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Q8(c)

Discuss the economic, social, and developmental impacts on tribal communities with special reference to mining.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Anthropology GS 2 · 15 marks · The concept of ethnicity

7.3 The concept of ethnicity; Ethnic conflicts and political developments; Unrest among tribal communities; Regionalism and demand for autonomy; Pseudo-tribalism. Social change among the tribes during colonial and post-Independent India.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss mining's economic, social and developmental impacts on tribal communities
- Use Samata, Niyamgiri, Jharkhand-Odisha-Chhattisgarh, health and displacement law
- Be critical of both deprivation and of a few winners
- Developmental impacts include infrastructure and broken commons

Revision summary

Mining brings wages and state royalties and destroys subsistence forests, water and sacred hills.

Samata 1997 and **Niyamgiri 2013** are the legal brakes in Scheduled Areas.

Social impacts include displacement, in-migration, gendered loss of MFP, and police conflict.

Developmental roads and CSR do not automatically compensate a broken commons.

Legitimate mining in tribal areas requires Gram Sabha consent and FRA title, not only a lease map.

Introduction

Mining is the sharpest meeting of the Indian development state with tribal land. Coal, iron, bauxite, uranium and limestone sit under **Fifth Schedule** and other Adivasi tracts. The economic ledger shows wages and royalties; the social ledger shows displacement, illness and a broken commons. Anthropology counts both, then asks **who owns the surplus**.

Body**Economic impacts**

Mines create **cash wages**, contract work, petty shops and some skilled jobs. They also destroy **MFP, jhum, grazing and stream fisheries** that women and PVTGs actually live on. Royalties accrue to states; **district mineral foundations** (after the MMDR amendment) are meant to return money locally. Capture by contractors is common. **Samata** (1997) restricted transfer of Scheduled Area land to non-tribal mining lessees unless law clearly allows it. Practice still uses state corporations and private partners. **Land Acquisition / RFCTLARR 2013** promises consent and R&R in Scheduled Areas; many older leases predate it.

Net economic effect for most households is **a short wage and a permanent loss of the subsistence base** - the pattern **Xaxa** called development without inclusion. A small tribal elite of sarpanch-contractors may gain. That is class inside the tribe.

Social impacts

Displacement splits kin (**Vidyarthi's** nature-man-spirit collapses when the hill is a pit). In-migration of non-tribal labour changes language, liquor markets and sexual risk. **Women** lose MFP cash and face camp-follower violence; some gain mine-canteen work. Sacred sites (Niyamgiri, groves, burial hills) are desecrated, which is a social fact, not a private hobby. Youth drop out into truck driving or leave for cities. Police camps and **FIRs against protesters** militarise the village. **Birsa's** land memory is often the language of resistance in Jharkhand.

- **Health:** silicosis, dust, contaminated water, malaria in pits, and **stunting** when forest food goes. This links to question 1(e) and 6(a).

Developmental impacts

Roads, electricity and mobile towers follow mines. Schools and PHCs may appear on paper for CSR. **Developmental** here means both **infrastructure** and **the official idea of progress**. The anthropological critique (**Elwin, Roy Burman** buffer, **Padel** on Odisha bauxite, **Niyamgiri** judgment) is that infrastructure without **Gram Sabha consent** is a corridor for extraction. **PESA** consultation and **FRA** community rights are the lawful developmental sequence; mining-first is the usual sequence.

Positive developmental impact exists where a titled community bargains a share, where **DMF** actually builds a working PHC, and where closed mines are restored. These cases are fewer than the coal and bauxite belts of **Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and parts of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh**.

Synthesis

Mining can be development for the treasury and deprivation for the custodian. A WRAP answer should not deny jobs; it should refuse to call a wasteland a trade-off already paid. **Climate** (6a) will add heat and water stress on the same pits. The ethical line is the same as **ILO 169** consultation, which India has not signed, and **Niyamgiri, which Indian law has: no pit without a free Gram Sabha**.

Flow diagram

Mine -> Wages royalties
 Mine -> Land water MFP loss
 Land water MFP loss -> Displacement health
 Gram Sabha Samata FRA -> Consent or stop

Conclusion

On tribal communities, mining pays some wages and royalties and takes land, water, health and sacred geography. Socially it splits kin and invites a non-tribal labour regime. Developmentally it brings roads and a model of progress that is extractive unless PESA, FRA and Samata actually govern the lease.

Facts & figures

Samata v. State of Andhra Pradesh 1997

Supreme Court restricted transfer of tribal land in Scheduled Areas to non-tribals for mining unless authorised by law.

Niyamgiri 2013

Gram Sabhas of Dongria Kondh villages were required to decide on bauxite mining affecting their religious and land rights.

DMF

District Mineral Foundation: statutory local fund from mining royalties, often weakly spent relative to damage.

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