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Q3(a)

Explain the impact of the concept of nature-man-spirit complex on sustainable use of natural resources with suitable examples

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Anthropology GS 2 · 20 marks · Sacred Complex and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex.

3.3 Sacred Complex and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex.

Core demand of the question

- Explain the nature-man-spirit complex and its bearing on the sustainable use of resources
- Keep the answer to a 20-mark length of about 250 words

Revision summary

Vidyarthi's complex unites forest, people, and spirits in one tribal ecology.

The **Maler** of Rajmahal are the type case.

Sacred groves and hunt taboos limit extraction.

FRA and **PESA** can legalise community control of that ethic.

Market and reservation break the spirit pole and open the resource.

Introduction

L. P. Vidyarthi's nature-man-spirit complex is a tribal world in which forest, people, and spirits form one working system. Sustainable use follows from that ritual ecology, not from a modern ministry plan alone.

Body

The **Maler model**

- **Vidyarthi built the idea from the **Maler** of the Rajmahal hills:** hills and forest as nature, shifting cultivators as man, and village and hill spirits as the third pole.
- Nature is not raw material. Sacred groves, clan hills, and hunt taboos are spirit-owned places that limit felling and catch.
- Man is the cultivator and hunter whose calendar is also a ritual calendar. Slash-and-burn is bounded by rest years and by priestly permission.
- Spirit is ancestor, hill god, and village deity who punish greed. Ecology is therefore moral.

Sustainable use

- Commons last when spirit sanction backs a closed season, a sacred patch, and sharing rules after a hunt.
- Comparison with other central Indian tribes shows similar grove and forest ethics, even where the **Maler** term is not used.
- **FRA, 2006** and **PESA** try to translate that community control into title and gram sabha consent. They work when they recognise the complex, not when they only issue individual plots.

Stress and critique

- Mission, market timber, and state forest reservation break the spirit pole, after which nature becomes open-access loot.
- The model can be romanticised. Not every taboo is conservation, and not every tribe fits Maler shifting cultivation.
- Sustainability today needs the old ethic plus legal forest rights, or the complex remains a monograph while the hillside is mined.

Flow diagram

Nature forest hill -> Man cultivator
Man cultivator -> Spirit ancestor grove
Spirit ancestor grove -> Nature forest hill
FRA PESA -> Man cultivator

Conclusion

Nature-man-spirit makes resource use a three-way duty. It sustains the forest when spirits and gram sabha still bind; it fails when only the market remains.

Facts & figures

L. P. Vidyarthi

Formulated the nature-man-spirit complex from Maler ethnography.

Maler

Rajmahal hill people whose shifting cultivation and hill spirits are the type model.

Sacred grove

Spirit-protected patch that functions as a local conservation rule.

Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA)

Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act that can house gram sabha control over community resources.

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