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Rabari, Bharvad and Charan of Gujarat

Recently, the Gujarat government has decided to form a **five-member commission** to identify members of **Rabari, Bharvad and Charan** communities, who are eligible for benefits of **Schedule Tribe (ST) status**.

Key Points

- **Issue:**
 - In **October 1956**, the **central government conferred ST status** on people of **Rabari, Bharvad and Charan** communities, living in *nesses* (tiny, oval-shaped hutments made of mud) of **Gir, Barda and Alech** areas of Gujarat.
 - However, it has been alleged that a number of **people not living in nesses** have managed to **get ST certificates** and are **enjoying undue reservation benefits**, mainly in government jobs.
 - Leaders of these three communities and other communities as well, have been **protesting** for quite some time against this.
- **Objective of the Commission:**
 - To **resolve this issue and identify the legitimate beneficiaries** of ST status among the members of the three communities.
 - To **ensure** that the eligible members of the tribes are **not devoid of their right** and the **others do not get an undue benefit** in their names.
- **Composition:**
 - The five-member commission will comprise a retired judge of the high court as the head, two district judges, one retired forest officer and one retired revenue officer.

Rabari

- They **migrated from Rajasthan** via Kutch and now most of them live in the Okhamandal region of Jamnagar district.
- They speak '*Bhopa*' which is a **mixture of Gujarati, Kachchi, Marwari words and Pharasi** (Persian) and use **Gujarati script**.
- **Women stand in almost equal status** to that of men.
- The main economic activity is **sheep breeding and selling of milk**. Only a few of them own cultivable **agricultural land**. Recently, they have started engaging as **wage labourers in industrial establishments** both as skilled and unskilled labourers.

- They profess **Hinduism** and are followers of **Shiva and Shakti**.
- Their folk songs are called '*Siya*'.

Bharvad

- The term Bharwad is a modified form of the word '*Badawad*'.
 - 'Bada' means sheep and 'Wada' refers to compound or enclosure. The person who possesses compounds or pens is known as Badawad.
- They **communicate in Gujarati** and use **Gujarati script**.
- Bharwad **women have a lower status**.
- The Bharwads are **pastorals** who are permitted to graze their sheep and cattle in certain demarcated areas of the reserved forest. Some of them **possess dry agricultural land** and earn their livelihood as **agricultural labourers**.
- They profess **Hinduism** and **Krishna** is considered the supreme God.

Charan

- The Charan, also called **Gadhvi**, is a small tribe in Gujarat and the name Charan is derived from the word '*Char*' which means **grazing**.
- They **speak Gujarati** and use **Gujarati script**.
- They **marry within their community** and **practice monogamy**.
- The Charans are traditionally **cattle breeders**. They have also **adopted agriculture as their secondary occupation**.
- They profess **Hinduism** and the main deity is **Pithorai Mata**.

Scheduled Tribes

- As per **Census 1931**, Schedule tribes are termed as '**backward tribes**' living in the '**Excluded**' and '**Partially Excluded**' areas.
 - The Constitution **does not define the criteria for recognition** of Scheduled Tribes and hence the definition contained in 1931 Census was used in initial years after independence.
- The **Government of India Act, 1935** called for the first time for representatives of '**backward tribes**' in provincial assemblies.
- **Article 366 (25)** of the Constitution **only provides a process to define** Scheduled Tribes:
 - Scheduled Tribes means such tribes, tribal communities, parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed

under **Article 342** to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of the Constitution.

- **Article 342 (1):** The President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor, by a public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory.
- The category of '**tribe**' entails a **social and cultural dimension** but the '**schedule tribe**' category has **political-administrative implications**.
- A majority of the ST population is **concentrated in the eastern, central and western belt** covering the nine states of **Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal**.
 - About **12%** inhabit the **North-eastern region**, about **5%** in the **Southern region** and about **3%** in the **Northern states**.
- The **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019** will amend **Part VI of the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950** that specifies the tribal and tribal communities which are deemed to be Scheduled Tribes.
- **Other Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 15 (4):** Special provisions for advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) or the STs.
 - **Article 16 (4):** Enables the state to make any provision for reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the services under the state.
 - **Article 46:** Promotion of educational and economic interests of SCs, STs and other weaker sections.
 - **Article 330 and 332:** Provides for specific representation through reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies respectively.
 - **Article 338 A:** Gives powers to the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)** to oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to STs.