges to Traditional Authority:

- British measures introduced chiefs, disrupting the power of elders and warriors.
- Restrictions on raiding affected traditional authority.

#### a. Impact on Chiefs vs. Warriors:

- Appointed chiefs accumulated wealth and lived in towns.
- Chiefs had trade income, making them more resilient, while warriors faced disruptions in their traditional roles.

#### b. Struggles of Poor Pastoralists:

- Poor pastoralists, reliant on livestock, struggled during bad times.
- The impact varied among pastoralists, with differences in resources and coping mechanisms.

## Conclusion:

In various parts of the world, pastoral communities face changes. New laws and borders limit their movement. Finding good grazing lands becomes tough, especially in droughts. They adapt by changing routes and seeking support. Pastoralism remains relevant, fitting many regions today and highlighting its importance.

### Category

1. Class 9th

### Date

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