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Q2(a)

Analyse A.R. Desai's views on India's path of development.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society
Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- Analyse A.R. Desai's views on India's path of development
- Treat as a 20-mark answer

Revision summary

Desai treated Indian development as a class path, not a cultural story.

Colonialism made a dependent bourgeoisie and a rent-based countryside.

Independence did not complete land reform for labourers.

Planning aided capital while socialist language covered it.

1991 and displacement continue the uneven path; caste and gender must be added.

Introduction

A. R. Desai read India's development as a class path, not as a cultural awakening. Colonialism created a dependent bourgeoisie. Independence and planning did not complete a popular agrarian revolution. The path is capitalist, state-aided, and uneven.

Body**The path he named**

- British rule destroyed older crafts, tied agriculture to export and rent, and grew a bourgeoisie that was not a full industrial transformer.
- The national movement, including peasant episodes such as **Champaran**, mixed anti-colonial unity with landlord and rich-peasant interests.
- After 1947, land reform was incomplete. Intermediaries fell in law; occupancy peasants and capital-rich farmers captured surplus more than labourers.

Planning and mixed economy

- The state built heavy industry and protected private capital. Desai saw this as bourgeois development with a socialist vocabulary.
- Community Development and village harmony sociology, in his critique, hid class.
- **Green Revolution later fitted his map:** regional plenty, hired labour, and a new agrarian elite.

Contrast with other Indian sociologists

- M. N. Srinivas's dominant caste is usable, but Desai insists land and surplus come first.

- Yogendra Singh's modernisation of tradition is too cultural for this political economy.
- G. S. Ghurye's **Hindu civilisation** is not a development theory of classes.

Present applicability

- 1991 liberalisation intensified the capitalist path: new middle class, informal labour, and displacement for projects.
- Farmer debt and tribal mining belts are the unfinished agrarian and Adivasi questions he posed.

Limit

- Caste, gender, and ethnicity need more than class reduction. Use Desai with **Ambedkar** and Dube, not instead of them.

Flow diagram

Colonial dependent bourgeoisie -> Incomplete land reform

Incomplete land reform -> Planning plus private capital

Planning plus private capital -> Uneven growth labour surplus

Caste gender -> Limit of class-only

Conclusion

- **Desai's path of development is an incomplete bourgeois-national capitalism:** colonial origin, limited land reform, state-supported private accumulation, and persistent rural poverty. Analyse it as a class diagnosis that still explains uneven India, and complete it with caste and gender.

Facts & figures

Social Background of Indian Nationalism

Desai's reading of the national movement's class composition.

Incomplete land reform

End of intermediaries without a labourer-centred agrarian revolution.

Champaran

Peasant anti-colonial struggle that still sat inside a wider bourgeois-led movement.

Green Revolution

Later illustration of regional capitalist farming and hired labour.