Society & Social Justice · GS - I

Examine the uniqueness of tribal knowledge system when compared with mainstream knowledge and cultural systems.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2021	GS - I	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Indigenous knowledge, oral traditions, ecological wisdom, traditional medicine, biodiversity conservation, collective ownership, holistic worldview, formal education, intellectual property rights, inclusive development.

Model Answer

Introduction

Tribal knowledge systems comprise indigenous practices, beliefs and skills developed over generations through interaction with local ecosystems and community life.

Unique Characteristics

- **Ecological orientation:** Tribal communities possess detailed knowledge of local plants, wildlife, soils, rainfall and seasonal cycles.
- **Oral transmission:** Stories, songs, rituals and practical demonstrations transmit knowledge across generations.
- **Collective ownership:** Knowledge is often shared within communities under customary rules governing access to forests, water and other resources.
- **Holistic worldview:** Nature, spirituality, livelihoods and social relationships are closely interconnected.

- **Sustainable practices:** Traditional seed preservation, mixed cropping and community forest management can support biodiversity.
- **Cultural diversity:** Indigenous languages, crafts and medicinal practices reflect distinct local identities.

Comparison with Mainstream Systems

Mainstream knowledge generally relies more on formal education, written records, specialised institutions and standardised scientific methods. Tribal knowledge is often place-specific, experiential and community-centred. However, both systems can complement one another.

Way Forward

Document indigenous practices with community consent, protect intellectual property rights and promote ethical collaboration between tribal communities and scientific institutions.

Conclusion

Recognising tribal knowledge strengthens cultural preservation, environmental conservation and inclusive development while respecting community autonomy.

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