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Q5(d)

Concept of tribe and Indian census

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on the concept of tribe and the Indian census
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Anthropology treats tribe as a social type on a continuum with caste.

The Indian census mainly counts Scheduled Tribes on a notified list.

ST can be Hindu or Christian in religion columns.

The same community may be ST in one state and not in another.

Census cannot settle the Ghurye-Elwin argument.

Introduction

Tribe in anthropology is a type of society. Tribe in the Indian census is a legal-administrative label, mainly **Scheduled Tribe**. The two overlap and they fight.

Body

Anthropological concept

- Classic marks are segmentary kinship, territory, and a political order below the state. **Bailey** and **Sinha** then placed many Indian groups on a **tribe-caste continuum**.
- **Ghurye** flattened tribe into backward Hindu. **Elwin** kept a cultural isolate. **Census** clerks cannot referee that debate.

Census practice

- Colonial census listed tribes as a religion or a race box. After independence, **ST** is a presidential notified list by state, not a fieldwork diagnosis.
- A person is ST for the count if the community is listed and local certificates follow. Language and faith may be Hindu, Christian, or other.
- Groups on the continuum may be ST in one state and a caste in another. The census records the list, not the ethnography.

Problem

- Political demand to enter the ST list uses census numbers. Anthropology of tribe cannot be reduced to that petition.

Flow diagram

Anthropological tribe -> Continuum kinship territory
Census ST -> Presidential list
Census ST -> Headcount benefits

Conclusion

Census tribe is a notified category for counting and benefits. Anthropological tribe is a social type. Teaching must keep both, or the list swallows the concept.

Facts & figures

Scheduled Tribe

Constitutional notified community, the census's working tribe.

Presidential list

State-wise ST schedule that census enumeration follows.

Tribe-caste continuum

Bailey and Sinha's reminder that the census box is sharper than the social field.

Religion column

Census faith entry that does not by itself decide ST status.