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Q7(a)

Analyse the trilogy between environmental movement, development, and tribal identity

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 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

- Treat the trilogy as a three-way relation, not three separate essays
- Show how 'development' projects hit tribal land and identity
- Show how environmental movements become identity movements and vice versa
- Use Chipko, Narmada, Niyamgiri, FRA, mining belts

Revision summary

The trilogy means development, environment and tribal identity define one another on the ground.

Dams, mines and parks have displaced Adivasis in the name of the nation.

Chipko, Narmada and Niyamgiri joined livelihood, ecology and peoplehood.

FRA and PESA are legal attempts to institutionalise that join.

Urban green talk that drops tribe and class misunderstands Indian environmentalism.

Introduction

Environmental movement, development, and tribal identity form a **trilogy** because each term defines the other two in central India and the Himalaya. 'Development' as dam, mine, plantation or park arrives on **Adivasi land**. The protest is called environmental in the city and is lived as **identity, livelihood and sacred geography** in the village. **Virginus Xaxa** and Guha-Gadgil help us keep all three in one analysis.

Body**Development as dispossession**

Post-Independence planning treated forests and rivers as national stock. Dams on the Narmada, mines in Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, and protected areas produced **development-induced displacement**. Tribal identity is not a costume. It is a relation to land, myth, clan and language. When the hill is mined, identity is attacked, not only income. The **Fifth Schedule**, PESA and FRA exist because this was already known and still happens.

Environmentalism and identity

Chipko is often remembered as tree-hugging. In the hills it was also peasant and women's control of forests against commercial felling-identity as pahari livelihood. Narmada combined environmental critique of large dams with adivasi and peasant displacement. **Niyamgiri** fused

Dongria Kondh sacred identity, biodiversity, and a no to bauxite. Palthagadi and related assertions mix constitutional Schedule identity with resistance to land laws.

Urban climate discourse can **strip** these movements of tribe and class and keep only carbon. That is a sociological error. Conversely, identity politics without ecology can bargain for a share of mining royalties and still lose the forest. The trilogy is the claim that **you cannot analyse one vertex alone**.

How the three now interlock

The state offers development as jobs and roads; companies offer CSR; security forces treat some belts as insurgency. Environmental law (EIA, Forest Conservation) is the paperwork of the same conflict. Tribal identity becomes a legal resource (ST, FRA claims) and a stigma (primitive, anti-national). Movements succeed when they join **Gram Sabha legality, ecological knowledge, and a public story** the rest of India can hear.

Mining belts also show the trilogy inside the movement. Some households want jobs in the plant; some want the sacred grove left alone; women often carry both the water shortage and the protest. The state then offers cash and a public hearing. **Development** becomes a language of compensation; **environment** becomes a file in the ministry; **identity** becomes an ST certificate. The trilogy is the refusal to let those three files stay separate.

- **The trilogy also includes internal difference:** tribal elites, Christian and sarna splits, and women who carry water and oppose liquor and mines in different ways. A trilogy is not a harmony.

Flow diagram

Development projects -> Tribal land and forest
 Tribal identity -> Tribal land and forest
 Environmental movement -> Tribal land and forest
 Tribal land and forest -> Trilogy of conflict and claim

Conclusion

Environmental movements, development projects and tribal identity are one structure of conflict over land and meaning. Development that ignores identity is dispossession; environmentalism that ignores tribe is aesthetic; identity that ignores ecology can sell the hill. FRA and Gram Sabha consent are the institutional names of the trilogy.

Facts & figures

Narmada Bachao

Movement against large dams combining displacement, environment and alternative development.

Niyamgiri Gram Sabhas

Voted against mining; identity, ecology and consent in one event.

FRA 2006

Recognises forest dwellers' rights; a hinge between environmental law and tribal identity.

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