



Tribal Development Approaches

For Prelims: Haka, [Sentinelese tribe](#), [Traditional knowledge](#), [Sixth Schedule](#), [Tribal Panchsheel policy](#), [Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana](#).

For Mains: Indigenous Rights, Tribal Development Policies in India, Challenges in Balancing Modern Governance and Cultural Heritage.

[Source: IE](#)

Why in News?

- Recently, Maori lawmakers in New Zealand staged a **haka protest** against the **Treaty Principles Bill**, which seeks to reinterpret the **1840 Treaty of Waitangi**.
- The protest highlighted the debate on the **approaches to tribal development policy** in balancing cultural heritage with modern governance.

What is Haka?

- **About:** The haka is a traditional Maori dance, performed by warriors on the battlefield or to welcome others, involving chanting, facial expressions, and hand movements. It represents Maori identity and has become a symbol of resistance.
 - The Maori Tribe is an **indigenous tribe who have inhabited New Zealand**.
- **Haka Protest:** The haka protest is a response to the introduction of the **Treaty Principles Bill**.
 - The Bill seeks to reinterpret the **1840 Treaty of Waitangi**, a foundational document that **established the relationship between the British Crown and Maori chiefs**.
- **Treaty Principles Bill:** It aims to ensure equality for all New Zealanders. Critics argue that by applying the Treaty principles equally to all New Zealanders, **the bill fails to recognize the distinct rights of the Māori as Indigenous people**.
 - This approach is seen as undermining the **legal protections afforded to Maori under the Treaty of Waitangi**.

What are the Approaches to Tribal Development Policy?

- **Isolation:** This approach emphasises protecting Indigenous communities by **limiting their interaction with modern society** to preserve their cultural and ecological systems.
 - **Examples:** The [Sentinelese tribe](#) in the Andaman Islands lives in total isolation, protected by strict laws under the [Andaman and Nicobar Islands \(Protection of Aboriginal Tribes\) Act, 1956](#).
 - **Benefits:** Traditional lifestyles, languages, and knowledge systems are preserved.
 - Shields communities from **external influences** that may exploit **resources or labour**.
 - Indigenous lands are often rich in biodiversity, preserved through their sustainable practices.
 - **Challenges:** Isolation often results in **lack of healthcare, education, and economic**

opportunities.

- Communities may remain **excluded from national development processes**.
- Changes like [climate impacts](#) or encroachment can render isolation unsustainable.
- **Assimilation:** This approach incorporates Indigenous communities into mainstream society, aiming for a **unified national identity**, but it can undermine their unique cultural practices.
 - **Examples:** In the **United States, Native American children** were placed in boarding schools to “**Americanize**” them, suppressing their languages and traditions.
 - In Australia aboriginal children from the “**Stolen Generations (aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people)**” were forcibly removed from their families to assimilate into White culture.
 - **Benefits:** Access to basic amenities like education, healthcare, and job opportunities can improve quality of life. Assimilation can **bridge gaps in economic and political representation**.
 - **Challenges:** Forced assimilation **erodes Indigenous identity** by causing the **loss of language, traditions, and spiritual practices**, weakening cultural heritage.
 - The forced assimilation often meets **resistance, fostering alienation and distrust between Indigenous peoples and the government**, complicating efforts to balance cultural preservation with modern governance.
- **Integration:** It involves incorporating Indigenous peoples into modern governance while **respecting their cultural identity, ensuring their rights, traditions, and autonomy** are preserved within broader society.
 - **Examples:** The **Gundjeihmi and Bininj tribes** work alongside the Australian government in managing **Kakadu National Park**, combining [traditional knowledge](#) with modern conservation practices.
 - **Benefits:** Inclusion in governance gives **Indigenous peoples a voice in decision-making processes** that affect their communities.
 - Recognition of Indigenous rights through modern governance can enhance their ability to **protect lands, traditions, and resources**.
 - Collaborative frameworks can foster **trust between Indigenous communities and governments**.
 - **Challenges:** Indigenous communities may face **systemic racism** and **inequality despite formal inclusion**.
 - Governments and industries may resist ceding power or resources to Indigenous authorities.

What is India's Approach to Tribal Development Policy?

- **Pre-Independence Approach:** The British enforced an **isolationist approach** for tribal areas by classifying them as “**Excluded**” or “**Partially Excluded**” zones to ensure law and order.
 - In 1874, the **Scheduled District Act (Act XIV)** was introduced in British India, which exempted certain areas from regular laws to protect them from exploitation.
- **Post Independence:** Government policies have been oriented towards both autonomy and integration.
 - Policies focused on autonomy include the [Panchayats \(Extension to the Scheduled Areas\) Act, 1996 \(PESA\)](#), the [Forest Rights Act, 2006](#) and **constitutional safeguards such as the Fifth and Sixth Schedules**.
 - These measures prioritise preserving tribal self-governance, ensuring minimal interference in their cultural and religious practices, and affirming their **rights over land and forest resources**.
 - The **Integration-Oriented Policy** aimed to incorporate tribals into the national framework while preserving their identity and autonomy. It is **guided by [Jawaharlal Nehru's Tribal Panchsheel policy](#)**, which emphasises self-development, respect for tribal rights, minimal external imposition, local participation in administration, and human-centred outcomes over financial metrics
 - Recent initiatives for integrating tribal communities in India include the [Pradhan Mantri Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group \(PVTG\) Development Mission](#), [Eklavya Model Residential Schools](#), [Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana](#), and a mission to eliminate [sickle cell anaemia](#).

Conclusion

Balancing the preservation of Indigenous cultural heritage with modern governance is a complex challenge. While approaches like isolation, assimilation, and integration each have their pros and cons, **recognizing Indigenous rights and preserving culture is crucial** for their well-being. Globally and in India, policies that **combine autonomy with integration** are essential to ensuring the well-being and cultural integrity of tribal populations.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Analyse the balance between isolation, assimilation, and integration in tribal development policies. What are their impacts on cultural heritage?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q: Analyse the perspectives of Isolation, Assimilation and Integration in understanding the trajectories of Indian Tribal Development. **(2023)**

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