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Q7(a)

Identify the contemporary limitations in the process of tribal development. How can anthropological knowledge contribute in this process?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Anthropology GS 2 · 20 marks · Social change and contemporary tribal societies

7.2 Social change and contemporary tribal societies: Impact of modern democratic institutions, development programmes and welfare measures on tribals and weaker sections.

Core demand of the question

- Identify contemporary limitations in tribal development as process, not as a list of ministries
- Show how anthropological knowledge (field method, land, health, language, gender) can correct the process
- Use **Xaxa**, PESA, FRA, **PM-JANMAN** and courts as evidence

Revision summary

- **Limits:** consent deficit, list-area mismatch, livelihood substitution, last-mile services, security overlay, elite capture, blunt data.

Xaxa, PESA, FRA and Niyamgiri name the same gap between paper and hamlet.

Anthropology contributes field method, ethnoecology, medical and linguistic knowledge, gendered land.

Use it in FRA mapping and social impact before clearance, not as decoration in an EIA.

PM-JANMAN helps only if PVTG hamlets author the micro-plan.

Introduction

- **Tribal development fails less from a shortage of schemes than from a wrong process:** targets without consent, land without record, schools without language, clinics without trust. Anthropology's contribution is that process - how a hamlet actually lives - not a new slogan.

Body

Contemporary limitations

- **Consent deficit:** Mines, dams, tiger corridors and plantations still arrive as faits accomplis. **PESA** Gram Sabha and **FRA** community forest rights exist on paper; **Xaxa** documented how officers treat them as hurdles. **Niyamgiri** is the exception that proves the rule.
- **List and area mismatch:** ST certificates, **Fifth Schedule** maps and actual hamlets do not coincide. PVTGs inside a "developed" block remain invisible until **PM-JANMAN**.
- **Livelihood substitution:** Tendu and mahua cash, then a ban or a contractor; jhum labelled backward without a wet-rice alternative that works at that slope.
- **Human development last mile:** teacher and ANM vacancies, instruction in a non-mother tongue, sickle-cell and malaria treated as character. **Expert Committee on Tribal Health** said

this.

- **Security overlay:** In central Indian and some North-Eastern belts, development is routed through camps and roads first. Anthropology of fear is not in the DPR.
- **Elite capture:** A small ST contractor class takes panchayat and mining liaison; women and PVTGs do not.
- **Data:** No hamlet-level, season-sensitive food calendar in the MIS.

What anthropology contributes

Participant observation and genealogies show who really holds land and who only has a patta. **Ethnoecology** maps grove, jhum cycle and women's collection, which FRA claims need. **Medical anthropology** explains why a tablet is refused and how a gunia and an ANM could share a protocol. **Linguistic respect** designs the school that **NCF** now also asks for in mother tongue. **Gendered ethnography** stops treating "the tribe" as male hunters.

Anthropologists in **Tribal Research Institutes**, in **Gram Sabha FRA mapping**, and in **social impact assessment** under the 2013 land Act are already the applied form. The limit is when anthropology becomes a **rapid appraisal for a clearance file**.

- **Knowledge contributes if it is** upstream: before the dam alignment, not as a chapter in the EIA after the contract is signed. It contributes if the **sarpanch and the woman collector of mahua** are co-authors of the plan, which is the spirit of PESA and of Elwin's NEFA caution without Elwin's romance.

Flow diagram

Limitations -> No consent
 Limitations -> Mismatch list/area
 Limitations -> Last-mile health school
 Ethnography -> FRA PESA SIA
 FRA PESA SIA -> Hamlet as author

Conclusion

The limitation is a development process that skips consent, language and season. Anthropological knowledge repairs that process when it is used to write FRA maps, health protocols and school language with the hamlet, before the project, not after the protest.

Facts & figures

Xaxa Committee

2014 report on tribal communities that made consent, land and governance the core of development failure.

Social impact assessment

Required under the 2013 land Act; anthropological method is the right tool if it is independent and early.

PM-JANMAN

PVTG habitation mission that still needs hamlet-level ethnography to avoid a standard housing packet.

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