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Q4(a)

Elucidate the problems faced by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups and the major challenges in the formulation of special programmes for their development.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 2 · 20 marks · History of administration of tribal areas, tribal policies, plans, programmes of tribal development and their implementation. The concept of PTGs (Primitive...

9.1 History of administration of tribal areas, tribal policies, plans, programmes of tribal development and their implementation. The concept of PTGs (Primitive Tribal Groups), their distribution, special programmes for their development. Role of N.G.O.s in tribal development.

Core demand of the question

- Elucidate the problems faced by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups and the major challenges in formulating special programmes for them
- Name criteria, examples, and scheme limits
- Keep the answer ethnographic and administrative

Revision summary

PVTGs are about 75 ST groups listed after the **Dhebar** line, defined by fragile demography, pre-agricultural technology, and low literacy.

Problems include forest loss, disease on contact, language-mismatched schools, and collapsed crafts such as Asur smelting.

Programme challenges are bad lists, scattered hamlets, one-size housing, and under-used **FRA habitat rights**.

- **Andaman contact ethics and PM-JANMAN saturation sit at opposite risks:** neglect versus forced assimilation.

Elwin's limit on over-administration is still a design rule.

Introduction

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are a subset of Scheduled Tribes identified as the most fragile in population, technology, and literacy. Special programmes exist because ordinary ST schemes miss them. Problems of life and problems of programme design are two sides of one fact.

Body

Who they are

- The category began as **Primitive Tribal Groups** after the **Dhebar Commission** (1960-61) and was renamed PVTG in 2006. About **75** groups are listed across states.
- **Criteria used in administration:** stagnant or declining population, pre-agricultural or hunting-foraging technology, extremely low literacy, and a subsistence economy.

- **Examples:** Jarawa, Onge, and Great Andamanese; Sentinelese (contact policy of restraint); Birhor, Asur, Birjia in Jharkhand; Baiga, Abujh Maria in the central belt; Chenchu in Andhra-Telangana; Cholanaikkan in Kerala; Toda and Kota in the Nilgiris; Shompen in Nicobar.

Problems they face

- Land and forest loss after the **Indian Forest Act** tradition, mining, and parks. **Birhor** rope-making and **Asur** iron-smelting collapsed when forest and ore access closed.
- **Health:** malnutrition, malaria, measles on first contact, and in some groups **sickle-cell** burden. **Jarawa** contact on the Andaman Trunk Road brought infection and exploitation.
- **Language and school:** primers in the state language fail when the child speaks a isolate or a small Munda tongue.
- Debt, bonded labour, and sexual exploitation at the forest-market edge, recorded in Xaxa and earlier Elwin notes on Baiga and Gond fringes.
- Demographic smallness means one epidemic or one dam can erase a local band.

Challenges in special programmes

- **Identification:** lists mix hunter-gatherers and small cultivators; some PVTGs are politically quieter than larger ST neighbours and lose budget inside a district ST pool.
- **Scattered hamlets:** a hostel or PHC on the road does not reach an Abujhmarh or Andaman forest camp. **PM-JANMAN** (2023) tries habitation-level saturation; delivery still depends on staff who stay.
- **One-scheme-fits-all:** housing prototypes ignore mobile foraging; cash without forest rights repeats dependence.
- **Consent and contact:** Andaman policy must not become forced assimilation. The Sentinelese case shows that "development" can be lethal.
- **FRA and habitat rights** (**section 3(1)(e)** of FRA for PVTGs) are under-used. Without habitat title, a livelihood scheme is a patch.
- **Data:** outdated population figures and weak baseline make targets theatrical.

What a better formulation needs

- Habitation micro-plans, local language workers, health before spectacle tourism, and habitat rights before brick housing.
- **Verrier Elwin's** warning against over-administration remains practical, not romantic.

Flow diagram

PVTG -> Forest land health
 PVTG -> Tiny population
 Special schemes -> Habitation and habitat rights
 Standard ST package -> Forest land health

Conclusion

PVTGs face collapsing subsistence, disease, and tiny numbers. Special programmes fail when they treat PVTGs as a smaller ST, ignore habitat rights, and push contact or standard housing. The challenge is to design from the hamlet and the forest, not from a district average.

Facts & figures

Dhebar Commission

1960-61 report that led to identifying the most isolated tribal groups later called PTG then PVTG.

About 75 PVTGs

Administrative count of groups across states and Andaman-Nicobar, not a biological race list.

FRA habitat rights

Forest Rights Act section on community habitat for PVTGs, still poorly implemented in many states.

PM-JANMAN

2023 mission aiming to saturate PVTG habitations with basic services; success depends on staff and consent.

Jarawa and Trunk Road

Andaman example of how a road and tourism contact bring infection and exploitation to a PVTG.

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