

# DOWN TO EARTH

# OJAANK IAS ACADENY

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## OJAANK IAS ACADEM

### **Our Selected Students in IAS 2020**

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**RANK 389 MOHIBULLAH** ANSARI





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## **Why Tribal People Die Young**

#### Why You Should Know?

- SEVENTY-YEAR-OLD Jetli has seen her family grow by three generations. This is lesser than what her ancestors witnessed "When I was six years old, at least five generations of my family used to live to together," she said.
- A resident of Chhapri village in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district, Jetli believes people of her Bhil tribal community are not living for long the used to a low decades ago Doctors say this is due to people getting married Inter and having fewer children.
- But Jetli's assumption is not entirely wrong. If you in born as a member of scheduled tribe (ST) in India today, you are likely to live four years lesser than a "higher caste Hindu", according to a recent study by researchers with the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics, a non-profit focused on health and well-being in India.
- Published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) in March 2022, the study says that "Relative to higher-caste Hindu.. Adivasi life expectancy is more than 4 y [years] lower, Dalit life expectancy is more than 3 y lower, and Muslim life expectancy is about 1 y lower."
- Its estimates are based on the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's "Annual Health Survey, 2010-11", which analyses nine states Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Among these, ST groups in Madhya Pradesh have the lowest life expectancy, for men it is 57.4 ycan and for women 60.1 years.
- Life expectancy is the average number of years a person is expected to live. The life expectancy of ST groups has always been lowest among social groups. In July 2019,

- the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs released a press statement saying life expectancy of ST groups is 63.9 years, as against 67 years for the general population.
- It attributes the figures to 2016 Lancet study using Census 2011 data. The reasons for shorter lifespan include gaps in various health and nutritional indicators, education level, poverty level, (sic) between ST and non-STs, traditional lifestyle, remoteness of habitations and dispersed population," the statement says.
- Another paper published in April 2022 in Population and Development Review, by researchers from Harvard University, US, also says that compared to other social groups, life expectancy of ST groups is the lowest, at birth and through out their lives.
- However, it notes that the figures for this group have improved over the year. In 1997-2000, life expectancy of ST women at birth was 57 years, which rose in 2013-16 to 68 years while for ST men, it was 54.5 year in 1997-2000 and 62.4 years in 2013-16 (see "Last among unequals).
- The estimates are based on data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Sample Registration Surveys between 1997-2000 and 2013-16.

#### WHY THE LOW NUMBERS

- of the various reasons for ST groups consistently low life expectancies, change in food intake and uneven access to healthcare are evident in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua and Alirajpur districts, where 87 percent of people belong to ST groups.
- Kalia Dutiya, a resident of Golahadi village in Jhabua and a member of the Bhil tribe,says, "Twenty years ago, we used to grow natural crops. Now there is too much reliance on chemical fertilisers. Crops and dairy products do not smell the same."
- His statements are echoed by Laddo Hatila, a resident of Sejawada village in Alirajpur and a member of the Bhilala tribe. "Four decades ago, when I was in my 20s, my day would start by grinding pearl millet or sorghum to make rotis. It made my arms strong. Now, we buy wheat from markets."
- Staple foods have changed from locally-grown pearl millets, sorghum, maize, herbs, fruits and vegetables to wheat, pulses, nice and seasonal vegetables. "We

- stopped going to the forest for food because it does not have as many fruits and vegetables its earlier.
- I cannot remember the last time I saw kokada (spiny gourd) I ate as a child," says Dutiva. "The consumption of nutritious native foods are gradually declining due to climate impacts on food availability, preference for markets and farming of hybrid varieties of rice and pulses," says Suparna Ghosh-Jerath, professor and head of community nutrition at the Public Health Foundation of India, Consumption of meat, a major source of protein, is nearly non-existent in all five villages Down To Earth visited in both the districts.
- There is also a high prevalence of malnourishment. The fifth round of the NFHS (2019-21) says 49.3 percent of children under five years in Jhabua are stunted (defined by the World Health Organization as low height for age), 17.9 percent are wasted (low weight for height) and 41.7 per cent underweight low weight for age, In Alirajpur, 34.6 percent of children under five years are stunted, 15.4 percent and wasted and 31:6 per cent underweight.

#### SHIFT IN DIETS

- Such a situation is prevalent across the country. A 2009 report by the National Nutrition
  Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) under the National Institute of Nutrition, which covers
  nine states, notes a marginal decline in the consumption of some foods in tribal areas
  between 1985-89 and 2007-08.
- Nutritional intake during the period also remained below the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'S recommended daily allowances, Between the second (1988-90) and third (2008-09) NNMB surveys, consumption of millets and cereals decreased by 50 g per consumption unit (CU) per day, protein intake by 3 g per CU per day.
- Vitamin A by 117  $\mu$ g (microgrammes) per CU per day and energy intake by 150 kilocalories per CU per day. CU is defined by ICMR as calorie consumption based on age, gender and physical activity.

#### **DOWN TO EARTH GIST**

- The NNB report also says only 29-32 percent of children of different age groups, 63 74 percent of adults and 25 per cent of pregnant and lactating women in tribal areas consumed an adequat diet in terms of protein, energy and calories.
- Research indicates this shift may be due to the fact that grains like wheat that are availed through the public distribution system (PDS) now dominate tribal people's diets.
- Tribal communities inability to adapt the modern systems of cultivation and consumption, forced them to take ration from PDS instead of their indigenous food items like ragi, chama (bajra), millet and maize," notes a 2017 paper in the journal Social Work Foot Prints.
- Moreover, in states like Chhattisgarh, the Green Revolution has been lands fit only for millet cultivation being used for wheat and rice, says Yogesh Jain a paediatrician and founding member of public health initiatives Jan Swasthya Sahyog And Sangwari in the state. "Access to millets has declined so much that young people cannot recognise some varieties, he says.

#### LACK OF HEALTHCARE

- In terms of healthcare, tribal populations still struggle for adequate access. Data from the Union health ministry's "Rural Health Statistics 2019-20" for five states with substantial tribal populations-Maha rashtra Telangana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan Show all except Telangana face a shortage of sub-centred, public health centres (PHCs) and community health centres (CHCS), Madhya Pradesh's tribal areas, for example, are short of 2,408 sub-centres, 491 PHCS and 116 CHCS.
- Tribal Health in India", a 2018 report by the Union health ministry, notes the tribal groups face a triple burden of communicable, non communicable and mental health ailments. Bacterial and viral diseases, sexually transmitted diseases and skin infections are widespread.
- Prashanth N Srinivas, who works on tribal health inequities at the Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru, says the current health data gives a partial picture. Several forestassociated groups, especially in central and south India, identify as tribes but are not recognised as ST groups. These groups are marginalised compared to urban and rural

ST groups not associated with forests.. "Health indicators in national – surveys are an average of both groups. If disaggregated, non-recognised ST communities will show a poorer states," he says

#### SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT

- Despite the shortfalls, health indicators of ST populations show improvement over the long term The 2018 report says infant mortality among ST populations has declined from 90.5 per 1,000 births in 1988 to 44.4 in 2014. But when compared with other social groups, the gap in infant mortality rates rose from 10 percent to 35 percent, it notes.
- The NNMB report shows stunting in ST children in the 1-5 age group has reduced from 58 per cent to 56 per cent, wasting from 23 per cent to 22 per cent while underweight conditions from 57 to 52 per cent. between 1998-99 and 2007-08. According to the "Rapid Survey on Children by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, as of 2013-14 these figures improved to 42,3 percent for stunting, 18.7 percent for wasting and 36.7 percent for underweight conditions. This alludes to a marginal change in trends.





### **DOUBLE SPEAK**

#### Why You Should Know?

- We BREATHE fire every day, says Sadan Kumar Paswan. The ground around his house is filled with crevices that emit smoke. When ever it rains, noxious gases and steam envelop the colony, making it difficult to breathe, he adds.
- The 37-year-old lives in Jharkhand's Gopinathpur Pahadi Basti, one of India's few rehabilita tion colonies for retired coal mine employees. The colony was built in 2010 by refilling a part of the Gopi nathpur open coal mine that was operational till 2020, when ground water flooded the pits.
- "The refilling was not done properly and the mining company, Eastern Coalfields, did not even bother to inform us that there is a blazing fire under the ground that feeds on the coal reserves and can not be extinguished," says Paswan.
- When Down to Earth (ITE) visited the colony in early May, all 60 houses had cracked walls and ceilings. The residents say cracks are a recurring problem in the area as the ground sage every time it rains because of poor refilling.
- "Nobody knows how big the fire is, but the smoke is increasing every year. The company recently started sending us eviction notices to vacate the colony, but we do not have any other place to go," says Paswan, who travels 60 km everyday to work at a private bank in Dhanbad, the coal capital of India.
- The mining company maintains that the colony is safe and that it has not issued eviction notices. "I have visited the colony and there is no problem of underground fire there," says JP Gupta, director (technical), Eastern Coalfields.

#### **DOWN TO EARTH GIST**

- The colony also lacks basic civic amenities. Residents say they travel more than 1.5 km every day to the nearest natural stream to fetch water as they do not have piped water connections. They cannot ac cess groundwater because of the fire. Electricity is also available for only 8-10 hours a day.
- Despite the perils, there is little that the residents of Gopinathpur Pahadi Basti can do
  to make the company accountable, because In dia's guidelines on coal mine closure
  plans are silent on the rehabilitation of people dependent on them.



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#### WEAK FRAMEWORK

- In 2009, India made it mandatory for all coal companies to prepare a mine closure plan, along with mining plans and feasibility reports. The plan has to be approved by a standing committee of the Union Ministry of Coal or the board of the company, if it is government-owned.
- The guidelines, revised in 2013, focus on the technical (refilling of land, handling of equipment) and environmental (air and water pol lution levels, plantations) aspects of a mine closure and has a passing mention on how to reduce the impact of the closure on the people.
- Article 3.10 of the guidelines, which deals with the economic repercussions of the closure of the mine, says the company should check if the people working on the mine can return to their family occupations after the closure. It also talks of compensation for sustenance and employment at a different mine for the affected people.
- "A robust policy has to look at ways to shape future economic activities in the area. It should include aspects of social justice, economic diversification, and compensation for all those who will lose their livelihood," says Swati D'Souza, energy analyst at international think-tank Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis,
- The other challenge is that companies continue to abandon coal mines without refilling them, which is a clear violation of the existing guidelines, says Subhash Mishra, a Dhandbad-based social rights activist. Once abandoned, nearby com munities start illegal mining, and this results in frequent accidents because the land easily caves in.
- Mishra says companies get away from implementing the guide lines just by saying that their mines are either abandoned or dis continued, and not closed.
- Sanjay Kumar Singh, director (technical), Bharat Coking Coal Limited, a subsidiary of Coal India, gave DTE the same reason for not acting on its abandoned mines in Dhanbad. "The protocol is to be followed when a mine is closed.
- But so far, we only have discontinued mines that can become operational again. They were discontinued as we did not have the technical infra structure," says Singh

- Coal India and its eight subsidiaries have 284 closed, abandoned or discontinued mines. Singareni Collieries Company has another nine such mines, as per a reply by Pralhad Joshi, Union Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs in Parliament on February 7, 2022.
- India had implemented the guidelines and reclaimed 201 sq km at 111 closed mines by Coal India by 2020, as per a report released by the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute Limited, Ranchi, in March 2021. The report does not mention rehabilitation of people from these sites

#### LATE REALISATION

- In a bid to include rehabilitation in closure plans, the Union Ministry of Coal in November 2021, sought approval from the Union Ministry of Finance for an eight-year project to develop a mineclosure framework with the World Bank.
- The framework, which aims to provide livelihood alternatives for people dependent on the sector, is expected to play a crucial role in India's plan to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070 through phasing-down of coal.
- The framework is expected to focus on repurposing legacy and Abandoned mines for the economic use of the local communities and provide them with livelihood opportunities when the mines close.
- "This is going to be an all-inclusive, comprehensive India-wide mine closure framework to cover legacy mines, recently closed mines, and mine closures scheduled to happen in the short term," reads a press statement released by the Union coal ministry.
- "The current guidelines talk only of refilling and planting trees, but what is needed is
  restoring the land to its original state," says NC Jha, former chairman of Coal In dia.
  This includes levelling the land after mining, which requires a lot of time, resources and
  capital.
- He says that mines where relatively less quantity of rock has been removed (stripping ratio) can even be made suitable for agriculture.

• The ministry has identified two districts for the initial field surveys and pilot projects in Bokaro, Jharkhand and Korea, Chhattisgarh. The districts have 38 mines. and 18 of them are non-functional.

#### **CAUSE FOR CONCERN**

- While India is, for the first time, at tempting to rehabilitate communities around its
  closed mines, it is also exploring the possibility of resuming mining in them to augment
  coal production.
- On May 6, 2022, Raosaheb Patil Danve, Union Minister of State for Coal, Mines and Railways, announced the auctioning of 20 discontinued mines of Coal India to private players to resume mining.
- He justified the move by saying it would de crease the country's reliance on imports of thermal coal and help it: become self-sufficient. The extract able reserve in the abandoned coal mines is around 380 million tonnes.
- Of this, 30-40 million tonnes of coal can be easily extracted from the mines, as per the Union coal ministry. India's Economic Survey 2021-22 projects coal demand in the range of 1.3-1.5 billion tonnes by 2030, an increase of 63 percent from the current demand.
- "When it comes to mining, India always speaks in two voices. Unfortunately these kinds of paradoxes are becoming common even in the global scenario," says Xavier Dias, social rights activist in Jharkhand.
- Punit Binz, another social activist from the state, says inviting private players is just a new way of earning profits and keeping the people away from their land.
- He adds that the guidelines mandate that abandoned mines should be re turned to the state government and ideally should be used to rehabilitate the original owners who continue to live in dismal conditions.
- "If private players have the technology to mine from the abandoned mines, then what is stopping Coal India and its subsidiaries from acquiring them," he adds.



## NEAR FUTURE: SHUT ECONOMIES

#### Why You Should Know?

- In the immediate future, the overall global availability of foodgrains will be further reduced. The rise in prices of energy and fertilisers is likely to reduce yield, as per IFPRI's report.
- The fertiliser shortfall comes at the start of planting seasons in many countries, including India. The report says that "food-crisis countries", such as Honduras, Cameroon, Guatemala, Sierra Leo ne, Nigeria, Mozambique and Kenya, de pend on Russian and Ukraine for 10-50 per cent of their fertiliser imports.
- As countries substitute the commodities that are in short supply with others, the prices of the substitutes will go up. For example, rice is being used to fill the gap in cereal imports, and its price has in creased by 12 per cent globally since the beginning of the year.
- On May 5, the government of India suddenly stopped wheat purchase from Punjab, procuring only 56 per cent of its target of 44 million tonnes.
- When the wheat stock dwindled, the government replaced 5,5 million tonnes of wheat with rice for its pandemic relief programme, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kaly an Yojanı As countries start sourcing food, fuel and fertilisers from countries other than Russia and Ukraine, it will add to the overall costs, ultimately adding to the cost of the produce.
- This is also where the true character of a "globalised world" could come to fore, with countries already resorting to hoarding staple foods that till recently they ex ported for profits.

- Russia, for instance, has banned sales of fertiliser, sugar and grains, Indonesia, which produces more than half the world's palm oil, has halted outgoing shipments.
- Turkey has stopped exports of butter, beef, lamb, goats, maize and vegetable oils. India joined this group when it banned wheat export on May 14.
- This was while negotiating export to at least 12 countries that depended on Russia-Ukraine for wheat. India has also had a break in its five-year bumper harvest of wheat, as a severe and long heatwave brought down the yield.
- India is tradition ally not a wheat exporter, but in a surprise declaration it committed to export 10 million tonnes of wheat before the ban on wheat export.
- This offered a hope to the surging wheat prices that have gone up in the country by 60 per cent this year. This decision has not only crashed wheat prices in Indian wholesale markets but also drawn condemnation from the Group of Seven (G7).
- "If everyone starts to impose export restrictions or to close markets, that would worsen the crisis," German food and agriculture minister Cem Oz demir said in a statement on May 14.



#### **EXPORT RESTRICTIONS**

- Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, the number of countries imposing export restrictions on food has risen from three to 17.
- Those restrictions include export bans implemented by 16 countries and export licensing require ments implemented by seven countries, as per IFPRI's Export Restrictions Tracker.
- The Tracker indicates that about 43 per cent of vegetable oils in global markets is affected by export restriction.
- The export ban hits the food market severely as it is not just limited to a few commodities but also to their production and export held by a handful of countries. As per IFPRI, five agricultural products ac count for almost 90 per cent of imported calories.
- These are: wheat (31 per cent of total calories affected), palm oil (28.5 per cent), corn (12.2 per cent), sunflower oil (10.6 per cent) and soybean oil (5.6 per cent). All these are impacted by the cur rent export ban.
- Export restrictions affect nearly 36 per cent of wheat exports: 55 per cent of palm oil; 17.2 per cent of corn, 78.2 per cent of sunflower oil exports; and 5.8 per cent of soybean oil.
- Curbs on export make availability of food grains difficult for deficit geographies, In an unprecedented joint appeal on April 13, the heads of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, wff, and World Trade Organization gave a call: "We also urge all countries to keep trade open and avoid restrictive measures such as export bana on food or fertilizer that further exacerbate the suffering of the most vulnerable people."
- The World Bank has warned that each percentage point increase in food prices would push an additional 10 million people into extreme poverty.
- The Washington based Center for Global Development estimates at least 40 million people around the world will be pushed into extreme poverty defined as living on less than \$1.90 a day because of the price spike caused by the war.

• By the 100 day of the Russia-Ukraine war, the food crisis emerged as the top agenda in all the efforts to stop it. G7 foreign ministers meeting in Germany on May 14 made an "appeal" to Russia to lift naval blockade on Ukrainian foodgrains export.

#### **CHANGES IN FOOD PRODUCTION**

- This is the third global food crisis (after the crises of 2007-08 and 2010-11) in the past 15 years, but the worst-ever in severity and spread. In all the crises, the world saw how agriculture and food production systems became concentrated on just a few commodities and in a few countries.
- This made production efficient and drew advantage of scale. But it also made food production vulnerable. It changed how and what we eat, adding to the food system's vulnerability.
- First, our diet majorly comes from just four grains-rice, wheat, corn and soy. These grains account for 50 per cent of the average daily calories consumption, globally, with wheat and rice contributing a major chunk.
- Five countries-China, India, Russia, Brazil and the US control 60 per cent of the global food production. Within these countries, production is further concentrated to a few regions. For example, India is a major wheat producer but more than four-fifths of it comes from five north Indian states.
- In the last five decades, there is a swift change in the way food is produced and distributed across the world. When agriculture trade becomes free, or globalised, inflation comes down.
- This thrives on outsourcing production and processing at mass to cheap labour areas in the world. But the character of consumption changes.
- In the world, four-fifths of total food consumption is still produced locally. But the share of internationally traded commodities in total food trade is constantly increasing: from 10 per cent in 1985 to 14 per cent in 2017.
- This coincides with the trend of mostly developing countries becoming increasingly import dependent.
- According to an estimate by Fao, the demand for imported food products in low- and middle-income countries is not only increasing, but will go up 2-3.5 times by 2050.
- In 2020 the demand for imported food commodities in lower-income countries made up 80 per cent of the annual rise in the world's total food import bill.

- This is both a good and a bad development. Food is available to most vulnerable countries and people, but at the same time it is conditional to situations in countries that process it before it reaches the destination.
- Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director-general of the World Trade Organization, said in a recent event on the impending food crisis that the global trading system has helped drive glob all growth and provided countries with important goods even during the pandemic.
- WHEN WE talk of globalisation, we say free trade will like core of any crisis situation. But it has not been the case so far.
- In a crisis, governments want to take core of their own. Normally exporters wish to export more, while net importing countries tend to impose tariffs to protect their producers.
- They try to balance the object of providing afford able food to consumers and protecting their producers. In a crisis, the story changes.
- The exporting countries look to impose export bons (like Indonesia banned edible oil export), while the net food importing countries reduce their tariffs to obtain affordable food items. So, the scenario is totally opposite from exporter and importer points of view.



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