



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** "Tribal communities in India face the dual challenge of preservation of their cultural identity and integration with mainstream development." Discuss this statement with suitable examples. **(250 words)**

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### Approach

- Introduce the answer by defining the current status of Tribes in India and why their cultural preservation and integration with the mainstream is crucial.
- Delve into the Challenges in Cultural preservation and integration with the mainstream
- Suggest Measures for Balancing Cultural Preservation with Development
- Conclude with a forward looking statement.

### Introduction

**Tribal communities in India**, constituting **8.6% of the population (Census 2011)**, have historically lived in **harmony with nature**, preserving indigenous traditions while maintaining distinct socio-cultural identities.

- Striking a balance between their cultural preservation and integration with the mainstream is crucial for their **empowerment and sustainable development**.

### Body

#### Challenges in Cultural Preservation:

- **Land Alienation and Displacement**
  - Large-scale **development projects** such as **mining, dams, and industrialization** have led to the **displacement** of tribals, disrupting their traditional way of life.
  - **Example:** The **Dongria Kondh** of Odisha opposed bauxite mining in **Niyamgiri Hills**, as it threatened their **sacred lands and traditional livelihoods**.
- **Loss of Traditional Livelihoods**
  - Tribal communities depend on **shifting cultivation, pastoralism, and forest-based activities**.
  - **Example:** **Van Gujjars**, a semi-nomadic pastoral tribe in the Himalayas, face restrictions on seasonal migration due to **wildlife conservation laws**.
- **Erosion of Indigenous Knowledge and Practices**
  - As younger generations migrate to urban areas, traditional **medicinal knowledge, art, and sustainable agricultural practices** are being lost.
  - **Example:** The **Apatani tribe** of Arunachal Pradesh practices **rice-fish cultivation**, a highly sustainable method that **risks being forgotten**.
- **Cultural Homogenization Due to Urbanization and Globalization**
  - Exposure to **mainstream education and urban lifestyles** is leading to the **erosion of traditional languages, attire, and customs**.
  - **Example:** The **Toda tribe** of the Nilgiris faces a decline in the use of **their unique Toda**

language, which is not widely taught in schools.

## Challenges in Integration with Mainstream Development

- **Socio-economic Marginalization**
  - Tribals face **low literacy rates, poor healthcare, and limited employment opportunities.**
  - **Example:** Despite reservations, the **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Scheduled Tribes** remains lower than the national average in **higher education (AISHE Report 2020-21).**
- **Weak Implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006**
  - The **FRA recognizes the land rights of tribals**, but its implementation is **slow and ineffective.**
  - **Example:** In 2019, the **Supreme Court ordered the eviction of over 1 million forest dwellers**, highlighting gaps in legal protection.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Degradation**
  - Climate change affects **rainfall patterns, biodiversity, and traditional farming practices**, making tribal livelihoods more vulnerable.
  - **Example:** The **Khasi tribe of Meghalaya** has seen a decline in traditional **shifting cultivation** due to **erratic monsoons.**
- **Human-Wildlife Conflict**
  - Increasing **deforestation and habitat loss** bring wild animals into **closer contact with human settlements**, threatening lives and livelihoods.
    - **Example: 3938 human deaths** were recorded due to elephant attacks between **2014-2022 (MoEFCC Report).**

## Balancing Cultural Preservation with Development:

- **Recognizing and Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Development Policies**
  - Tribal **sustainable practices** should be **documented and incorporated into environmental conservation efforts.**
  - **Example: Kadars of South India** practice **regenerative resource collection**, ensuring forest sustainability.
- **Promoting Eco-tourism and Sustainable Livelihoods**
  - **Community-led eco-tourism** can generate income while preserving **tribal culture and biodiversity.**
  - **Example: Khonoma Village (Nagaland)**, managed by the **Angami tribe**, successfully runs an **eco-tourism model.**
- **Strengthening Forest Rights and Community-Based Conservation**
  - Strengthening the **Joint Forest Management (JFM) program** and ensuring **effective implementation of FRA.**
  - **Example: Idu Mishmi tribe** in Arunachal Pradesh has declared parts of their forest as **Community Conserved Areas.**
- **Promoting Tribal Handicrafts and Indigenous Industries**
  - Government initiatives like **TRIFED and Van Dhan Yojana** should be expanded to support tribal artisans.
  - **Example: Hakki Pikki tribe** of Karnataka markets **herbal products** internationally, ensuring economic benefits while preserving traditional knowledge.
- **Educational Reforms to Preserve Tribal Identity**
  - Introducing **tribal languages and cultural studies** in school curriculums to ensure **linguistic and cultural preservation.**
  - **Example:** The **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** aim to provide **quality education** while maintaining cultural roots.

## Conclusion

Empowering tribal communities requires a **synergistic approach that balances cultural preservation with inclusive development.** Strengthening **FRA implementation, eco-tourism, indigenous industries, and educational reforms** will ensure their sustainable integration.

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