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Q7(c)

Explain the social and religious consequences of contact between tribal and non-tribal populations

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status.

5.2 Linguistic and religious minorities and their social, political and economic status.

Core demand of the question

- Explain the social and religious consequences of contact between tribal and non-tribal populations
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

Contact produces **Sanskritisation** and class splits inside tribes.

Ghurye called the social path **Hinduisation**; Elwin called it loss.

Religion may Hinduise, Christianise, or throw up a prophet such as Birsa.

Sacred groves and brew are early casualties of plough and mission.

Consequences are mixed, not a single conversion story.

Introduction

Contact with non-tribal populations changes tribal kinship, rank, and worship as well as the market. Social and religious consequences travel together.

Body

Social consequences

- **M. N. Srinivas's** **Sanskritisation** appears when a tribe copies neighbouring caste style, diet, and marriage closure.
- **G. S. Ghurye** read this as **Hinduisation**, the tribe entering the caste ladder. **Elwin** read the same contact as loss of land and of a distinct social world.
- Labour migration, boarding school, and diku marriage produce class splits inside the tribe. A salaried clan line is not the old council.

Religious consequences

- Village deities get Hindu names, or a new goddess arrives with the trader. Sacred groves shrink when the **Forest Act** and the plough arrive together.
- Christian missions in the North-East and among **Santals** created indigenous churches, a religious consequence that is not **Sanskritisation**.
- Reform sects, prohibition of brew, and anti-witch campaigns follow Hindu and Christian contact alike.
- **Birsa Munda's** faith was a religious answer to contact, not a simple copy of either neighbour.

Limit

- Contact is old. The British state and the post-Independence mine intensified it. Not every festival change is a fall.

Flow diagram

Contact -> Sanskritisation class split
Contact -> Hinduisation
Contact -> Church
Contact -> Birsa prophetic revolt

Conclusion

Socially, contact yields caste-like rank, class split, and sometimes council decline. Religiously, it yields **Hinduisation**, church, and prophetic revolt. The direction is not one-way.

Facts & figures

Sanskritisation

Srinivas's term for copying a locally high Hindu style; tribes may use it after contact.

Hinduisation

Ghurye's reading of tribes entering Hindu caste society through contact.

Birsa Munda

Prophetic-political response to landlord, mission, and colonial contact.

Santal churches

Mission contact that produced Christian Santal communities beside older bonga worship.