

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS:

THREAT TO ADIVASI CULTURE?

Dr Mahipal Rathore



Question

Which of the following statements regarding the 'Development of **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups**' scheme are correct?

1. There are 50 tribal groups categorized as PVTGs
 2. 100% grants-in-aid are made available to States as per the provisions of the scheme.
 3. Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the implementing agency
 4. Among the listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Telangana.
-
- A. 1,2,3
 - B. 1 and 2 only
 - C. 2 and 4 only
 - D. None of the Above

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Are mega residential schools wiping out India's Adivasi culture?

**Malvika Gupta****Felix Padel**

FEBRUARY 13, 2021 16:11 IST

UPDATED: FEBRUARY 16, 2021 10:15 IST

- Residential schools for Adivasis have been **accused of systematically destroying tribal culture.**
- Most of these schools are located in the states of **Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.**
- **Adivasis were looked down upon as racially inferior** by the colonial British Raj.
- **Post independence**, there have been efforts to **assimilate them into mainstream civilization**, by erasing their distinct cultural identity.

Background of the troubled past

1871 – Under the **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871**, the Government of British India listed some Adivasi tribes as *Criminal Tribes*. for being “addicted to the systematic commission of non-bailable offences.”

- Once a tribe became “notified” as criminal, **all its members were required to register with the local magistrate.**
- Otherwise, they would be **charged with “crime” under the Indian Penal Code.**

- Most early schools for Adivasis were **set up by Christian missions.**

1920s to 50s – Reactionary movement set in **against colonial form of education.**

➤ **Two prominent schools of thought.**

1. **Gandhi's Nai Talim** – Sought to decolonise education to bring unity of hand, mind and heart.

➤ Emphasis on local practical knowledge and **mother tongues**.

2. **Hindutva** – Consolidated in the 1950s, when R.K. Deshpande set up Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA).

➤ Soon established a vast network of schools.

- **G.S. Ghurye**, a **founding father of Indian sociology** and trained in anthropology at Cambridge in the 1920s, **inspired VKA's perception of Adivasis.**
- The VKA idea saw **Adivasis as 'backward Hindus.'**
- Ghurye advocated **'assimilation' of tribal people into mainstream civilization.**

- Similar to this school of thought was that of **A.V. Thakkar** (Thakkar Bapa).
- Set up the influential *ashramshala model*.
- Bhil Seva Mandal
- The Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh
- General secretary of - Harijan Sevak Sangh



- Many ashram schools **appeared to become Hindu nationalists.**
- However, **followed patterns set by Christian mission schools.**
- **Uniforms, strict (sometimes brutal) discipline,** a deeply hierarchical structure, **alien 'knowledge' learnt by rote,** short haircuts, and Adivasi names replaced with Hindu ones.

1941 – A lecture by Thakkar in Pune highlighted negative stereotypes about tribal ‘laziness’, ‘promiscuity’, ‘illiteracy’, and ‘addiction to shifting cultivation’.

- The cultural racism in such stereotypes still continues in the discrimination and humiliation of Adivasis, even today.

1941 – In a lecture, **Thakkar** advocated using tribal tongues as a 'bridge'.

➤ However, this **did not happen in practice**.

1949 – Jaipal Singh Munda **confronted Thakkar Bapa in the Constituent Assembly debates**, **for failing to use tribal languages in his schools**.

1949 – Criminal Tribes Act **repealed**.

- This also **de-notified the tribal communities**.
- Replaced by a series of **Habitual Offenders Acts**.
- These Acts **asked police to investigate** a suspect's criminal tendencies, and **whether their occupation is “conducive to settled way of life.”**

1959 – The denotified tribes were **reclassified as “habitual offenders”**.

1960 – Elwin Committee report.

- Among the **earliest tribal policy statements** of independent India.
- Recognised that **tribal people have their own institutions of learning.**
- Recommended a **policy of ‘integration’**, as **opposed to ‘assimilation’**.
- **Indigenous institutions should be treated as allies of schools**, not rivals.

- The best known of these indigenous institutions is the **Ghotul in Bastar**.
- Here, older Muria Gond children educate youngsters through a **work-play curriculum** and **pass on knowledge orally**.
- Children learn skills, while sharing myths, riddles, songs, dances.
- **Ethics** are taught **based on values of sharing** (and **not competition**).
- Similar institutions such as **Dhumkuria and Dangribasa exist in Jharkhand and Odisha**.
- However, these were only a few **exceptions**.

- From the 1960s onwards, there was a rapid increase in residential schools for Adivasi children.
- These schools focused on training tribal citizens for jobs in industrial projects.
- Aimed at producing a compliant workforce for the industries expanding in Adivasi areas.

1990s – This system of school education to train for industrial jobs grew stronger.

- Many **new tribal residential schools** started.
- **State-run schools** – Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), and the Eklavya Model Residential Schools.
- **Private schools** – the **Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)** in Bhubaneswar.

- From 2005 onwards, the Maoist conflict started escalating and mining companies started vying to take over forest lands.
- Hundreds of day schools have been shut down in Adivasi villages, since then.
- Adivasi children were removed en masse from 'Maoist affected' villages.
- 'Portacabin' schools were set up in south Chhattisgarh, to replace the shut-down day schools.

- Around this time, **companies also started funding their own tribal schools.**
- The National Mineral Development Corporation set up **'education cities' in Chhattisgarh.**
- In **2020**, **Adani opened a joint school with KISS** in Mayurbhanj, Odisha.
- Vedanta and Nalco too have deals with KISS, **funding admissions from areas where they have mining interests.**

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“They want our children to hate their own culture” — Why big business is “educating” tribal children

Activists have accused these schools of teaching Adivasi children that their culture is uncivilized.

Some Adivasi parents say that children were taught in schools to ask their families to move out of forest lands and give those lands for mining instead.

These schools have been accused of humiliating Adivasi children into thinking that they belong to an uncivilized culture.



5 things you need to know about Factory Schools

Survival International · 447 views · 1 year ago

- KISS claims to be the **world's largest residential school**.
- Has **27,000 students**, all from Scheduled Tribe communities.
- Describes itself as '**the world's largest anthropological laboratory**.'
- It has stated its goal as – '**converting tax consumers into taxpayers**'.
- Critics say that this shows **an insensitivity to Adivasi culture and society** and looks down upon Adivasis as primitive.

The founder of KISS has been caught on video speaking of non-literate Adivasi parents as people who “don’t understand anything”.

➤ The cultural racism in such schools resembles colonial mindsets.



#FactorySchool

"They live in trees": what Factory School founder thinks of indigenous people

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18



5



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Outrage from Indigenous leaders: notorious 'Factory School' for 30,000 children set to host World Congress of Anthropology

July 14, 2020

*KISS was due to host
the next World
Congress of
Anthropology in
January 2023.*

*This was cancelled following opposition by Adivasi activists and
anthropologists.*



India's factory schools cut students off from family, religion and language

Activists say free education is hyped as a 'gift' for Adivasi children.

They have asked why do police play such a big role in bringing the children to school?



Remedies?

Some Adivasis say that **preservation and revival of their mother tongue** is crucial to saving their culture.

Let us take a look at some government policies.



Two signs of assimilation are:

➤ Residential schools that are removed from community life of Adivasis, and

➤ The imposition of dominant regional languages.

- Article 350A of the Constitution gives every child the right to education in their own mother tongue.

- Studies show that multilingual education helps in cognitive development of children and stimulates intellectual confidence much more effectively.

1961 – The **Dhebar Commission** had recommended integration of tribal knowledge and languages into the curriculum.

➤ Asked schools to ensure that **school times did not clash with tribal festivals and agricultural work**, which are **vital learning spaces**.

2005 – Similar recommendations from the **National Curriculum Framework**.

➤ Unfortunately, **these recommendations have not been followed, either.**

2006 – The **UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** underscores their **right to establish and control their own educational institutions.**

- **Article 30 of the Indian Constitution** guarantees the fundamental right of minorities (both religious and lingual) to establish and administer their own educational institutes.

2007 – The UN's anti-discrimination body Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), **asked India to repeal the Habitual Offenders Act of 1952**, and effectively **rehabilitate the denotified and nomadic tribes.**



**REPORT OF THE
HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE ON SOCIO-
ECONOMIC, HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL
STATUS OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES OF INDIA**

- A High Level Committee on tribal affairs was constituted by the Prime Minister's Office in August 2013.
- Known as the **Xaxa Committee** (headed by Professor Virginius Xaxa), it submitted its report in 2014.

The Xaxa Committee found:

- 51 out of the 58 districts where the forest cover was more than 67% were tribal districts.
- Most of this forest was classified as Reserved Forests, Protected Forests, Wildlife Sanctuaries or National Parks.
- Here tribal communities were treated as encroachers before the Forest Rights Act of 2006.

- About half of the top mineral-producing districts were predominantly tribal districts, where land had been diverted for mining.
- This had degraded the environment, reduced livelihoods and displaced many tribal communities.
- The number of people displaced due to dams, mines, wildlife sanctuaries and industries in the first 40 years since Independence was about 21 million.
- Government sources, show that at least 75 per cent of them had not been rehabilitated.

Report on India's tribal population kept under wraps

High-level committee report was submitted to the Prime Minister's Office in May 2014, and includes radical recommendations



NEXT NEWS >

By [Mukta Patil](#)

Published: Monday 29 December 2014

However, no policy action has been taken on the recommendations of the report.



Amendments to the Forest Rights Act were under consideration, that would have diluted tribal rights for making projects easier.

In 2019, the Union government withdrew amendments to the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006, just a few days before the Jharkhand Assembly election got under way.

- The **National Education Policy of 2020** is silent on the crucial question of integrating Adivasi knowledge.
- It encourages multilingual education but **calls for 'philanthropic' investment, focused on producing workers for the market** rather than implementing the Right to Education Act (2009).
- Activists say, philanthropic = **corporate investment**.

SIDE NOTE -

This 2020 Netflix miniseries portrays the impact of British colonial policies and the policy of assimilation by mainstream Indian civilization, on Adivasi culture.



Question

Answer – C

75 PVTG

Odisha has highest no. of PVTGs

Which of the following statements regarding the 'Development of **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups**' scheme are correct?

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 3. Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the implementing agency
 4. Among the listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Telangana.
-
- A. 1,2,3
 - B. 1 and 2 only
 - C. 2 and 4 only
 - D. None of the Above

- **“Development of PVTGs”**
- **Activities like education, housing, land distribution, land development, agricultural development, animal husbandry, construction of link roads, installation of non-conventional sources of energy for lighting purpose, social security or any other innovative activity meant for the comprehensive socio-economic development of PVTGs.**
- **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**



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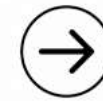
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