



Colonisation of Indigenous Tribes

For Prelims: [Māori tribe](#), [Congo](#), [Bedouin and Senussi Tribes](#), [British East India Company](#), [French Guiana](#), [Falkland Islands](#), [British Indian Ocean Territory \(BIOT\)](#), [Indigenous People](#), [National Park](#), [Sovereignty](#).

For Mains: History of Colonialism and its Impact on Contemporary World.

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Why in News?

Recently, **New Zealand's Māori King, Kiingi Tuheitia Pootatau Te Wherowhero VII**, died, days after the celebration of his 18th year on the throne.

- He was the 7th monarch in the **Kiingitanga movement** (Māori King movement).
 - **The Kiingitanga movement** was founded in **1858** to **unite New Zealand's Indigenous Māori tribes** in the face of British colonisation.
 - The movement's primary goals were to end the sale of land to non-Indigenous people and stop inter-tribal warfare.

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What were the Various Indigenous Tribes Colonised by Europeans?

- **Māoris in New Zealand:** New Zealand transitioned from an **exclusively Māori world** to one dominated by **Pākehā (Europeans)** in terms of population, politics, society, and economy.
 - This transformation took place between **Captain James Cook's arrival in 1769** and the outbreak of the **First World War in 1914**.
 - Māori and Europeans indulged in **several conflicts** in New Zealand over land ownership and British control of indigenous resources. E.g., **Wairau Valley clash (1843)**, **Flagstaff War (1845-46)**, **Waikato War (1863-64)** etc.
- **Aboriginals in Australia:** Aboriginal land was taken over by British colonists on the premise that

the land belonged to **“no-one”** (**‘terra nullius’**).

- Aboriginals had associations with land on a **spiritual and inheritance basis**. Nonetheless, they did not believe in British sovereignty.
- Australia’s colonisation resulted in a **drastic decline** in the Aboriginal population.
- Many Indigenous men, women and children died of introduced **diseases** to which they had **no resistance** such as **smallpox, influenza and measles**.
- Many also died in random killings, punitive expeditions and **organised massacres e.g., the Myall Creek massacre (1838)**.
- **Red Indian of North America:** The European colonisation of the Americas that began in **1492** resulted in a **substantial decline** in the size of the **Native American population** because of newly introduced diseases like **Smallpox**.
 - By the close of the Indian Wars in the late **19th century**, fewer than **238,000 Indigenous people** remained, a sharp decline from the estimated **5 million to 15 million** living in North America when Columbus arrived in **1492**. E.g., **Gnadenhutten Massacre (1782)**.
- **Boer War in South Africa:** Between **1899 and 1902**, the British Army fought a bitter colonial war against the **Boers in South Africa**.
 - Boers were South Africans of Dutch or German descent, especially one of the **early settlers** of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.
- **Massacre in Africa:**
 - **Namibia:** In Namibia, **German colonial authorities** brutally suppressed uprisings by the **Herero and Nama people**, who resisted the expropriation of their lands, livestock, and resources.
 - **Congo:** The **Congo Free State**, a personal colony of **King Leopold II of Belgium**, became notorious for extreme violence against indigenous people, including **mutilation, torture, and mass killings**, to enforce rubber quotas.
 - **Libya:** During Italy’s colonial rule in **Libya**, the indigenous **Bedouin and Senussi tribes** resisted Italian attempts to expropriate their lands and resources.
 - Italy employed brutal counterinsurgency tactics, including **concentration camps and mass executions**. An estimated **80,000 to 100,000 Libyans**, a significant portion of the population, perished during this period.

What is colonialism?

- Colonialism is defined as **“control by one power over a dependent area or people.”**
- It occurs when one nation **subjugates** another, conquering its population and exploiting it, often while forcing its **own language and cultural values** upon its people.
- By 1914, a large majority of the world’s nations had been colonised by **Europeans** at some point.
- Prominent colonists were **Portugal, Spain, England, the Netherlands, France, and Germany**.
- Even former colonies eventually became colonists themselves. E.g., The **U.S.**, which was formerly held by Great Britain, extended its territory shortly after winning the War of Independence and later expanded its claims to the **Pacific and Latin America**.
- India was colonised by the **British Empire** for over **200 years**. The **British East India Company**, supported by the British crown, gradually conquered much of India throughout the 18th century.

What are the Remnants of Colonial Possession in the Modern World?

- **French Guiana:** **French Guiana** is located on the North Atlantic coast of **South America**.
 - French Guiana is a **European presence** in South America.
 - French Guiana is governed by the provisions of the **French constitution** as a territorial collectivity of France.
 - It forms an **integral part of the French Republic**.
- **Falkland Islands:** The **Falkland Islands** are an overseas territory of the **United Kingdom**, but they are also claimed by **Argentina**, which calls them **Las Malvinas**.
 - In **1982**, a **war** was fought between Argentina and Great Britain over control of the Falkland Islands.
- **Réunion Islands:** It was settled by the **French** in the 17th century. It is one of the many French Overseas Territories.

- **Guam Islands:** The United States occupied the **Guam Islands** in the **North Pacific Ocean** in the aftermath of the **Spanish-American War of 1898**. It is home to a large US **military base**.
- **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT):** **BIOT** is an archipelago of **58 islands** covering some 640,000 sq km of ocean. It is administered from London and is located approximately halfway between **East Africa and Indonesia**.

What are the Present Day Challenges to Indigenous People?

- **Green Colonialism:** **Global North** countries promote **militarised fortress conservation models** in countries of the **Global South**.
 - **Global North** often targets territories of **indigenous peoples**, who are **driven off** so that those lands can be incorporated into national parks.
 - This phenomenon is called **'green colonialism'** and explains how **'Big Green' conservation NGOs** from the Global North are reinforcing colonial power over Indigenous Peoples.
- **Neocolonialism:** Neocolonialism is a form of imperialism where a state uses **economic, political, and psychological pressure** to control and exploit another country, while maintaining the appearance of **national sovereignty**.
 - It is a system where **former colonial powers and new superpowers** use economic and political strategies to maintain control of a region. **E.g., US invasions of Vietnam and Afghanistan, US invoking regime change in unfriendly countries.**
- **Impact of Climate Change:** Indigenous peoples are among the first to face the direct consequences of **climate change**.
 - Climate change threatens the habitats and ecosystems on which Indigenous people rely for food, water, medicine, livelihood, and cultural identity.
- **Encroaching on their Right to Self-Determination:** Many indigenous peoples are denied the **right to freely choose their own government** or political systems. E.g., Indonesian government has employed military and police forces to **suppress dissent and resistance in West Papua**.
 - This is despite the fact that indigenous peoples were governing themselves freely for thousands of years prior to the arrival of colonists from the 15th century onwards.
- **Forced Assimilation:** During the 19th and 20th centuries, Canada removed Indigenous children from their families and placed them in **federally funded boarding schools**, with the intent of **assimilating** them into broader Canadian society.
 - At these **"Indian Residential Schools"**, they were not allowed to speak their languages or express their cultural heritage and identities.
- **Trespassing on their Right to Cultural Lands:** Indigenous Peoples' lands which are home to over **80% of our planet's biodiversity** and often rich in natural resources, such as **oil, gas, and minerals** are routinely appropriated, sold, leased or simply plundered and polluted by vested authorities.

Way Forward

- **Restoration of Land Rights:** Colonies like **French Guiana, the Falkland Islands, Réunion, Guam, and the British Indian Ocean Territory** should be **returned to original owners** and rights of local populations to **self-determination** should be recognised.
 - **Promote Inclusive Conservation Models:** Shift away from militarised, exclusionary conservation models and towards approaches that respect indigenous sovereignty.
 - Ensure indigenous peoples should be included in decision-making processes, acknowledging their role as **custodians of biodiversity**.
 - **End Forced Assimilation Practices:** Promote restorative justice, cultural revitalization programs, and legal protections for Indigenous languages, traditions, and identities.
 - **Protect Indigenous Lands and Resources:** Enforce laws that safeguard Indigenous lands from illegal appropriation and resource exploitation. Promote fair land use policies that protect biodiversity, honour land rights, and benefit Indigenous communities.
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Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Discuss in brief the history of colonisation on Indigenous Peoples. Also, analyses the contemporary challenges they face, including issues related to land rights, cultural preservation, and political autonomy.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q.At the national level, which ministry is the nodal agency to ensure effective implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006?

- (a) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- (b) Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- (c) Ministry of Rural Development
- (d) Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Ans: (d)

Q.With reference to India, the terms 'Halbi, Ho and Kui' pertain to **(2021)**

- (a) Dance forms of Northwest India
- (b) Musical instruments
- (c) Pre-historic cave paintings
- (d) Tribal languages

Ans: (d)

Q. With reference to the history of India, "Ulgulan" or the Great Tumult is the description of which of the

following events? **(2020)**

- (a)** The Revolt of 1857
- (b)** The Mappila Rebellion of 1921
- (c)** The Indigo Revolt of 1859-60
- (d)** Birsa Munda's Revolt of 1899-1900

Ans: (d)

Q. Consider the following statements about Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in India: (2019)

1. PVTGs reside in 18 States and one Union Territory.
2. A stagnant or declining population is one of the criteria for determining PVTG status.
3. There are 95 PVTGs officially notified in the country so far.
4. Irular and Konda Reddi tribes are included in the list of PVTGs.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a)** 1, 2 and 3
- (b)** 2, 3 and 4
- (c)** 1, 2 and 4
- (d)** 1, 3 and 4

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)? **(2017)**

Q. Why are the tribals in India referred to as 'the Scheduled Tribes'? Indicate the major provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India for their upliftment. **(2016)**

Q. How do you explain the statistics that show that the sex ratio in Tribes In India is more favourable to women than the sex ratio among Scheduled Castes? **(2015)**

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/colonisation-of-indigenous-tribes>

