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Q5(c)

Major problems of nomadic and semi-nomadic groups

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · 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 major problems of nomadic and semi-nomadic groups
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Nomadic and semi-nomadic groups live by herd, craft, or circuit, not one village.

Colonial criminal-tribe law still shapes police practice after 1952.

Idate Commission mapped missing lists and documents.

Forests and cities have closed old routes.

Settlement without grazing or trade rights is not a solution.

Introduction

Nomadic and semi-nomadic groups move with herds, crafts, or performance circuits rather than a single plough village. Their problems are legal stigma, lost routes, and missing settlement rights.

Body**Legal and census problems**

- The **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871** branded many mobile groups. Denotification in 1952 did not erase police suspicion.
- The **Idate Commission** on denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic communities recorded gaps in caste lists, ration cards, and school papers.
- Without a fixed house, they fall between Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and OBC lists.

Livelihood problems

- Grazing routes close under the **Indian Forest Act** and private fences. Pastoralists such as some **Gujjar** and Deccan herders lose the old corridor.
- Urban bye-laws criminalise street performance and scrap trade that replaced older circuits.
- Health, vaccination, and girls' schooling break at each camp.

Settlement paradox

- Forced sedentarisation without pasture or shop creates a slum, not a farm. Anthropology asks for portable rights: ration, school, and grazing, not only a brick house.

Flow diagram

Nomadic groups -> Criminal Tribes stigma

Nomadic groups -> Closed grazing routes

Nomadic groups -> No portable papers

Conclusion

The major problems are colonial stigma, closed routes, and papers that assume a village address. Denotification without portable rights leaves the camp illegal.

Facts & figures

Criminal Tribes Act 1871

Colonial law that notified mobile groups as hereditary criminals.

Denotification 1952

Repeal of that Act; social stigma and surveillance often continued.

Idate Commission

National commission on denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic communities and their list-and-paper gaps.

Indian Forest Act

Forest law that restricts grazing corridors used by pastoral nomads.