

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 15 marks

Write an essay on 'New Social Movements' in developing countries.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 not every demand is material → Marxist reductionism fails → protest shifts to identity, rights, environment

R2 **Habermas**: revolt against the over-sized, over-rational state intruding on private life → but in the developing world the shift is only partial

Body flow

organisation = decentralisation + participative, middle class & students (**Mukherjee and Ramaswamy**) → range: youth / feminist / ecological / civil-rights → distinctive Southern face is ecological → **Guha's** empty-stomach South vs full-stomach North + **Shiva's** resistance to global exploitation → grounding: Tiger Leaping Gorge China (2007), Narmada Bachao, Kudankulam → but no independent evolution → still basic needs, methods identical to old (strikes, dharnas), scope tied to direct concerns

Counter-view

Asef Bayat: don't romanticise → without real political-economic change, larger goals stay out of reach

Conclusion routes

R1 a hybrid — new aspirations resting on an old material base

R2 still incipient — livelihood dominates, democracy stays procedural (only the vote)

New social movements opened space for the idea that not every human demand is material. Marxist reductionism, tying all collective action to class and economy, could not grasp these newer forms of protest, which turned to identity, rights and the environment.

Jurgen Habermas calls them as a resistance to the excessive size and rationality of the state and its intrusion into the private lives of individuals. In developing countries, however, this shift stays partial, blending the new with the old,

Their organisation rests on decentralisation and participative decision-making, drawing on the emerging middle class & students as Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy observe.

Ramachandra Guha contrasts the "empty stomach" environmentalism of the global South with the 'full stomach' environmentalism of the North.

While Vandana Shiva sees such movements resisting global exploitation and promoting sustainable development.

The green movement in China against the Tiger Leaping Gorge dam (2007), which threatened to displace 100,000 people, the Narmada Bachao Andolan and the Kudankulam protest show this character.

But in developing societies these movements have no independent evolution. They centre on basic needs and their methods strikes, dharnas and protests. They stay close to older movements, with scope limited to issues that directly affect participants.

Asef Bayat argues that without substantial political and economic change, their larger goals may remain out of reach. They are still at an incipient stage, where livelihood dominates and democracy often means only the act of voting.