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PAPER - 1

PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Pangenome Reference Map

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper I)

- A pangenome reference map has been built using genomes from 47 anonymous individuals (does not include Indians).

What is genome?

- The genome is the entire set of DNA instructions found in a cell. It contains all the information needed for an individual to develop and function.
- In humans, the genome consists of 23 pairs of chromosomes located in the cell's nucleus, as well as in the mitochondria.
- Each chromosome is a contiguous stretch of DNA string which in turn is composed of millions of individual building blocks called **nucleotides or bases**. The four bases include adenine, thymine, guanine and cytosine (A, T, G and C).
- The genome is an identity card like Aadhaar as each our genome is unique.
- To date, humans are the only life form that has successfully sequenced its own genome, yet there are many life forms that have substantially larger genomes.

What is genome sequencing?

- **Genome sequencing** is the method used to determine the precise order of the four bases (A, T, G and C) and how they are arranged in chromosomes.
- It helps us understand human diversity at the genetic level and how prone we are to certain diseases.

What is the importance of pangenome reference map?

- **Human genetic diversity** - A complete and error-free human pangenome map will help to understand the differences and explain human diversity better.
- **Genetic variation** - It will also help us understand genetic variants in some populations.
- **Health** - It will allow scientists to identify the genes and gene variants that are associated with specific diseases.
- **Personalized medicine** - Information in the map can be used to develop personalized medicine approaches that are tailored to the individual patient's genetic makeup.

- **New insights into human evolution** - Can be used to study how genetic variation has changed over time and the history of our species.

2. Marriages in India – Legal Interventions and Reforms

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 2.3 Paper I)

What is Marriage?

- **Marriage** – It is a legally recognized, socially sanctioned union, typically between a man and a woman, forming a partnership with rights, obligations, and the purpose of creating a family and continuing lineage.
- **Types** – The two main forms of marriages are **Monogamy, Polygamy**
- **Monogamy** – One man marries one woman at a time, and it is most common globally.

Polygamy – Marriage with two or more spouses simultaneously.

This includes two types: **Polygyny, Polyandry**.

Polygyny – It is a form of polygamy where one man is married to multiple women.

Polyandry – It is the form where one woman is married to multiple men at the same time.

This includes two types: Fraternal polyandry, Non-fraternal polyandry

Fraternal Polyandry – Woman marries brothers, seen in Khas tribes of Uttaranchal.

Non-fraternal Polyandry – Woman marries unrelated men, practiced by the Nair caste in Kerala.

Other Forms – There are other forms of Marriage also.

Endogamous – Restricts marriage within one's own group.

Exogamous – Requires marriage outside one's own group.

Inter-caste Marriage – Union of individuals from different castes.

Child Marriage – Marrying children before puberty

How the monogamous family emerged?

- **Prior to emergence of monogamy** – There existed a state of unregulated sexual relations.
- **Influence of economic conditions** – In “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State (1884)”, **Friedrich Engels** argues that changes in material conditions shape the organisation of family relations.

Engels looks at the emergence of the monogamous family as an economic institution designed to ensure the inheritance of private property.

- **Indian context of sambandham** – Anthropologist **Kathleen Gough's** extensive work on the Nayers of Kerala shows that they followed a matrilineal kinship system in which property and lineage were traced through women. Their marital practices were not monogamous but based on sambandham.
- **What are the measures needed to bring reforms in marriage:**
- **Clear judicial interpretation** – A more consistent and standardized judicial interpretation of existing grounds for divorce like cruelty, desertion, and adultery may help reduce the influence of moralistic or subjective biases.
- **Gender equal provisions** – Making child custody laws more gender-equal would help encourage co-parenting and healthier models of separation.

3. Human Evolution – Tree Climbing to Habitual Bipedalism

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 1.4 Paper I)

- A new study provides evidence that archaic humans had largely shifted from regular tree climbing to habitual upright walking on the ground.

Key Finding :

- **Major evolutionary transition** – Arboreal lifestyle to Terrestrial bipedalism
- **Approximate period** – 1.8 million years ago
- **Evidence used** – Internal strength of limb bones
- **Fossils studied** – Little Foot and Dmanisi Homo
- **Researchers** – University of the Witwatersrand + University of Southern California
- **Methods Used by Scientists to Determine Findings:** Previous research primarily analyzed the morphology and proportions of fossilized limbs.
- The recent study concentrated on assessing the internal structural strength of bone shafts.
- **Analytical Framework** – Bone strength reflects the physical loads experienced, which in turn inform interpretations of locomotor behavior and habitat utilization.

Increased forelimb loading indicates greater use of the arms, including activities such as tree climbing. Stronger adaptation of the lower limbs suggests a greater reliance on terrestrial locomotion.

- Researchers compared the strength ratios of fossil limb bones with those observed in

the following extant species:

- Modern humans
- Chimpanzees
- Gorillas
- Orangutans.

4. Gene Activity Map of the Prefrontal Cortex

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper I)

- Recently, scientists have created a detailed molecular map of gene activity in the brain's prefrontal cortex.

Gene Activity Map of the Prefrontal Cortex:

- **Objective** – To understand normal brain development, ageing and disorders such as **Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, schizophrenia and dementia. Conducted under – PsychAD research consortium** with support from the **U.S. National Institute on Aging (NIA)**.
- **Key Findings**
- **Similarities among Brain Disorders** – Significant similarities in gene expression profiles were identified among the following disorders: **Alzheimer's disease, Lewy body disease, Vascular dementia, Parkinson's disease.**
- The following biological processes were commonly affected: Nerve-cell development, Neuronal communication, Blood-vessel biology.
- **Microglia** – Researchers identified shared molecular pathways in microglia between **Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. *Microglia are the resident immune cells of the central nervous system.***
- **Transition from infancy to adulthood** – Significant molecular changes occur in the prefrontal cortex during this period. **Throughout most of adulthood** – There is relative molecular stability across various cell types.
- In later life, renewed molecular changes are observed, particularly in immune and support cells. **Transition point** – The study identifies approximately 24 years of age as the point at which a molecular shift occurs, marking the onset of the stability phase.
- **Cognitive Resilience in Alzheimer's** Certain individuals maintain relatively preserved cognitive function even in the presence of significant Alzheimer's pathology.

Researchers have identified differences in energy-related cellular processes within the brains of these individuals. However, further research is necessary to elucidate these

mechanisms.

- **Inherited Genetic Risk** – Researchers established connections between the following elements: Inherited genetic risk, particular genes, and specific cell types. The study mapped genetic influences that affect the activity of over **14,000 genes**.
- **Significance** – These findings may facilitate the identification of the following:

Genes associated with disease, Cell populations that are particularly vulnerable, Relevant molecular pathways, Potential targets for therapeutic intervention.

5. Neanderthals - The Artistic Humans

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 1.6 Paper I)

- A recent study found that Europe's cave paintings might have been drawn by Neanderthals.

Who are Neanderthals?

- Neanderthals were archaic humans that became extinct about 40,000 years ago.
- They seem to have appeared in Europe and later expanded into Southwest, Central and Northern Asia. Neanderthals, were long thought to have been the archetypal cavemen, brutish and intellectually un-evolved.
- In early 1900s, scientific findings described Neanderthals as gorilla-like beasts, an extinct branch of humanity that could not compete with slender, brilliant humans.

What are the findings of the recent study?

- Earlier research shows that modern man and Neanderthals mated may have had the “cognitive capacity to create art”.
- It is also believed that they were capable of using sophisticated technology (for prehistoric times) and showed social behaviour previously thought complicated for them to exhibit.
- Recent studies shows that they were much more intellectually capable, the first cave-paintings, it turns out, could have been made by them.

What are the evidences for the recent findings?

- Dating experts and archaeologists now agree that the simple paintings from three caves in Spain, outline of a hand, an array of lines and a painted cave formation are more than 64,800 years old. Thus, these pre-date the arrival of the H. sapiens in Europe by at least 20,000 years.
- The cave paintings and their possible link to Neanderthals means that the gap between human and Neanderthal intellectual faculties may not be as wide as believed.

What are some counter arguments for the findings?

- While some believe humans and their extinct cousins were cognitive equivalents, others believe that the latter definitely had sophisticated intelligence but their “cultural achievements fell short of modern humans”.
- Cave art, with certain exceptions, was notoriously difficult to date until very recently and thus modern humans have been historically assumed to have created them.
- Neanderthal art may be comparable to the art and symbolism of modern man across Africa, painted egg shells and minerals attributed to “our direct ancestors” have been found and these date back some 80,000 years.

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PAPER - 2

INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Odisha Government is set to implement the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA)

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper II)

- The Odisha Government is set to implement the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996, after the proposal is discussed in the State Cabinet in September 2026.
- Key Points: PESA: PESA, 1996 extends the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas with certain modifications.
- Strengthen Gram Sabhas: The Act seeks to strengthen Gram Sabhas and promote self-governance among tribal communities living in Scheduled Areas.
- Wider Consultation: Odisha has completed consultations with government departments, tribal community representatives, NGOs and other stakeholders for finalising the framework.
- The State Government has modified the draft PESA Rules after considering objections and suggestions from various stakeholders.
- Tribal Benefit: The proposed implementation is expected to benefit tribal communities across nine tribal-dominated districts, covering 117 blocks and 2,022 Gram Panchayats. Tribal communities constitute around 22.8% of Odisha's population.
- Tribal Self-Governance: PESA strengthens participatory democracy by giving tribal communities a greater role in decisions affecting their lives and resources.
- PESA and the Fifth Schedule: PESA is particularly significant in areas covered under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, which deals with the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in states other than those covered under the Sixth Schedule.

2. Scheduled Areas in India

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- India's Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute 8.6% of the population, residing in various states and union territories. Article 244 of the Indian Constitution is a critical provision for the administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas.

What are Scheduled Areas?

- Scheduled Areas represent regions covering 11.3% of India's land area, inhabited by various ST communities comprising 8.6% of the country's population.
- They are designated in 10 states under the Fifth schedule: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh. 4 States under the Sixth Schedule: Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- In 2015, Kerala proposed to notify 2,133 habitations, five-gram panchayats, and two wards in five districts as Scheduled Areas; it awaits the Union government's approval.
- Criteria for Identification: The guiding norms for declaring an area as a Scheduled Area include significant tribal population, compactness, reasonable size, viability as an administrative entity, and economic backwardness compared to neighboring areas. The 2002 Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission or the Bhuria Commission recommended considering areas with 40% or more tribal population according to the 1951 Census as Scheduled Areas.

What are the Concerns Related to Scheduled Areas?

- Despite demands from Adivasi organizations, a significant portion (59%) of India's ST population is outside the purview of Article 244, denying them rights protected under laws applicable to Scheduled Areas.
- The absence of viable ST-majority administrative units has been a common bureaucratic response, which has further led to demands for the denotification of parts of Scheduled Areas.
- They are denied rights under the laws applicable to Scheduled Areas, including the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 and the Biological Diversity Act 2002.

3. Idea of Purity and Pollution in the Caste System

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- Core Idea: The caste hierarchy was historically organised around the concepts of purity (Shuddhi) and pollution (Ashuddhi).
- Social Exclusion: Communities placed at the bottom were associated with occupations involving waste, death and animal carcasses, reinforcing notions of impurity and untouchability.

- **Spatial Segregation:** These beliefs contributed to social exclusion and separate settlements, often forcing Dalits to live on village outskirts.
- **Ritual Practices:** Contact or even association with lower-caste individuals was traditionally considered polluting, leading to purification rituals and discriminatory practices.

Challenges in Curbing Untouchability

- **Shift to Covert Forms:** While visible forms of untouchability (denial of access to wells or temples) have reduced, it has mutated into institutional and subtle forms. In urban areas, this manifests as spatial segregation (ghettoization in housing societies), algorithm-driven endogamy (caste-based matrimonial sites), and systemic bias in corporate hiring and academic spaces (e.g., discrimination in peer circles or faculty evaluations).
- **Graded Inequality:** Caste operates through an ascending scale of privilege and descending scale of social status, causing discrimination even among Scheduled Castes, which can weaken collective mobilisation against caste-based discrimination.

In *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024), the Supreme Court recognised this internal inequality. Overruling *E.V. Chinnaiah* (2004), the Court held that SCs are not a homogeneous group, with some sub-castes facing greater historical disadvantages.
- **Criminal Justice Bottleneck:** Despite the stringent SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the conviction rate remains dismally low. This is driven by: **Burking of crimes:** Police often dilute FIRs or register them under milder sections of the IPC, 1860 (now *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita* (BNS), 2023)) rather than the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- **Witness Vulnerability:** Due to asymmetrical power dynamics in rural areas, witnesses frequently turn hostile.
- **Structural Bias:** A lack of sensitisation within the investigating machinery and the lower judiciary often leads to a failure in establishing the "caste-based intent" of a crime.
- **Economic Dependence:** Landlessness and dependence on dominant castes for agricultural work can enable social boycotts and coercion, forcing victims into extra-judicial compromises, often mediated by Khap Panchayats.

4. Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in Tribal Communities of India

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.2 Paper II)

- Food insecurity and undernutrition are ongoing issues in tribal communities in India, even with government welfare programs in place.

Recent Findings in Malnutrition regarding Tribal Communities

- National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) report – It reveals the alarming poverty rates and malnutrition among Odisha's tribal population. Severe impacted districts – Kandhamal, Rayagada and Koraput.
Kandhamal district – Due to mango kernel (a waste product of mango fruit canning industry) consumption the dire state of food insecurity among Odisha's tribal communities. It reminds the earlier incidents of illnesses and multiple deaths in Kashipur, Rayagada in 1987, 1995 and 2001 due to the consumption of mango kernels.

Features of the Koraput Model

- The Koraput Model – It is a community- based Approach to Food Security.
- To address these issues, the MSSRF implemented a community-driven intervention from 2013 to 2022 in Koraput, focusing on nutrition literacy, sustainable farming, and collective decision-making.
- Community Nutrition Literacy -Training programs educated villagers on dietary diversity and balanced diets.
- Women and children received priority in access to better nutrition. Local champions were trained to promote healthy eating. Diversified Agriculture -Villagers were encouraged to grow a variety of crops which enhanced food security.
- Successful initiatives included home gardens, mushroom production, vermi-composting, and crop diversification. Government Initiatives related to Tribal Communities Food Insecurity and Malnutrition
- Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) Development Program – Targets the most vulnerable tribal communities on improving access to healthcare, education, clean water, and electricity.

What lies ahead

- The Koraput model illustrates that a community-driven approach, combined with sustainable farming and nutrition education, can effectively address food insecurity and malnutrition.
- This model can serve as a valuable blueprint for improving food security and health outcomes in other tribal areas across India.

5. No provision in Forest Rights Act to obtain gram sabha consent for projects: Ministry

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.3 Paper II)

- The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs has told the Union Ministry of Power that the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 carries no provision for obtaining gram sabha consent for Stage-II forest clearance. It added that such matters do not fall within its purview.

How does gram sabha consent for forest clearance actually work?

- The requirement sits in the diversion rules, not in the Act: The Forest Rights Act, 2006 carries no language on gram sabha consent for diverting forest land to non-forest purposes.
- The Union government's rules under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 require that all processes under the Forest Rights Act be completed before a diversion certificate is issued.
- Step one, identify and recognise: The guidelines require potential claimants under the Forest Rights Act to be identified, and their rights to be recognised where they apply.
- Step two, vest the rights: Recognised rights are then vested in the holders before the diversion proposal can move.

What is the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' stated position?

- The communication is dated and specific: The Ministry stated on 31 August that there is no provision for obtaining gram sabha consent for Stage-II forest clearance in the Forest Rights Act, 2006 or the rules made under it.
- It disclaims jurisdiction: It concluded that such matters therefore do not fall under its purview.
- The Act says otherwise on responsibility: The Forest Rights Act explicitly names the Ministry of Tribal Affairs as the nodal ministry responsible for the law's implementation.
- The disclaimer has a record behind it: The Ministry has previously claimed no role in the Nicobar mega-infrastructure project and in Forest Rights Act implementation cases in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and other States, arguing that the Act assigns implementation to State and Union Territory governments.

What did the parliamentary committee propose, and why?

- The report is dated: The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Undertakings reported on NHPC Limited on 3 August, and the Power Ministry's deliberations with the Tribal Affairs Ministry followed from it.
- The delay figure: Based on discussions with NHPC officials, the committee recorded an average forest clearance time of 106 months for under-construction projects.
- The bottleneck it identified: It found the requirement that all concerned gram sabhas consent to be the single most critical bottleneck.

6. What Measures are Needed to Further Strengthen Democratic Decentralisation in India?

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 5.3 Paper II)

- Legally Guarantee Activity-Based Devolution: States should prepare legally enforceable Activity Mapping Frameworks that clearly allocate each subject among Gram Panchayats, Block Panchayats, District Panchayats and State departments.
- Every activity should be accompanied by corresponding funds and staff through a Function–Finance–Functionary Matrix. Kerala's activity mapping and participatory

planning and Karnataka's first position in the Devolution Index provide replicable models.

- Revitalise State Finance Commissions: State Finance Commissions should be constituted on a fixed national calendar with standardised terms of reference, professional staff and access to audited local-government data.
- Their reports and Action Taken Reports should be compulsorily tabled before State Legislatures within six months. Non-constitution or delayed implementation of an SFC report should be disclosed through a State Fiscal Devolution Dashboard.
- Establish Dedicated Local Government Cadres: Panchayats and Municipalities require permanent cadres of engineers, accountants, planners, public-health experts, data managers and social-development professionals.
- Staff working under local governments should be administratively accountable to elected councils rather than exclusively to State departments.
- Restore the Gram Sabha as a Deliberative Institution: Gram Sabha meetings should follow a publicly announced annual calendar with convenient timings, adequate notice and accessible agenda documents.
- A minimum social-diversity quorum can ensure the participation of women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, persons with disabilities and marginalised hamlets. Budget proposals, beneficiary lists, audit observations and project-completion reports should be placed before the Gram Sabha in plain language.
- Strengthen Women's Substantive Leadership: States should penalise unauthorised interference by "Sarpanch Patis" and provide elected women with leadership training, legal assistance, digital access and peer-support networks.
- The Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan should be institutionalised through State training institutes and district mentorship centres.
- Proxy governance should be monitored through attendance and digital verification mechanisms, including biometric/e-authentication for key Panchayat proceedings and financial transactions.
- The Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats Initiative should serve as a catalyst for institutionalising women-led local governance by ensuring elected women representatives exercise real decision-making authority.
- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj's collaboration with the "Panchayat" web series is a positive step towards using popular culture to raise awareness about grassroots governance and women's leadership.

7. What are the Concerns Related to Scheduled Areas?

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- Despite demands from Adivasi organizations, a significant portion (59%) of India's ST population is outside the purview of Article 244, denying them rights protected under laws applicable to Scheduled Areas.
- The absence of viable ST-majority administrative units has been a common bureaucratic response, which has further led to demands for the denotification of parts of Scheduled Areas.
 - They are denied rights under the laws applicable to Scheduled Areas, including the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 and the Biological Diversity Act 2002.
- What are the Provisions Related to STs in India?
- Definition:
 - The Constitution of India does not define the criteria for recognition of STs. As per Census-1931, STs are termed as "backward tribes" living in the "Excluded" and "Partially Excluded" areas.
 - The Government of India Act of 1935 called for the first time for representatives of "backward tribes" in provincial assemblies.

Way Forward:

- All habitations or groups of habitations outside Scheduled Areas in all States and Union Territories where STs are the largest social group will need to be notified as Scheduled Areas irrespective of their contiguity.
- The geographical limit of these villages will need to be extended to the 'community forest resource' area on forest land under the FRA (Forest Rights Act) 2006. wherever applicable, and to the customary boundary within revenue lands made possible through suitable amendments to the relevant State laws.
- The geographical limits of the revenue village, panchayat, taluka, and district will need to be redrawn so that these are fully Scheduled Areas.
-

8. Odisha Launches Videsh Siksha Bruti Scheme for SC and ST Students

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.2 Paper II)

- The Odisha Government has launched the Videsh Siksha Bruti Scheme to support meritorious students belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities in pursuing postgraduate and doctoral studies abroad.

Key Points:

- **Scheme:** The initiative is named the Videsh Siksha Bruti Scheme launched by the Government of Odisha.
- **Target Beneficiaries:** The scheme is aimed at meritorious SC and ST students from Odisha.
- **Purpose:** It seeks to enable eligible students to pursue higher education abroad.
- **Courses Covered:** Financial assistance is available for postgraduate and doctoral programmes.
- **Financial Assistance:** Selected students can receive assistance of up to ₹25 lakh per year.
- **Academic Session:** The scheme will commence from the 2025–26 academic session.
- **Social Inclusion:** The initiative seeks to improve access to international higher education for students from disadvantaged communities.
- **Human Capital Development:** By supporting advanced studies abroad, the scheme aims to strengthen skills, knowledge and professional capabilities among SC and ST students.
- **Educational Opportunity:** The scheme can reduce the financial barriers faced by meritorious students seeking admission to foreign universities and institutions.
- **Broader Objective:** The initiative reflects Odisha's efforts towards inclusive education and equal opportunities in higher education.
- **Significance:** The Videsh Siksha Bruti Scheme can expand access to quality international education for meritorious students from SC and ST communities.

9. Concerns Regarding the Ministry of Tribal Affairs Stance on Gram Sabha Consent

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.3 Paper II)

- The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) stated in an official communication to the Ministry of Power that the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 has *"no provision for obtaining consent of the Gram Sabha for Stage-II forest clearance."*
- The MoTA further asserted that such matters do not fall under its purview, sparking a debate on the dilution of tribal rights and the mandatory requirement of Gram Sabha consent for infrastructure projects.
- **Proposal for Qualified Super-Majority:** To balance community participation with infrastructure needs, the Parliamentary Committee, drawing on practices in Brazil, Australia and New Zealand, recommended exploring a 70–75% consent threshold

among affected Gram Sabhas for large hydropower projects of national importance. The proposal has prompted consultations between the Ministry of Power and MoTA.

What are the Concerns Regarding the MoTA Stance on Gram Sabha Consent?

- **Abdication of Nodal Responsibility:** Legal experts view the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' (MoTA) disengagement as legally untenable. By distancing itself from the consent process, the nodal ministry effectively leaves vulnerable indigenous communities without central representation or protection.
- **Violation of Judicial and Constitutional Mandates:** MoTA's stance contradicts the constitutional spirit of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules and the PESA Act, 1996. Furthermore, it violates nearly two decades of administrative precedent and the landmark 2013 Niyamgiri Supreme Court judgment, which firmly established the Gram Sabha's decisive statutory role in safeguarding customary and ecological rights prior to forest diversion.
- **Dilution of Grassroots Democracy:** Lowering the consent threshold from 100% to a 70-75% "super-majority" threatens to silence severely impacted minority hamlets. Under this numerical approach, a single village directly losing its sacred groves or ancestral lands could be easily outvoted and overruled by peripherally affected neighboring villages.
- **Risk of Social Conflict:** Circumventing unanimous, informed consent mechanisms paves the way for mass involuntary displacement and inadequate rehabilitation. This approach risks sparking civil unrest and widespread protests across India's resource-rich and forested tribal belts.

10. ST commission to seek report from NTCA

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has taken cognisance of representations sent to it against an advisory of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), asking state forest departments to submit action plans on the relocation of villages from tiger reserves.
- According to NTCA, 591 villages, with a total of 64,801 families, are located within critical tiger habitats (core areas) across 54 tiger reserves in 19 states. NTCA has asked to state forest department to relocate them.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

- The NCST was established under Article 338A of the Indian Constitution, introduced by the 89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003.
- It was created to safeguard the rights of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India, separating

from the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

- The NCST is a multi-member body consisting of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and three other members.
- Members are appointed by the President of India and hold office as specified by the President.

Mandate and Functions:

- Monitor and evaluate the progress of development initiatives for STs under Union and State Governments.
- Investigate and report to the President on issues related to the socio-economic and educational advancement of STs. Safeguard ST interests in employment, protection from exploitation, and welfare schemes.
- Recommend measures to prevent atrocities and discrimination against STs.

Powers:

- The NCST has powers akin to a civil court, including summoning witnesses, requesting documents, and taking evidence.
- It is empowered to inquire into matters on complaints about deprivation of ST rights or any failure in duty by the administration.

11. ST commission to seek report from NTCA

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- According to NTCA, 591 villages, with a total of 64,801 families, are located within critical tiger habitats (core areas) across 54 tiger reserves in 19 states. NTCA has asked to state forest department to relocate them.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

- The NCST was established under Article 338A of the Indian Constitution, introduced by the 89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003.
- It was created to safeguard the rights of Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India, separating

from the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

- The NCST is a multi-member body consisting of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and three other members.
- Members are appointed by the President of India and hold office as specified by the President.

Mandate and Functions:

- Monitor and evaluate the progress of development initiatives for STs under Union and State Governments.
- Investigate and report to the President on issues related to the socio-economic and educational advancement of STs. Safeguard ST interests in employment, protection from exploitation, and welfare schemes.

Powers:

- Recommend measures to prevent atrocities and discrimination against STs.
- The NCST has powers akin to a civil court, including summoning witnesses, requesting documents, and taking evidence.
- It is empowered to inquire into matters on complaints about deprivation of ST rights or any failure in duty by the administration.

12. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper II)

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs has implemented the scheme of “Development of PVTGs” which covers 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) for their comprehensive socio-economic development.
- Under the scheme, State Governments submit Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) plans on the basis of their requirement.
- 100% grants-in-aid are made available to States as per the provisions of the scheme.
- In India, tribal population makes up for 8.6% of the total population.
- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups. Due to this factor, more developed and assertive tribal groups take a major chunk of the tribal development funds because of which PVTGs need more funds directed for their development.
- In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups. In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as PVTGs.
- In this context, in 1975, the Government of India initiated to identify the most

vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, While in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes.

PVTGs have some basic characteristics –

- they are mostly homogenous with a small population,
- relatively physically isolated,
- absence of written language,
- relatively simple technology,
- a slower rate of change etc.

Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha.

13. Community Forest Resource Rights

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.3 Paper II)

- The Community Forest Resource (CFR) area is common forest land that has been traditionally protected and conserved for sustainable use by a particular community.
- The community uses it to access resources available within the traditional and customary boundary of the village, and for seasonal use of landscape in the case of pastoralist communities.
- Each CFR area has a customary boundary with identifiable landmarks recognised by the community and its neighbouring villages.
- It may include forest of any category – revenue forest, classified & unclassified forest, deemed forest, DLC (District Level Committee) land, reserve forest, protected forest, sanctuary and national parks etc.

What are Community Forest Resource Rights?

- The Community Forest Resource rights under Section 3(1)(i) of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (commonly referred to as the Forest Rights Act) provides for recognition of the right to “protect, regenerate or conserve or manage” the community forest resource.
- These rights allow the community to formulate rules for forest use by itself and others and thereby discharge its responsibilities under Section 5 of the FRA.
- CFR rights, along with Community Rights (CRs) under Sections 3(1)(b) and 3(1)(c),

which include nistar rights and rights over non-timber forest products, ensure sustainable livelihoods of the community.

- Once CFRR is recognised for a community, the ownership of the forest passes into the hands of the Gram Sabha instead of the forest department.
- Effectively, the Gram Sabha becomes the nodal body for management of the forests. These rights give authority to the Gram Sabha adopt local traditional practices of forest conservation and management within the community forest resource boundary.
- Chhattisgarh is only the second state to have recognised CFR rights inside a national park i.e., Kanger Ghati National Park. In 2016, the Odisha government was the first to recognise Community Forest Resources (CFRs) inside the Simlipal National Park.

14. Odisha Tribals' Fight to Preserve Mother Tongues

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.2 Paper II)

- In Rayagada district's Engerba village, 14 Saora tribal families are running a community-funded school — paying teachers in rice and pulses instead of salary — to save their mother tongue and indigenous script from extinction.

About the Engerba Initiative:

- Location: Engerba village, Rayagada district, Odisha
- Community: Saora (Sabara) tribe. Institution: SP Mangali Ashram school — 62 students, Classes I–VIII
- Medium of instruction: Saora language, taught using the Sorang Sompeng script. Sustenance model: No government support; 14 teachers work unpaid; villagers contribute food grains and wages earned from road construction work.

Origin and Functioning:

- Founded by Giria Sabar, after villagers observed children losing fluency in Saora due to dominance of Odia/English in formal education. Villagers pooled savings and built a mud structure to start the school.
- Currently run by Chakrapani Sabara, a retired government official, following the founder's death over a decade ago.
- Teaching method: Textbooks translated into Saora; material in Odia/English transcribed into Sorang Sompeng script; examinations conducted in Saora and the script itself

Status of Tribal Languages in Odisha:

- Odisha has ~10 million tribal population from 64 communities. These communities speak 21 distinct tribal languages and 74 dialects.
- Only four languages — Santhali, Ho, Sora, and Kui — possess their own scripts.
- Santhali is included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution; efforts are underway to secure similar recognition for Ho.
- Government Initiative 2006: Odisha introduced a Multilingual Education (MLE) Programme, under which tribal children are taught in their mother tongue during the first five years of primary education.
- UNESCO Classification of Endangerment. Languages spoken by fewer than 10,000 people are classified by UNESCO as "potentially endangered".

15. Tribals in MP's Dindori Earn Rs 42 Lakh Collecting Sal Borer Beetles

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- Tribal communities in Madhya Pradesh's Dindori district have earned nearly Rs 42 lakh between June and July 30 by collecting more than 2.1 million sal borer beetles, under a forest department drive to contain a major infestation threatening sal forests.
- Villagers are being paid Rs 2 per beetle under an ongoing "trap tree" operation aimed at reducing the adult beetle population before further spread. More than 400-500 tribal families participated in the initiative.
- **Scale of the Infestation:**
- The infestation has affected more than 1.47 lakh sal trees across nearly 30,000 hectares of forest in Dindori.
- Affected areas cover the East Karanjia, West Karanjia, South Samnapur, and Bajag forest ranges. Affected trees are at varying infestation stages, with some severely damaged and unlikely to recover.
- Proposed Tree Felling to Contain the Outbreak:
- The Madhya Pradesh forest department has sought permission from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to fell more than 1.47 lakh trees to contain the epidemic — accounting for 15% of the district's sal forests.

- Subhranjan Sen, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), confirmed this request. Officials note that felling heavily infested trees can reduce breeding sites and slow the pest's spread; all proposed trees for felling are confirmed infected.
- **Scientific Explanation for the Outbreak:**
- Dr. C Mohan, senior scientist at the Tropical Forest Research Institute (TFRI), Jabalpur, explains that heavy rainfall last year raised moisture levels to nearly 90% in the Dindori-Amarkantak region, accelerating the pest's spread. Beetles are drawn to sap oozing from wounds on trees, where they lay eggs and hollow out the trees from within.
- **Significance:**
- The initiative demonstrates a community-based, incentive-driven approach to pest management, generating direct livelihood benefits for tribal households while supporting forest conservation goals.
- It highlights the link between climatic factors (heavy rainfall, elevated humidity) and forest pest outbreaks, relevant to broader discussions on climate change impacts on forest ecosystems.

16. Nicobar Tribal Self-Governance and Electoral Reforms

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II).

Who Are the Nicobarese

- The Nicobarese are a Scheduled Tribe with a total population of about 30,000 spread across the Nicobar group of islands.
- They are represented by seven Tribal Councils — covering Car Nicobar, Nancowry, Kamorta, Teressa, Little Nicobar, Great Nicobar, and others.
- Below the Tribal Councils sits the village leadership structure of three Captains per village — a First Captain assisted by a Second and Third Captain.
- The concept of “captaincy” is centuries old — originating in the 16th century when Nicobarese who negotiated with passing colonial ships began calling themselves captains.
- The British later formalised this structure for their own administrative convenience in the late 19th century. The tribal council structure itself is more recent, emerging in the 1990s primarily to facilitate community participation in Central government poverty alleviation schemes.

How Do Nicobarese Choose Their Leaders

- The current system is consensus-based and community-driven, not bureaucratically fixed. Elections for village Captains happen whenever the community feels the need, not on a fixed schedule.
- The process is strikingly organic: Village residents gather at a community meeting, nominate names through popular consensus, prepare their own ballot papers, appoint their own polling officer from within the community, and elect the Captain by majority vote.
- The Tribal Council Chairperson is similarly chosen by popular consensus — and in some councils, no formal election has been held for decades, with the position continuing on the basis of community acceptance.
- Crucially, even elected Captains are not autonomous decision-makers. As per the experts, decisions are taken through popular community consultation — Captains are neither lawmakers nor unilateral leaders.
- The community values candidates for their education, Hindi fluency (for dealing with government officials), exposure to the outside world, and practical “smartness” in navigating bureaucracy.

Conclusion

- True self-governance for tribal communities cannot be delivered through a standardised electoral template designed for mainland India. When a community has governed itself — effectively and organically — for generations, formalisation without consultation is not reform; it is substitution.

17. Major Challenges faced by DNTs, NTs, and SNTs

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 9.1 Paper II)

- The Denotified Tribes (DNTs), Nomadic Tribes (NTs), and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (SNTs) in India face numerous challenges, including denial of caste certificates in most states.
- Despite the Indian Government launching the Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs scheme (SEED) for their upliftment, various other issues have led to growing discontent among these communities.

Major Challenges faced by DNTs, NTs, and SNTs

- Historical Injustice: These tribes were labeled criminal tribes under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 during British rule, stigmatizing them for generations.
- Despite being denotified in 1952, the stigma persists, impacting their social and economic inclusion. Historically, Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes never had

access to private land or home ownership.

- **Unclassified Communities:** The Idate Commission (2017) identified a total of 1,526 DNT, NT and SNT communities. Out of these 1,526 identified communities, 269 communities are still unclassified under the categories of either SC, ST or OBC.
- Similarly, many individuals from these communities are unable to obtain caste certificates in 29 states, limiting their access to welfare schemes.
- Several estimates suggest a significant population of over 25 crore individuals, yet many lack basic identity recognition.

Implementation Gaps: Recommendations of the Idate Commission, including a permanent commission and caste-census inclusion, remain unaddressed.

The SEED scheme has seen limited success due to delays and lack of outreach. Overlapping benefits with SC/ST/OBC schemes lead to difficulties in beneficiary identification.

SEED

- **About:** The Scheme for Economic Empowerment Denotified, Nomadic, Semi Nomadic communities was launched in February 2022 by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **Aim and Components:** It aims to provide free competitive exam coaching to these students for Civil Services, entry to professional courses like medicine, engineering, MBA, etc.
- To provide health insurance to families, to uplift clusters of these communities through livelihood initiatives, and to provide financial assistance for housing.

18. Scheduled Tribe Status vs. Religious Conversion

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- The Allahabad High Court held that religious conversion does not automatically end Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, but continuing tribal affiliation may be examined where such status is disputed.
- The case involved three agricultural land transactions in Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh, in 2011, 2017 and 2018. The petitioner (Land buyer) claimed ST status by birth as a member of the Bhuiyan tribe.
- Authorities questioned her status after records showed that she had married a Muslim man and converted to Islam. The Deputy Collector declared the transactions void under Section 157-B of the U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950, It restricts transfer of protected ST land to non-ST persons.

- Court's Key Observations – Conversion alone cannot extinguish ST status. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 does not prescribe a religion-based exclusion from ST status. Whether ST status continues after conversion is primarily a question of fact, to be determined from evidence.
- The Court relied on: State of Kerala v. Chandramohan (2004) and Chinthada Anand v. State of Andhra Pradesh (2026). A person need not follow every tribal custom throughout life, and a single document indicating another religion cannot by itself determine ST status.
- The Court ultimately upheld cancellation of the transactions as the petitioner failed to establish sufficient continuing connection with the Bhuiyan community.

Why is the Issue Important? Question of identity – The judgment distinguishes religious identity from tribal identity.

- Religion based exclusion – The ST framework does not prescribe a general religion-based exclusion, unlike the constitutional framework governing Scheduled Castes.
- ST status – It provides access to affirmative action and protective measures, including safeguards against alienation of tribal land. Therefore, determining continuing tribal affiliation can become important when ST status is disputed.

What are the Key Challenges Existing?

- Defining continuing tribal identity – Conversion may alter religious affiliation without necessarily ending social or cultural links with the tribe.
- Overly rigid tests – Requiring strict adherence to every tribal custom may fail to reflect social change and diversity within tribal communities. Potential misuse – ST status provides several safeguards and benefits, creating a need to prevent fraudulent claims. Tribal diversity – Different tribes have distinct customs, traditions and social structures; a uniform test may therefore be inappropriate.

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19. FRA 2006 & Gram Sabha Consent of Forest Clearance

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.3 Paper II)

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has clarified that the FRA, 2006 does not explicitly mandate Gram Sabha consent for forest clearance, amid concerns over delays in major hydropower projects due to pending Gram Sabha clearances.

Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA 2006)

- FRA 2006 – Also called as Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 recognises the rights of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.
- It gives the Gram Sabha a central role in initiating the process of determining and recognising forest rights. Nodal Ministry – Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the implementing agency. Gram Sabha and Forest Diversion – FRA does not expressly use the phrase “Gram Sabha consent for forest clearance”.
- The framework governing diversion of forest land requires that the relevant FRA rights-recognition process be completed before forest diversion.

What is the Significance of Gram Sabha Consent?

- Democratic participation – Gram Sabhas provide local communities with a mechanism to participate in decisions affecting their forests and livelihoods.
- Protection of tribal rights – Many forest-dependent communities derive livelihoods, food, fuel, cultural identity and customary rights from forests.
- Conflict reduction – Meaningful consultation can reduce conflicts between local communities, governments and infrastructure developers.
- Constitutional decentralisation – The role of Gram Sabhas is consistent with the broader objective of decentralised governance and community participation.

What could be done?

- Clarify the legal framework – The roles of MoTA, MoEFCC, State governments and Gram Sabhas should be clearly delineated.
- Ensure genuine consent – Consent/consultation should be free, informed and transparent, rather than treated merely as a procedural clearance.
- Time-bound decision-making – A statutory and transparent timeline can prevent indefinite delays while retaining safeguards.
- Strengthen Gram Sabhas – Provide communities with information regarding the project's environmental, social and livelihood impacts before taking a decision.

- Improve inter-ministerial coordination – MoTA and MoEFCC should establish a clear institutional mechanism to resolve disputes for implementation of FRA safeguards.

20. Traditional Diets and Indian Tribes

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.1 Paper II)

- Researchers have found that traditional diets, particularly those rich in dairy and grains in trans-Himalayan populations, were associated with distinct gut bacteria and locally adapted microbial strains. The study stressed the need for India-specific microbiome research and probiotics.
- Led by - Researchers from BRIC-National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS), Pune, and Stanford University, USA.
- It concentrated on 8 Indian tribal communities. It showed that what people eat over generations may leave a lasting imprint not just on their health but also on the trillions of microbes living inside their gut.
- The study analysed healthy adults from the Warli, Gond, Madia, Kabui, Boto, Balti, Brokpa and Purigpa communities across 4 geographically diverse regions of India.
- Researchers examined stool samples alongside dietary habits of participants using advanced DNA sequencing. The 4 trans-Himalayan groups regularly consumed milk, homemade butter, wheat and barley, as also rice, turmeric and chilli.
- Bifidobacterium – It is a group of bacteria known to break down carbohydrates and commonly used in probiotic products.
- Researchers also found that gut microbes in the trans-Himalayan participants carried distinct and diverse genes involved in digesting lactose, galactose and grain-derived carbohydrates, suggesting that the microbial communities had adapted to foods these populations consumed traditionally.
- It noted that other than food, geography, altitude and lifestyle may also influence gut microbes.
- Moreover, the most striking finding was that strains of Bifidobacterium adolescentis isolated from these participants were genetically distinct from many strains commonly found in industrialised countries.
- Although belonging to the same bacterial species, the Indian bacterial strains carried unique combinations of carbohydrate-processing genes, indicating adaptation to local diets.
- Researchers cautioned against assuming that all probiotic strains behaved similarly simply because they belonged to the same bacterial species.
- Consumers should not assume that all members of a probiotic species are

interchangeable. Rather than rejecting imported probiotics, the study highlighted the need to evaluate them in Indian populations and develop indigenous probiotic strains based on healthy Indian microbiomes

21. The 80s nostalgia holds caste bias

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 3.2 Paper II)

- Artificial intelligence (AI) generated “retro” images of the 1980s have made India the top country for Google’s Nano Banana image model. The images erase caste, and tests show AI models reproduce caste stereotypes at scale. India’s AI governance still relies on voluntary codes.

Why does AI nostalgia leave caste out?

- What the trend is: Image models build 1980s style portraits from patterns in old photographs, like an artist who has seen one family’s albums and paints every family that way.
- Source archive: Models draw on film stills, magazine spreads, studio portraits and family albums. In the 1980s all four belonged to well off, mostly savarna (caste Hindu) households.
- Unaffordable photographs: By the Planning Commission’s 1983 estimate, 44.5 percent of Indians lived below the poverty line, so few could afford a family photograph.
- Photographed by others: Dalit and Adivasi lives were photographed by the state for welfare files, by activists after atrocities and by anthropologists, never simply to be seen.
- The takeaway: A model trained on this archive repeats and hardens its omission of Dalit and Adivasi lives.

What did the frame leave out?

- Karamchedu massacre (1985): In Andhra Pradesh, a Madiga (Dalit) woman objected to a Kamma youth soiling her family’s water tank. By nightfall, Madiga men had been killed and Dalit women raped.
- Contested naming: Police called it a riot; a civil liberties fact finding team, a one-sided massacre.
- Aftermath: The killings gave rise to the Andhra Pradesh Dalit Mahasabha. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 came only at the decade’s end.

- Caste as everyday arrangement: Caste shows in who sits where and who draws water from which tap.

Eg. Fandry and Pariyerum Perumal, films by those who lived it.

22. The 80s nostalgia holds caste bias

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23. NCST Favours Separate Commissions for SCs and STs in Karnataka

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has recommended the establishment of separate commissions for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in Karnataka to oversee the implementation of welfare programmes for the two communities.
- **Key Points**
- **NCST Recommendation:** The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has recommended that Karnataka establish separate commissions for SCs and STs.

- **Purpose:** The proposed commissions would oversee the implementation of welfare programmes for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Model:** The recommendation has been made on the lines of the Union government's separate mechanisms for the two communities.
- **NCST Chairperson:** Antar Singh Arya, Chairperson of the NCST, reviewed the implementation of government programmes for Scheduled Tribes with the Karnataka Chief Secretary and senior officials. ST Population: Scheduled Tribes constitute around 7% of Karnataka's population.
- **Reservation:** STs currently receive around 3% reservation in Karnataka, with directions given to increase it to 7%.
- **Kasturirangan Report:** The NCST will visit within one month to hear grievances of STs regarding the implementation of the Kasturirangan report.

24. Retention of Scheduled Tribe (ST) Status Post-Conversion

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)

- The Allahabad High Court affirmed that religious conversion does not automatically extinguish Scheduled Tribe (ST) status; however, the continuation of such status is a question of fact that requires substantiating an ongoing connection to tribal customs, traits, and community life.
- **Legal Ratio on Religious Conversion:** Relying on the Supreme Court ruling in *Chintad Anand vs State of Andhra Pradesh and Others (2026)*, the Court ruled that there is no absolute legal bar terminating ST status upon conversion, contrasting with Scheduled Caste (SC) status under the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, which restricts SC status primarily to Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Test of Tribal Identity (Question of Fact): To claim constitutional protection under Article 342, an individual must prove that they have not severed their ethnic roots, demonstrated through active observance of tribal customs, traditions, rituals, and acceptance by the community.
- **Evidentiary Value of Caste Certificates:** The Court held that a caste certificate issued by an executive authority (such as a Tehsildar) is not conclusive proof; it remains rebuttable if subsequent conduct, such as complete social and religious assimilation into a non-tribal community over decades, indicates a severance of tribal identity.
- **Statutory Bar on Tribal Land Alienation:** The ruling reinforced land transfer prohibitions under Section 157-B of the UP Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms

(UPZA&LR) Act, 1950 and Section 99 of the UP Revenue Code, 2006, which mandate that agricultural land belonging to an ST member cannot be transferred to a non-ST person to prevent land dispossession.

Scheduled Tribe (ST)

- Article 366(25) of the Constitution of India states: "Scheduled Tribes" means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution. Under Article 342, the President of India holds the initial authority to formally notify these communities, while only Parliament has the power to amend the official list. Constituting 8.6% of India's total population (Census 2011), Scheduled Tribes are identified based on the rigorous Lokur Committee (1965) criteria, which include primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the larger community, and socio-economic backwardness.

25. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 6.3 Paper II)

- The recent data presented by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) revealed that the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) is currently functioning with less than 50% of its sanctioned strength.

What is the NCST?

- Formation:** NCST was set up in 2004 by amending Article 338 and by inserting a new article 338A in the Constitution through the 89th Constitution Amendment Act, 2003.
- Hence, it is a constitutional body.** By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely: the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and the NCST.
- Objective:** Article 338A inter-alia gives powers to the NCST to oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to Scheduled Tribes (STs) under the Constitution or under any other law for time being in force or under any other order to the Government and to evaluate the working of such safeguards.
- Composition:** It consists of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and 3 other Members who are appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal. At least one member should be a woman.
- The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the other Members hold office for a term of 3 years. The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister, the Vice Chairperson has the rank of a Minister of State and other Members have the rank of

Secretary to the Government of India. The members are not eligible for appointments for more than two terms.

What are the Duties and Functions of the NCST?

- To investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the STs under the Constitution or under any other law for the time being in force or under any order of the Government.
- To inquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the STs. To participate and advise in the planning process of the socio-economic development of the STs and to evaluate the progress of their development.
- The Commission shall provide reports on the operation of those safeguards to the President annually and as necessary. To make in such reports recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or any State for effective implementation of those safeguards.

26. Allahabad HC on SC/ST Act and Caste Identity

(Use this content in the topic of syllabus – Unit 7.1 Paper II)_

- The Allahabad High Court held that merely belonging to a Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) is not sufficient to attract the provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The Court stressed that the essential ingredients of the alleged offence must be established.

Key Points:

- Allahabad High Court: Justice Santosh Rai made the observation that merely belonging to a Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) is not sufficient to attract the provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- Nature of Dispute: The case arose from a property transaction in Ghaziabad. The Court observed that the dispute essentially concerned the sale of disputed property.
- Caste-Based Element: The Court found no material in the FIR or case diary indicating that the accused had used caste-based words or had abused, insulted or humiliated the complainant on account of his SC/ST identity.
- SC/ST Act Proceedings: The High Court directed that the accused be discharged from the offences under the SC/ST Act, modifying the order of the Special Judge, SC/ST Act, Ghaziabad.
- Other Offences: The Court clarified that proceedings relating to other alleged offences, including cheating, would continue.

- **Essential Ingredients:** The ruling emphasises that the application of the SC/ST Act requires the specific statutory ingredients of the alleged offence to be present; the victim's caste status alone does not establish the offence.
- **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:** The Act was enacted to prevent atrocities against members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and to provide for Special Courts, relief and rehabilitation of victims.
- **Relevant Principle:** For offences involving caste-based insult, intimidation or humiliation, the allegation must have the required caste-related connection prescribed by the Act.

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