

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q6(b)

Distinguishing between ethnic identity and ethnicity, discuss the factors responsible for ethnic conflict in tribal areas.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · The concept of ethnicity

7.3 The concept of ethnicity; Ethnic conflicts and political developments; Unrest among tribal communities; Regionalism and demand for autonomy; Pseudo-tribalism. Social change among the tribes during colonial and post-Independent India.

Core demand of the question

- Distinguish ethnic identity from ethnicity
- Discuss the factors responsible for ethnic conflict in tribal areas
- Use Indian ethnographic cases
- Keep definitions tight

Revision summary

Ethnic identity is a group's self-recognition in language, kin, and memory.

Ethnicity is identity mobilised as a political boundary, as Barth argued.

Tribal conflict factors include land alienation, outsider demography, council majorities, jobs, religion, and security laws.

Naga nationhood, Jharkhand, Bodo territoriality, and Bru exclusion are illustrations.

Conflict is organised by elites and the state, not by a tribal essence.

Introduction

- **Ethnic identity is a group's sense of who they are:** language, origin, clan, and memory. Ethnicity is the political use of that identity in a field of other groups and the state. Conflict in tribal areas grows when ethnicity organises land, jobs, and votes.

Body

Distinction

- **Ethnic identity** can be quiet: a Munda or Khasi knows kin, myth, and tongue without a militia.
- **Ethnicity** is identity mobilised as a claim - for a state, a council, a job quota, or exclusion of "outsiders".
- **Fredrik Barth** treated ethnicity as a boundary maintained in contact, not a museum of traits. **Paul Brass** and Indian political sociology stress elite competition and the state.
- **G. S. Ghurye** reduced many tribes to incomplete Hindus; that erasure itself can produce a later ethnic rebound (sarna flags, student unions).

Factors of conflict in tribal areas

- **Land and forest:** alienation, mining, and dams. Jharkhand, Odisha Niyamgiri, and Chhattisgarh show ethnicity forming around jal, jungle, jameen.

- **Demography and "outsider" labour:** Inner Line politics in Nagaland, Mizoram, and Arunachal; Bodo-Adivasi-Muslim contests in Assam; Tripura's tribal-Bengali history.
- **State boundaries and councils:** a Sixth Schedule or new district that privileges one group creates inner minorities (Bru/Reang in Mizoram, non-Bodo in Bodoland).
- **Resources and jobs:** coal, oil, and government posts in ST-reserved belts. F. G. Bailey already saw conflict as political, not as ancient tribal nature.
- **Religion and custom:** church versus valley Hindu or Meitei; sarna versus Hindu code; conversion debates in Arunachal.
- **Insurgency and security laws:** Naga, Mizo (historical), and later smaller armed groups; AFSPA belts where the army is a party to the ethnic field.
- **Development displacement** without consent, as Xaxa noted, turns a livelihood crisis into an ethnic story.

Ethnographic illustrations

- **Naga** identity was clan and village; twentieth-century ethnicity became a national claim across administrative lines (Fürer-Haimendorf described the older village world).
- **Santal** identity is old; **Jharkhand** ethnicity joined several tribes against a Bihar plains elite.
- **Bodo** mobilisation for a territorial council shows language plus land plus party.

Caution

- Not every riot is primordial. Leaders, census categories, and resource rents organise the fight.

Flow diagram

Ethnic identity -> Ethnicity as claim
 Ethnicity as claim -> Land forest jobs
 Ethnicity as claim -> Outsiders and borders
 Ethnicity as claim -> Council and party
 Council and party -> Conflict

Conclusion

Ethnic identity is belonging. Ethnicity is that belonging turned into a political boundary. Tribal-area conflict follows land, outsiders, councils, jobs, and security, as Naga, Bodo, Jharkhand, and Bru cases show. Anthropology should name the resources, not an eternal tribal feud.

Facts & figures

Fredrik Barth

Treated ethnicity as a social boundary maintained in interaction, not a list of cultural traits.

Inner Line

Permit regime in some North-Eastern hill states that structures who counts as an outsider.

Bodoland Territorial Region

Council settlement that institutionalised Bodo ethnicity and left non-Bodo rights as a live conflict.

Jharkhand movement

Multi-tribe regional ethnicity against plains domination, later a state (2000).

Xaxa Committee

Linked tribal unrest to dispossession and failed consent, not to a natural ethnic temperament.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/anthropology-gs-2/2023/distinguishing-between-ethnic-identity-and-ethnicity-discuss-the-factors-responsible-for-ethnic-conflict-in-tribal-areas/>
· ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com