

Quiz 2 Examination

HSS368: Introduction to Sociology

Max Marks: 30

28 October 2025

Instructions:

Answer the following questions based on the assigned reading (*Red in Teeth and Claw: Searching for Class in Struggles over Nature* by Amita Baviskar) and the 2 assigned videos *Gaon Chodab Nahi* and *Poromboke Paadal*) in 300-400 words each.

1. Based on the article and the video *Gaon Chodab Nahi*, how would you characterise the environmentalism you see in the video (5 marks)? Why do you think *Gaon Chodab Nahi* (which is based on lyrics penned by an *Adivasi*) chooses to portray the vision of environmentalism that it does (10 marks)?

The environmentalism expressed in *Gaon Chodab Nahi* is **an environmentalism of belonging and resistance**, rooted in an *Adivasi* moral universe that fuses nature, livelihood, and culture into an indivisible whole. The film portrays a world where the forest, soil, rivers, and mountains are not resources to be managed but kin and deities to be honoured. The protagonists' defiance—"Gaon chodab nahi, jangal chodab nahi, mai-maati chodab nahi"—articulates an ecological ethic that is simultaneously spiritual and political: refusing displacement becomes both an act of survival and of cultural affirmation.

This vision of environmentalism stands in stark contrast to the technocratic "Vikas ke Bhagwan" (God of Development) who brings dams, mines, and industries. The film constructs a clear moral geography of "us" versus "them": the *Adivasis*, living in communion with nature, versus the urban-industrial world of consumerism, greed, and alienation. Environmentalism here is therefore **not a demand for inclusion in development**, but a **rejection of development's logic**—a defence of another way of being in the world.

Why This Vision?

Drawing on Amita Baviskar's analysis, we can see that *Gaon Chodab Nahi* embodies a **strategic and cultural politics of representation**.

1. **Counter-narrative to Developmentalism**

The film's sharp opposition between "Mother Earth" and the "God of Development" dramatizes the violence of displacement that Baviskar describes in the Narmada and Chipko

struggles. Like those movements, the film's environmentalism **emerges from dispossession**, not from leisure or consumer guilt. It is a "red-green" environmentalism where the ecological and the material are inseparable.

2. **Performing Indigeneity**

Baviskar warns that metropolitan environmentalism often exoticizes the tribal. *Gaon Chodab Nahi* is an example of what this does. Dancing, peacock feathers, forest worship— is showcased as **a performance of resistance**. The aesthetic of the "primitive" becomes a weapon: an assertion that what the state calls "backward" is in fact ethically and ecologically superior.

3. **Quest for Dignity, Not Integration**

Finally, the film's refusal to seek a "share of the development pie" aligns with Baviskar's observation that many subaltern movements are about **autonomy and dignity rather than redistribution**. The Adivasi world it depicts is not an anachronism, but an alternative model of development grounded in reciprocity with the environment.

2. How are the environmentalist narratives in *Gaon Chodab Nahi* and *Poromboke Paadal* different (10 marks)? Why do you think they are different (5 marks)?

Gaon Chodab Nahi (K.P. Sasi, 2009) and *Poromboke Paadal* (Vettiver Collective, 2017) are both environmental campaigns, but they articulate **very different kinds of environmentalism**, shaped by who speaks, who listens, and how nature is imagined.

In *Gaon Chodab Nahi*, environmentalism emerges as **a politics of belonging and resistance**. Centred on Adivasi communities, the film presents forests, rivers, and land as sacred kin—"mai-maati" (mother earth)—that cannot be abandoned. Its sharp "us vs them" division opposes the Adivasi world of harmony and dignity to the "God of Development" who brings dams, mines, and displacement. Nature here is home; defending it is defending life itself. This is a **"red-green" environmentalism**—a blend of class struggle and ecological reverence—spoken from the standpoint of the dispossessed. Yet, as Amita Baviskar notes, such portrayals often reproduce the image of the Adivasi as the "noble protector of nature," simplifying lived realities in order to appeal to urban, middle-class audiences.

Poromboke Paadal, by contrast, **turns the camera inward**. Sung by Carnatic vocalist T.M. Krishna, it addresses the urban middle class directly, urging self-reflection about their complicity in environmental degradation. Set against the polluted Ennore Creek, it reclaims *poromboke*—a Tamil word for common, shared lands—from its modern meaning of "worthless." Its message—"You and I must become Poromboke"—invokes collective civic responsibility rather than indigenous purity. There is no distant "other" here; the polluter and the saviour are the same "we."

The difference, therefore, lies in **positionality and audience**. *Gaon Chodab Nahi* speaks *about* the subaltern to the metropolitan viewer; *Poromboke* speaks *to* that viewer as participant. The first critiques development from its margins; the second critiques development from its heart. In Baviskar's terms, *Gaon Chodab Nahi* enacts the "environmentalism of the poor" (as represented for the rich), while *Poromboke* attempts an "environmentalism of responsibility."

Both expose the violence of industrial modernity, but their moral geographies diverge: the first defends a vanishing world; the second seeks to transform a collapsing one.