Society & Social Justice · GS - II

Does India’s tribal development policy reflect the aspirations for a socially grounded and equity-based governance ? Justify your answer.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2026	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Fifth and Sixth Schedules, PESA, Forest Rights Act, tribal self-governance, Gram Sabha, displacement, land rights, cultural identity, welfare schemes, implementation gaps, participatory governance

Model Answer

India’s tribal development policy increasingly reflects the principles of social justice, participation and equity, but significant implementation gaps remain.

Constitutional arrangements such as the Fifth and Sixth Schedules recognise the distinctive socio-cultural and administrative needs of tribal communities. The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 strengthens Gram Sabha-based participation, while the Forest Rights Act, 2006 recognises individual and community forest rights.

Government interventions in education, healthcare, livelihoods, infrastructure and financial inclusion aim to reduce historical deprivation. The emphasis on tribal self-governance and community participation also reflects a shift from a purely welfare-oriented approach towards rights-based governance.

However, displacement caused by mining and infrastructure projects, inadequate implementation of forest rights, weak Gram Sabha participation and gaps in health and educational outcomes indicate continuing challenges. Development projects may also conflict with tribal land, livelihood and cultural rights.

Therefore, tribal policy reflects an equity-oriented constitutional vision in principle, but its social grounding depends upon effective decentralisation, secure land and forest rights, culturally sensitive public services and meaningful participation of tribal communities in decisions affecting them.