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Q3(b)

Examine the factors responsible for the rural unrest in contemporary India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Rural and Agrarian transformation in India

Rural and Agrarian transformation in India: Programmes of rural development, Community Development Programme, cooperatives, poverty alleviation schemes; Green revolution and social change; Changing modes of production in Indian agriculture; Problems of rural labour, bondage, migration.

Core demand of the question

- Examine the factors responsible for the rural unrest in contemporary India
- Cover agrarian class, caste, state policy, and protest

Revision summary

Agrarian class splits after the **Green Revolution** feed farmer and labour unrest.

Dominant-caste honour and Dalit assertion turn economic injury into caste conflict.

State procurement, farm-law politics and displacement are immediate triggers.

Narmada-type projects link unrest to development.

COVID **reverse migration** intensified village livelihood pressure.

Introduction

Rural unrest in contemporary India is not a single peasant war. It is a cluster of protests over surplus, status, and the state's hand in farming, land, and dignity.

Body

Agrarian class factors

- **Green Revolution** regions produced a commercially organised farmer class that now faces price risk, debt, and corporate procurement politics.
- Landless labour, tenancy, and reverse tenancy keep a mazdoor layer whose unrest is wages and dignity, not only MSP.
- **A. R. Desai's incomplete agrarian transformation still travels:** rich peasants and labourers do not share one rural interest.

Caste and honour

- Dominant castes defend land and honour; Dalit assertion and atrocity flashpoints turn class into caste unrest, as **Ambedkar** would expect in the village den.
- Srinivas's dominant caste is often the union leadership in farmer protests, which can hide labour's voice.

State, market, and ecology

- Withdrawal or redesign of subsidies, farm laws, and procurement shifts trigger highway blockades, as in the 2020-21 farmer movement.
- Mining, highways, and special zones displace Adivasi and peasant land, linking rural unrest to development-induced loss, with **Narmada** as the long memory.
- Water stress, crop failure, and climate shocks add ecological unrest to price unrest.

Political organisation

- Caste associations, kisan unions, and party brokers convert local injury into a public.
- Identity politics, including Jat, Maratha, and Patidar reservation agitations, is rural unrest in a differentiated, not purely class, idiom.
- COVID **reverse migration** dumped surplus labour back on the village and raised the temperature of rural livelihood conflict.

What it is not

- It is not Metcalfe's little republic waking up. It is a countryside already inside markets and the state.

Flow diagram

Green Revolution debt price -> Rural unrest
Dominant caste honour -> Rural unrest
State farm policy displacement -> Rural unrest
Reverse migration labour -> Rural unrest

Conclusion

Rural unrest today is produced by agrarian class splits, dominant-caste defence of status, state-market restructuring of farming, and displacement. Contemporary India does not have one rural, so it does not have one unrest.

Facts & figures

Green Revolution

Raised yields and a rich-peasant class that later protested prices and debt.

Farmer movement 2020-21

Highway sit-ins against farm-law restructuring of procurement and markets.

Narmada

Dam displacement as a template of rural-Adivasi unrest against development.

Reverse migration

COVID return of workers that overloaded village labour and kinship support.