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Q2(a)

Critically discuss the recent welfare measures initiated by the Government for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Comment why PVTGs were erroneously called Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · 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

- State who PVTGs are and how they are identified
- Describe recent Union and state welfare measures, including PM-JANMAN, with a critical eye
- Explain why the older name Primitive Tribal Groups was erroneous
- Use Dhebar, Elwin, Xaxa and the ST list, not a scheme dump only

Revision summary

PVTGs are 75 listed communities identified by vulnerability, not by a primitive essence.

CCD plans, FRA habitat rights and PM-JANMAN (2023) are the main recent measures.

Delivery still misses hamlets; mining and land loss can cancel welfare.

Primitive Tribal Groups was an evolutionist and colonial name that ranked cultures.

Particularly vulnerable correctly points to isolation and dispossession as historical facts.

Introduction

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are a smaller list inside the Scheduled Tribes, marked by declining or stagnant population, pre-agricultural or simple technology, low literacy, and economic backwardness. Recent welfare has become more targeted. The older label **Primitive Tribal Groups** was wrong in science and in politics, which is why the name was changed.

Body

Who PVTGs are

The category grew from the **Dhebar Commission** (1960-61) concern with the most isolated tribes, and from **Verrier Elwin's** NEFA and central-Indian writing on groups that should not be rushed into the market. The Government of India later listed **Primitive Tribal Groups** (1975-76 onward, expanded in the 1980s). There are **75 PVTGs in 18 states and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Examples: Birhor, Asur, Birjia, Korwa, Hill Kharia** in Jharkhand; **Baiga, Sahariya** in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan; **Dongria Kondh, Bonda,**

Juang in Odisha; **Toda, Kurumba** in the Nilgiris; **Jarawa, Onge, Great Andamanese, Sentinelese** in the islands; **Cholanaikkan** in Kerala.

Criteria are administrative, not a separate racial stock. **B. S. Guha's** older racial types and colonial "primitive" language should not be read into the list. **Virginus Xaxa** (2014) treated PVTGs as historically dispossessed communities, not as leftovers of evolution.

Recent welfare measures

The **Conservation-cum-Development (CCD)** plans under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs funded habitat, land, education and health for PVTGs. States run micro-projects (Odisha's PVTG micro-projects are a known model). **Forest Rights Act, 2006 section 3(1)(e)** recognises community and habitation rights that matter especially for PVTGs. **PESA** Gram Sabhas, where notified, should consent to land acquisition.

PM-JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan, 2023) is the largest recent package: housing, piped water, roads, mobile connectivity, anganwadis, hostels, sick-cell and TB care, and sustainable livelihoods, aimed at PVTG habitations mapped as left-out of ordinary schemes. PM-JANMAN sits beside DA-JGUA / PM-AJAY housing and the older Vanbandhu and Eklavya school architecture. Land titles, FRA claims and habitat rights remain the slower, more decisive layer.

Criticism of the measures

Targeting is right; delivery repeats older failures. Hamlets are missed in surveys. Contractors capture housing. Connectivity arrives without language-ready health staff. Island groups need **protection from contact**, not tourism or road-first development - a lesson from Andaman policy and from Elwin's caution. **Samata** (1997) and **Niyamgiri** (2013) show that mining can erase a PVTG livelihood faster than a scheme can rebuild it. Cash and houses without **jal, jungle, jameen** are relief, not justice.

CCD plans were often utilisation-poor. Literacy hostels can detach children from language. Anthropological monitoring is still thin compared with the money now announced.

Why "**Primitive Tribal Groups**" was erroneous

Primitive is an evolutionist word. It implies that these communities are earlier humans, stuck on a ladder that **Tylor** and colonial census ethnography had drawn. Indian anthropology after **S. C. Roy, N. K. Bose, D. N. Majumdar** and **Elwin** had already shown that so-called primitives have complex kinship, ritual and ecological knowledge. **G. S. Ghurye's** "backward Hindus" was a different error - forced assimilation - but it shared the ranking impulse.

- **The groups are** particularly vulnerable **because of** isolation plus dispossession: forest reservation, mining, dams, and demographic shock (Andaman). They are not primitive in mind or culture. The 2006 renaming to PVTG, used in Xaxa and in later ministry language, corrects the insult and the science. Vulnerability is a **relation to the state and the market**, not a stage of culture.

ILO Convention 107, which India ratified, still uses older "tribal and semi-tribal" integration language; **Convention 169** (1989) speaks of peoples and rights. India's PVTG policy is closer to welfare targeting than to 169's consent standard - another reason names and rights must be held together.

Flow diagram

Dhebar Elwin -> PTG list
PTG list -> Renamed PVTG
Renamed PVTG -> CCD PM-JANMAN FRA
Mining isolation -> Vulnerability

Conclusion

PVTG welfare is now more visible, especially through PM-JANMAN, CCD and FRA habitat claims. It will fail if it is only concrete and SIM cards. The name Primitive Tribal Groups was erroneous because it ranked living peoples as evolutionary leftovers. Particularly vulnerable names a political condition, which is the accurate anthropological point.

Facts & figures

75 PVTGs

Listed across 18 states and Andaman and Nicobar; criteria include stagnant population, pre-agricultural livelihood, literacy and economic backwardness.

PM-JANMAN 2023

Union mission for PVTG habitations: housing, water, road, connectivity, health, education and livelihoods.

FRA 3(1)(e)

Recognises rights of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities to home and habitation, used for PVTG habitat claims.

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