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Q20

**Does tribal development in India centre around two axes, those of displacement and of rehabilitation? Give your opinion.**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS I · 15 marks · Indian Society and Diversity

Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

**Core demand of the question**

- State displacement and rehabilitation as two real axes of tribal development
- **Give your opinion:** they are central but not the only axes - education, health, FRA, voice
- Use dams, mines, sanctuaries as examples

**Revision summary**

Dams, mines and some conservation projects have made displacement a central tribal experience.

Rehabilitation has often been a plot or cash that did not restore forest-based life.

Those two axes therefore dominate the political meaning of 'tribal development'.

- **They are not sufficient:** education, health, forest rights and PESA voice are development without a bulldozer.
- **Opinion:** treat displacement as a last resort with just rehab, and do not reduce all Adivasi policy to oustee management.

**Introduction**

- **Adivasi politics in independent India has often sounded like a single sentence:** the dam or the mine comes, the village goes, a colony is promised, the colony fails. **Displacement and rehabilitation** are therefore true axes. The opinion asked for here is whether they are the **only** centre. They are the wound. They are not the whole body of tribal development.

**Body****Why the two axes dominate**

Large **dams** (Sardar Sarovar is the famous fight), **coal and bauxite mines** in Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, **steel towns**, and some **tiger reserves** have moved Scheduled Tribe families off land that was livelihood, grave and god. Rehabilitation has too often been a **plot without a forest**, cash without a job, or a promise in a file. **Samatha, Niyamgiri**, and countless gram sabha conflicts made this the public image of "tribal development": development **to** them as removal. Until rehabilitation is **land for land, forest rights, and a veto that bites**, this axis will stay central. It should.

**Why development cannot be only that**

Adivasi districts also need **schools that teach and stay, clinics, language, PESA** gram sabhas, and **markets** for minor forest produce at a fair price. **Displacement** does not explain every school dropout or every malaria death. **FRA** titles, **Eklavya** schools, and community

health workers are development without a bulldozer. Reducing the entire tribal question to oustee versus package can hide **internal inequality**, gender, and the young person who wants a degree without losing the hill.

### Opinion

Yes, **much of what the Indian state has called tribal development has orbited displacement and a weak rehab**. That is a historical fact of dams, mines and protected areas. No, **tribal development should not centre only on those two axes**. The ethical centre is **secure habitat plus voice plus ordinary public goods**. If rehab were just, displacement would still be a last resort, not a development model. If education and health arrived without a project oustee, that would still be development.

The map of tribal India is not only a map of lost villages. It is also a map of **living languages and unfinished citizenship**.

### Flow diagram

Dam mine sanctuary -> Displacement  
Displacement -> Rehabilitation  
Rehabilitation -> often weak Wound  
Tribal development -> Displacement  
Tribal development -> FRA PESA school health  
FRA PESA school health -> Voice and habitat

### Conclusion

Displacement and rehabilitation have been the loud centre of tribal development because projects moved people and failed to restore a life. They should remain a hard test of any project. Real development also needs rights, schools, health and a gram sabha that can say no.

### Facts & figures

#### Forest Rights Act, 2006

Recognises individual and community forest rights, a legal alternative to treating tribals only as oustees.

#### PESA, 1996

Extends panchayat powers to Scheduled Areas so a gram sabha can have a say in land and resources.

#### Niyamgiri

A conflict in which Dongria Kondh gram sabhas voted against a bauxite project, a landmark of consent.