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Q7(b)

## Discuss the rising ethnic conflicts in India and propose their possible remedial measures

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · 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

- Describe rising ethnic conflicts in India with anthropological causes
- Give regional examples
- Propose remedies that are constitutional and local, not only "peace and harmony"

### Revision summary

Ethnic conflict is organised around tribe, language, religion and caste blocs, heated by land, migration and elections.

- **Examples:** Manipur hill-valley, Bodo-Santhal, NRC politics, caste agitations, central Indian resource belts.
- **Remedies:** **Sixth Schedule**/371 with inner-minority protection, FRA before new lists, mixed recruitment, careful security law.

Bommai, Sachar and Xaxa address different cleavages.

Map the losers before a Gazette change.

### Introduction

Ethnic conflict in India is organised around **language, religion, tribe, caste bloc and region**, often several at once. It is rising in visibility where **resources, migration and federal rearrangements** meet a young electorate. Anthropology treats ethnicity as made in history, not as a blood feud from forever.

### Body

#### Causes

**Paul Brass** and **M. N. Srinivas** already showed that elites name the ethnic we. Today's accelerators: **job and land scarcity, social media rumours, migration into tribal and linguistic homelands, winner-take-all elections**, and **security laws** that humiliate one group. **Instrumental** and **primordial** feelings mix once a death has occurred.

#### Patterns

- **Hill-valley and ST-non-ST:** Manipur 2023 exposed Meitei ST-demand, Kuki-Zo land fear, and valley-hill federal design. Older Naga-Kuki and Bodo-Santhal (BTAD 2012, 2014) stories are cousins.

- **Linguistic and regional:** Assam's NRC-Citizenship Amendment debate, Shiv Sena's sons-of-soil history, Kannada-Tamil flashes.
- **Religious communal riots** in towns, with a caste underlay.
- **Caste-ethnic blocs:** Jat, Patidar, Maratha agitations, sometimes against ST/SC neighbours.
- **Adivasi-miner-state** violence in central India, where ethnicity and class braid.

## Remedies

**Federal design:** **Sixth Schedule** and **Article 371** work when councils share power with inner minorities (Bru, non-Bodo). Panchhi's cooperative federalism is the dry name for this.

**Land and Inner Line:** Clear FRA and customary title **before** a new ST list or a new railway colony. Samata's logic still applies.

**Power-sharing:** Rotating offices, mixed police recruitment, and **local peace committees** with women, as some Mizo and Naga church-civil society practices show.

**Law:** Equal application of criminal law; **avoid collective punishment.** AFSPA debates belong here because a special security regime becomes an ethnic grievance.

**Speech and school:** Mother-tongue schooling and a shared civic history reduce rumour. Ban lists do not.

**S. R. Bommai** protects elected state governments; it does not by itself stop a riot. **Sachar** and minority commissions address one cleavage; tribal councils address another. No single Ministry of Harmony replaces **jobs and maps.**

- **Anthropology's remedy is** thick description before a Gazette notification: who will lose land if this group is listed, if this district is divided, if this highway is fenced.

## Flow diagram

Ethnic we -> Land lists jobs  
 Ethnic we -> Migration media  
 Remedy -> Federal share  
 Remedy -> Title FRA 371  
 Remedy -> Inner minorities

## Conclusion

Ethnic conflict rises where identity is organised around land, lists and votes. Remedies are federal sharing, prior land rights, mixed institutions and honest ethnography of losers, not appeals to an abstract unity.

## Facts & figures

### BTAD violence 2012-14

Bodo-Muslim and Bodo-Adivasi clashes in Assam's territorial council area, a warning about **Sixth Schedule** majorities.

**Article 371 and ILP**

Special federal and permit devices meant to protect hill homelands; they fail if inner minorities and migrants are left without a civil status.

**Brass**

Showed ethnic riots as organised elite work, which is why rumour and party structure matter as much as ancient hatred.

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