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Q13

## How did the colonial rule affect the tribals in India and what was the tribal response to the colonial oppression?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · GS I · 15 marks · Indian Society and Diversity

Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

### Core demand of the question

- How did the colonial rule affect the tribals in India and what was the tribal response to the colonial oppression?
- Cover land, forest, and law, then name major uprisings and later politics

### Revision summary

Forest Acts and land revenue turned tribal commons into state and settler property.

Moneylenders, mines, and the **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871**, added debt and stigma.

Santhal hul, Birsa's ulgulan, and Manyam-Rampa were major armed answers.

Faith movements and later Adivasi organisations were political answers.

Fifth-**Sixth Schedules and the Forest Rights Act, 2006**, try to repair the same wound.

### Flow diagram

Colonial state -> Forest Acts revenue diku  
Colonial state -> Criminal Tribes Act  
Forest Acts revenue diku -> Santhal Munda Rampa  
Criminal Tribes Act -> Santhal Munda Rampa  
Santhal Munda Rampa -> Schedules FRA PESA

### Conclusion

- Record community forest rights, apply PESA, 1996, in scheduled areas, and make consent real before mines and reservoirs.
- Treat Criminal Tribes stigma as history to reverse through dignity, land, and schools, not through more policing.

Colonial rule hit tribals through forest law, revenue, settlers, and criminal branding. They answered with hul, ulgulan, hill war, and later constitutional politics, and the same land question still needs PESA and forest rights in practice.

### Facts & figures

**Indian Forest Act, 1878 / 1927**

Statutes that classified forest and restricted shifting cultivation and village use.

**Santhal hul, 1855-56**

Rising in the Rajmahal-Bhagalpur belt against dikus and colonial police, led by Sidhu and Kanhu.

**Birsa Munda, 1899-1900**

Ulgulan in Chotanagpur for land, faith, and an end to diku-sarkar grip.

**Criminal Tribes Act, 1871**

Colonial law that notified communities as hereditary criminals.

**Forest Rights Act, 2006**

Republic statute to recognise forest dwellers' land and community rights.

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