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Q6(c)

What are the factors accounting for the resurgence of ethnic identity movements in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 2 · 15 marks · Social Movements in Modern India

Social Movements in Modern India: Peasants and farmers movements; Women's movement; Backward classes and Dalit movement; Environmental movements; Ethnicity and Identity movements.

Core demand of the question

- What are the factors accounting for the resurgence of ethnic identity movements in India?
- Cover federalism, development, and political opportunity

Revision summary

Federal success of language states encourages new ethnic claims.

Extractive development in tribal and hill regions fuels resurgence.

Census and schedules make identity an official resource.

Party competition after one-party dominance opened space.

Land and dignity, not primordial hate, are the usual motors.

Introduction

Ethnic identity movements resurged in India because the republic both recognises difference and maldistributes development. Language, tribe, and region return as claims when the nation feels distant or extractive.

Body

Structural factors

- Linguistic federalism taught that identity pays in states and councils. New claims copy that success.
- Uneven development, mines, and dams in tribal belts turn ethnicity into a shield, after colonial isolation and Ghurye-Elwin unfinished business.
- **Census**, **Sixth Schedule**, and reservation make ethnicity a file identity that leaders can mobilise, as **Paul Brass** argued.

Political opportunity

- Party competition after Congress dominance opened space for regional and tribal fronts.
- Global indigenous talk and diaspora media thicken symbols, but local land is still the core.

Cultural factors

- Fear of assimilation and of majoritarianism recasts tribe and language as peoplehood.
- Middle-class ethnic intelligentsias write history and demand a flag or an autonomous council.

Flow diagram

Federal recognition -> Ethnic movements
Uneven mines dams -> Ethnic movements
Party opportunity -> Ethnic movements

Conclusion

Resurgence is not a return of the primitive. It is modern politics using ethnicity where class and nation have not delivered dignity or land.

Facts & figures

State reorganisation

The template that ethnicity can win a map.

Sixth Schedule

Autonomous councils as an institutional magnet for ethnic claim.

Paul Brass

Ethnicity as elite-mobilised, not merely inherited.

Elwin-Ghurye

The older frame that still sits under Adivasi ethnic politics.

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