



Guru's Ashram IAS

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UPSC MAINS 2024

Essay Paper Discussion

(Section – A)

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1. जंगल सभ्यताओं से पहले आते हैं और रेगिस्तान उनके बाद आते हैं।
 1. Forests precede civilizations and deserts follow them.



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Essay Paper 2024 Analysis

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Essay Analysis

Q1) forests precede civilization & deserts follow them.

Introduction

This statement encapsulate the issues with western modernity based civilizational growth. The picturization of which can be seen by the latest bollywood movie "The Kalki". This statement also encapsulate about what Mahatma Gandhi has talked about "The earth has enough resources for everyone's need, not for everyone's greed".

The body

The rise of civilization can be traced to the birth of "renaissance" and "the age of discovery" in the west. The renaissance primarily focuses on "the rebirth" of critical reasoning and the age of discovery has taken the society forward in terms of "materialistic growth."

(2)

Since the dawn of civilization (based on materialistic growth), there has been unprecedented development (like roads, highways, buildings and so on). These all development has been progressed at the cost of environment, particularly forests.

For instance, according to a report published by the ScienceDirect website, the forest cover has been reduced by an amount of 420 million hectares since 1990, for human consumption. Also from 2015 to 2020 the annual destruction of forest was at around 10 million hectares.

This diversion of forest is primarily because of the materialistic capitalist growth that has been achieved in western idea based modern civilization.

These areas are now converting in deserts - both occupied urban deserts & non occupied deserts. This is exactly what

has been worrying the humankind and that is why the UN spearheaded special Conference on desertification. This led to the evolution of UN Convention of desertification (UNCCD) at the Earth Summit in Rio, Brazil.

However inspite of this Convention and other supporting Convention like UNFCCC (United Nation frame work on climate change) and Convention on Biological diversity (UNCBD); there is continuous erosion of forest landscape.

This therefore bring this essay to the pertinent question "Why humanity is adopting such civilization?". The answer could be understood from the works of Italian Scholar "Gramsci". He has coined the

Concept of "Hegemony". The hegemony means "manufactured consent" of ideas or ideology.

The Capitalist Controlled state and media creates a perception that materialistic

growth is development and a gateway to future.

Everyone at different level of governance is so influenced by this Capitalist materialist sense of development, they think that highways, expressways & building are true development.

Similarly, Naomi Klein in her book on "Disaster Capitalism" has argued that Capitalism in today's sense has acquired the shape of disasters. They buckle regulations for environment including forest regulations for their narrow minded benefits. This ultimately leads to disasters.

For instance the Uttarakhand flood was the result of same Disaster Capitalism or according to environmental activist the "Char Dham" yojana had the same nature.

Also moving towards social dimension, the "Individual" based modern civilization has taken individual towards the "era of depression". For example, a study published by "National Institute of Health" of US govt. has found that western societies have 10-12 time more instances of depression & loneliness than Africa (Eastern civilization).

In simple terms a forest like colourful life of people having multiple dimensions is reduced to single individual like a desert. This is exactly what Herbert Marcuse has referred in his concept of "1D man" (one dimensional man).

Similarly, Gandhi has criticized western civilization and called western modernity as Satanic. He argued that western don't need to teach Indian about civilization; Their civilization is

harmful for society.

However, criticizing Civilization for desertification is not completely right; there is a strong role of "materialistic development" and "human greed" leading to desertification of life and earth.

Thus, from above analysis, it can be seen that the statement appears to be right at least in the context of destruction of physical and mental wealth.

There is a need to balance the development of civilization with the safeguard of environment & mental wellbeing of society. In simple term, Sustainable Development - in words of Brundtland Commission - development of present that does not compromise with the ability of future generation to meet their need.