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Q6(c)

Explain how British policies impacted the major resources of the tribals

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- Explain how British policies impacted the major resources of the tribals
- Keep the answer to a 15-mark length of about 200 words

Revision summary

British revenue law replaced lineage land with paper title and landlords.

Forest Acts reserved timber and criminalised shifting cultivation and nistar.

Mines and tea took labour after the resource base shrank.

Santhal hul and Birsa's ulgulan were resource revolts.

Fifth Schedule, PESA, and FRA answer that colonial resource history.

Introduction

British policy turned tribal land, forest, and shifting plots into revenue, reserved woods, and mines. The major resources were not left as commons under custom.

Body

Land and plough

- Permanent settlement and ryotwari brought landlords and moneylenders into Adivasi tracts. Title on paper replaced lineage title.
- The **Santhal** hul of 1855 and **Birsa Munda's** ulgulan answered diku landlords and mission-revenue pressure on **Khuntkatti** land.

Forest

- **Indian Forest Acts** of 1865, 1878, and 1927 reserved timber for sleepers and ships. Shifting cultivation and hunt became offence.
- **Verrier Elwin** described Baiga bewar as criminalised livelihood. Grazing and nistar shrank.

Mine, labour, and excise

- Coal, teak, and later minerals opened Chota Nagpur and central India. Tribal labour went to mines and tea without the old resource base.
- Excise on liquor attacked ritual brew and created contractor liquor, another resource loss.

After-image

- Independent India's **Fifth Schedule**, **PESA**, and **FRA, 2006** are replies to this resource history, not inventions from nowhere.
- **Chipko** later showed that forest as livelihood versus forest as outside timber remained the same fight in a new state.

Flow diagram

British policy -> Land revenue diku
British policy -> Forest reservation
British policy -> Mines labour
Land revenue diku -> Santhal Birsa

Conclusion

British land, forest, and mine law stripped tribal major resources of custom and made them revenue. Rebellions and later protective statutes are the long echo of that strip.

Facts & figures

Indian Forest Act 1878

Tightened state reservation of forests and curtailed customary use.

Santhal hul 1855

Rebellion against landlords and moneylenders in the Damin-i-Koh.

Birsa Munda

Led the ulgulan for Munda land and against outsider and mission-revenue pressure.

Khuntkatti

Munda lineage land system that colonial tenure failed to protect.