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MAGAZINE NOTES

Ecological Poverty vs Economic Poverty in Tribal States

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ENVIRONMENT

SOCIAL ISSUES

POLITY

ECONOMY

GS1

GS2

GS3

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Ecological Poverty vs Economic Poverty in Tribal States

🌱 Down to Earth · Chapter 10 · 1 min read ·

🔗 WHY IN NEWS

Newly formed states with large forest covers and tribal populations (Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand) consistently struggle with extreme poverty despite rich natural resources — a paradox driven by policy misunderstanding.

The Core Problem

- Policymakers focus on GDP-driven “**economic poverty**” (favouring mining, timber contractors, highways)
- Ignore “**ecological poverty**” — destruction of the natural resource base (forests, water, herbs) upon which rural poor depend for survival
- Adivasis being transformed into the “**new Dalits**” — displaced from lands, forced into undignified urban labour

Impact

- Massive land alienation and loss of adivasi culture
- Rise of **Naxalite movements** fuelled by resentment against autocratic forest management and corporate exploitation
- Saranda Forest (West Singhbhum, Jharkhand) — **Asia’s largest sal forest** — threatened by iron ore mining (Chiria village) and timber extraction

Case Study: Ho Adivasi People

- Austroasiatic Munda ethnic group in **Kolhan State, Jharkhand**
- Known for unique traditional governance systems and deep connection with Saranda forest

Way Forward

- State CMs must act as “**Chief Environmental Officers**”
- Shift to decentralised natural resource governance — hand forest regeneration ownership to local communities
- Leverage biodiversity for sustainable economic gains (Kerala model for herbal/Ayurvedic industries)

UPSC Angle

- **GS1:** Tribal society, social structure, poverty
- **GS2:** Governance, Centre-State relations, Fifth Schedule
- **GS3:** Environment, forest policy, Naxalism-development nexus



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