



Mains Practice Question

Q. What do you understand by scheduled tribes? Examine the dilemma related to the development of the tribes in India. (250 words)

20 Jan, 2020 GS Paper 1 Indian Society

Approach

- Explain the term 'scheduled tribes' and 'tribals general characteristics' in India.
- List out some challenges faced while developing tribals in India in dilemmatic form.
- Give some suggestive steps to come out of such a dilemma.

Introduction

Scheduled Tribes, as a term, was introduced as a part of Government of India Act, 1935 to give legal recognition to list of tribes marked for special treatment by the state, which is still practised as evident in affirmative actions provided under Indian Constitution.

Body

In general, the scheduled tribes are described by the following characteristics:

- Communities that are very old and did not practise a religion with a written text.
- They did not have a political form of the normal kind.
- They did not have sharp class divisions, were not part of the caste system and were neither Hindu nor peasants.

Tribes can be classified as:

- Having Permanent traits like region (middle India, North-East), language (Austic, Tibeto-Burman etc.), physical characteristics (Mongloid, Aryan etc.), ecological habitat.
- Acquired Characteristics like mode of living, the extent of incorporation into Hindu Society.

Dilemma related to their Development in India

- Tribe-Caste Distinction: Tribal community is less stratified while absorption into the mainstream is creating new class, caste-based division. There is also the erosion of community sense of ownership of resources.
- Traditional Culture Vs New Values: By way of Sanskritization, modernisation, a traditional cultural system of tribals is eroding like languages, dialect. This is challenging their identity leading to resistance and opposition among them example demand for a separate state by Nagas.
- Development Vs Rights: Economic Development of the nation many times leads to their exploitation, especially in forested and mineral belt regions. These challenges affect their means of livelihood and their ethnicity leading to displacement and challenges of rehabilitation, for example-Narmada Bachao Andolan.
- Human Development Vs Traditional Systems: Providing modern education, health facilities may at times challenge the orthodoxy resulting in resistance. This, in turn, stems from lack of harmony

between newer means and their traditional systems, example low vaccine coverage due to superstitions among tribals.

Way Forward

Resolving dilemma

- Making them part of the democratic process and decision makings like PESA Act, Special Powers to Scheduled and Tribal Areas.
- Making them part of the developmental process, example Forest Rights Act for managing forest-based resources.
- Human Development congruous to their traditional systems like Eklavya Model Schools.
- Upholding their rights and preventing their exploitation like Land Rehabilitation Act, Mines and Minerals Act etc.

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