



Mainstreaming Tribals in India

This editorial is based on [“What are the hurdles to building schools for tribals?”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 15/11/2022. It talks about the challenges related to mainstreaming Tribals in India.

For Prelims: Scheduled Tribe, Fifth Schedule, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, TRIFED, Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools, Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana, Baiga and Gond, Joint Forest Management,

For Mains: Constitution Provisions Related to Tribes, Challenges Faced by Tribes in India, Recent Government Initiatives Related to Tribes, Mainstreaming Tribals.

Tribes represent an important element in Indian society which is integrated with the **culture mosaic of our civilization**. Tribals make up **8.6%** of India's population.

Ethnic tribal sub nationalism poses a serious challenge to the progress of the tribal communities. Leaving the tribal in their own state will **deepen the developmental divide** between the mainstream and the tribals.

On the other hand, tribal lands are rapidly acquired for **new mining and infrastructure projects**. Often, these policies are perceived as **subjugating tribal people and causing the degradation of the resources** upon which they depended.

It is therefore necessary to approach this issue from a **multi prolonged perspective** and find solutions to prevail in a **socially just Indian society**.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Tribes?

- The Constitution of India does not endeavour to **define the term 'tribe'**, however, the term **Scheduled Tribe** was inserted in the Constitution through **Article 342**.
- The **Fifth Schedule** of the Constitution provides for the setting up a Tribes' Advisory Council in each of the States having Scheduled Areas.
- **Educational & Cultural Provision:**
 - **Article 15(4):** Special provisions for advancement of other backward classes (it includes STs)
 - **Article 29:** Protection of **Interests of Minorities** (it includes STs)
 - **Article 46:** The State shall promote, with **special care, the educational and economic interests** of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled **Castes, and the Scheduled Tribes**, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

- **Article 350:** Right to conserve distinct Language, Script or Culture.
- **Political Provision:**
 - **Article 330:** Reservation of seats for STs in Lok Sabha,
 - **Article 332:** Reservation of seats for STs in State Legislatures
 - **Article 243:** Reservation of seats in Panchayats.
- **Administrative Provision:**
 - **Article 275:** It provides for the grant of special funds by the **Union Government to the State Government** for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with a better administration.

What are the Recent Government Initiatives Related to Tribes?

- [Eklavya Model Residential Schools](#)
- [TRIFED](#)
- [Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools](#)
- [Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana](#)

What are the Challenges Faced by Tribes in India?

- **Educational Inequality:** There are many factors contributing to the **difficulty of getting to schools in tribal areas**, such as geographic conditions, sparse populations, and remoteness of tribal villages.
 - Even if school facilities are available, **early participation of children into work, abject poverty, lack of supportive education culture at home** has resulted in high rate of early dropout.
 - Also, **migrant populations are mostly from tribal communities**. Children tend to accompany their parents, **drop out of school** and are forced into hard labour at work sites.
- **Declining Status of Women:** Degradation of nature, particularly through the destruction of forests and shrinking resources, **threatens the health and nutrition of tribal women**, who are considered the last ones to be fed.
 - Also, with the opening of tribal belts to mining and industries, **tribal women are subject to the ruthless operations** to earn, **resulting in their commodification**.
- **Mass Displacement: Power projects, industries and large dams** are now setting up in the tribal inhabited areas. Acquisition of tribal land by the government for these projects led to **large scale displacement of the tribal population and** inadequate rehabilitation exacerbated the problem.
 - Tribes of **Chotanagpur region, Odisha, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh** are the hardest hit.
 - **Development of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries** and eco-parks are negatively impacting their habitat and displace their living leaving them with mental health issues.
 - In 2014, around **450 families from indigenous Baiga and Gond communities were evicted from Kanha Tiger Reserve**.
- **Indigenous Identity Erosion:** Traditional tribal institutions and laws are increasingly clashing with modern institutions, causing tribals to be concerned about maintaining their identity.
 - Another cause for concern is the **disappearance of tribal dialects and languages**.
- **Social and Mental Issues:** Tribal people experience social exclusion as a result of **discrimination at the social and institutional levels**, which leads to isolation, and consequently, **self-exclusion**.
 - For tribal people, **development activity feels like an intrusion into their home**. As a result, they have to migrate to other regions, and it causes psychological problems for them as they are not able to adjust well to other **lifestyles and values**.
- **Problems of Health and Nutrition:** Due to **economic backwardness and insecure livelihood**, tribal populations are prone to diseases like **malaria, cholera, diarrhoea, and jaundice**.

- It is also plagued by problems associated with malnutrition, such as **iron deficiency and anaemia**, [high infant mortality rates](#), etc.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Viewing Tribals as Forest Entrepreneurs:** There is a need to **revitalise Forest Development Corporations (FDCs)** to structure commercialization of forests and engage tribal communities as **“Forest Entrepreneurs”** in exploration, extraction, and enhancement of minor [forest-based products](#).
- **Educational and Digital Equality: Eklavya Model School Initiative** should be tasked with [digitalization of education](#), extending **digital infrastructure to tribal regions** so no area in India remains digitally isolated.
- **Tribal Women Empowerment:** Effective measures should be taken to improve the lot of tribal women through:
 - Taking the lead in [Joint Forest Management](#) and [Panchayati Raj Institutions](#)
 - **Legal and administrative measures to check the practice of victimising women along with a campaign for social awareness and rehabilitation of victimised women**, preferably through **women's organisations**.
- **Mainstreaming Tribes:** Non-tribal population should be educated about the **capability and dignity of tribal people** to ensure the **unity and integrity of the country and the spirit of brotherhood**.
- **Vocal For Local, Local to Global:** The government can collaborate with tribal groups for **identifying and collecting medicinal plants from the wild** and also cultivate suitable species for their self-consumption as well as for **sale in their local states**.
 - [Indian pharmaceutical exports](#) can also benefit from it.

Drishti Mains Question

Discuss major issues faced by Tribals in India. Also provide suggestions for mainstreaming tribes and empowering tribal women.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, who shall be the authority to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of individual or community forest rights or both? (2013)

- (a) State Forest Department
- (b) District Collector/Deputy Commissioner
- (c) Tahsildar/Block Development Officer/Mandal Revenue Officer
- (d) Gram Sabha

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. Given the diversities among the tribal communities in India, in which specific contexts should they be considered as a single category? (2022)

