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Q2(c)

Discuss how cultural diversity of Indian tribes has enriched its plural traditions

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Indigenous and exogenous processes of socio-cultural change in Indian society

5.3 Indigenous and exogenous processes of socio-cultural change in Indian society: Sanskritization, Westernization, Modernization; Inter-play of little and great traditions; Panchayati Raj and social change; Media and Social change.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss how cultural diversity of Indian tribes has enriched its plural traditions
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Indian tribes differ in language, kinship, and political form.

They feed little traditions into the civilisational web Bose described.

Sanskritisation and pilgrimage are two-way, not only Hindu gift.

Fifth and Sixth Schedules turn diversity into constitutional pluralism.

Elwin and Haimendorf recorded that wealth against Ghurye's flatten.

Introduction

Indian tribes do not form one culture. Their languages, kin, and rites feed the same plural civilisation that **N. K. Bose** called a web, not a single Hindu copy.

Body

What diversity looks like

- Naga village republics, Gond clan ritual, **Khasi matriliney**, and Andaman forager bands are different political and kin worlds.
- **Grierson's** families split tribal speech across four stocks. Dance, textile, and jhum calendars differ with ecology.

Enrichment of the plural

- **Vidyarthi's** sacred complex and Hindu tirthas already include tribal pilgrims. Little traditions thicken the great.
- **Srinivas** saw tribes as neighbours in Sanskritisation. The traffic is two-way: forest gods and possession cults enter regional Hinduism.
- **Sixth Schedule** councils and **Fifth Schedule** custom are constitutional pluralism, not folklore.

Against flattening

- **Ghurye's** backward-Hindu thesis underplays this gift. **Elwin** and **Haimendorf** recorded it as civilisation in its own right.
- Plural India is poorer if diversity is only a tourist list and land is gone.

Flow diagram

Tribal diversity -> Language kin rite

Tribal diversity -> Plural civilisation

Elwin Bose -> Plural civilisation

Conclusion

Tribal cultural diversity enriches Indian pluralism as language, kin, and political form. The republic houses it when schedules and FRA work; it loses it when only assimilation counts.

Facts & figures

N. K. Bose

Civilisational unity that can include tribal strands without erasing them.

Sixth Schedule

Institutionalises North-Eastern tribal political diversity.

Khasi matriliney

A kin tradition that widens India's family map beyond the north Indian patriline.

Verrier Elwin

Documented tribal art and custom as a national cultural resource.

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