



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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Date -30 September 2023

SARNA RELIGION

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the Topic details "SARNA RELIGION". This Topic has relevance in the Governance section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About Sarna Religion?

For Mains:

GS 2: Governance

Need for a Distinct Sarna Religion Code?

Process of Granting Religious Code?

Benefits of Recognizing Sarna as a Separate Religion?

Why in the news:

Religious leader Bandhan Tigga has expressed that unless the 'Sarna' code is incorporated in the forthcoming census, tribal communities might abstain from participating in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Changing Demographics:

- Since Independence, the percentage of tribal population in Jharkhand has decreased from 36% to 26%.
- This demographic shift has significant implications, particularly concerning policies framed for tribal communities under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution.

Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule:

- The Fifth Schedule contains provisions related to the administration and governance of scheduled areas and the welfare of Scheduled Tribes.
- The Sixth Schedule deals with the administration of tribal areas, providing special provisions to protect the interests of tribal communities.

The 'Sarna' Religion:

- In November 2020, the Jharkhand Assembly unanimously passed a resolution advocating the recognition of 'Sarna' as a distinct religion in the Census.
- 'Sarna' is the indigenous religious faith of tribal communities, predominantly worshipping natural elements such as mountains, forests, and wildlife.
- 'Sarna' followers have their unique festival calendar, distinct from other religions.
- They do not engage in idol worship and reject concepts like the Varna system, heaven, and hell.

- The core tenet of the 'Sarna' faith revolves around "Jal (water), Jungle (forest), Zameen (land)," with followers venerating trees and hills while emphasizing forest preservation.

Geographical Concentration:

- 'Sarna' followers are primarily concentrated in tribal belt states like Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam.

Sarna Believers:

- The adherents of 'Sarna' are primarily tribal communities who have resisted adopting other established religions such as Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity.
- They steadfastly uphold their unique customs and traditions, even in the face of missionary activities and the influence of other faiths.

The Need for a Distinct Sarna Religion Code:

- The demand for a separate Sarna Religion Code arises primarily from the assertion that they do not identify as Hindus.
- Various tribal organizations contend that during the 2011 census survey, over 49.57 lakh individuals in 29 States and Union Territories across India self-identified as Sarna under the "Others" category, surpassing the count of Jains (44.51 lakh) who have a separate religious code.
- Advocates of the Sarna faith argue that the religious and cultural values of tribals are distinct and cannot be equated with followers of other faiths.
- They call for the inclusion of a separate column for the Sarna Religion Code in the delayed Census 2021.

The Process of Granting Religious Code:

- Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guarantees Freedom of Religion to all citizens.
- Currently, six religious codes are recognized: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism.
- The establishment of a separate religious code requires the enactment of legislation passed by both Houses of Parliament, as it falls outside the purview of state jurisdiction.

Benefits of Recognizing Sarna as a Separate Religion:

- Acknowledging 'Sarna' as a distinct religious community would facilitate in preserving their language and historical heritage.
- Without such recognition, some community members have recently converted to Christianity in pursuit of minority status and associated reservation benefits.

The recognition of 'Sarna' as a separate religion holds implications for cultural preservation, representation, and safeguarding of the rights of indigenous communities in India.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/tribal-bodies-hold-mega-rally-for-sarna-code-in-jharkhand/article66611004.ece#:~:text=A%20separate%20'Sarna'%20code%20in,separate%20religius%20identity%20for%20decades.>

Q.1 Consider the following statements regarding the Sarna religion:

1. Sarna practitioners believe in the worship of natural elements such as trees, hills, and rivers.
2. The Sarna religion has a holy scripture known as the "Sarna Granth" that guides its followers in religious practices.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: A

Q.2 Consider the following statements regarding the Sarna religion:

1. Sarna is the religious faith primarily followed by indigenous tribal communities in India.
2. Granting recognition as a separate religion to Sarna requires legislation passed at the state level.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER: A

Q.3 Examine the dynamics of religious freedom within tribal communities in India. Highlight the coexistence of indigenous belief systems and mainstream religions, and evaluate the effectiveness of legal mechanisms in preserving and protecting the religious rights of tribal populations.

Rishabh

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