



Mains Practice Question

Q. "It was a firm belief of Gandhiji that in the peaceful struggle of Swaraj, the women of India can outdistance men by a mile." Comment. (250 words)

21 Oct, 2019 GS Paper 1 History

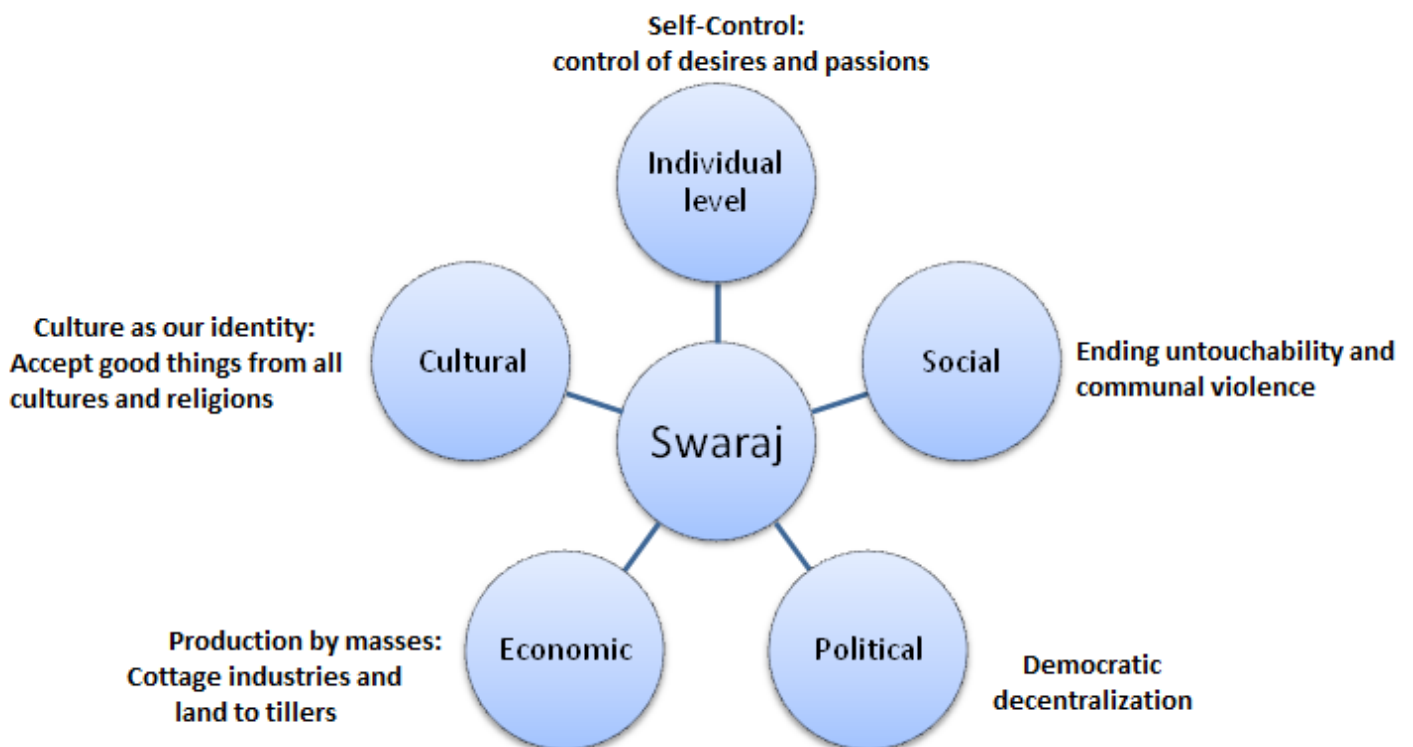
Approach:

- Introduce by explaining the Gandhian concept of Swaraj.
- Briefly mention Gandhiji's views on empowerment of women.
- Explain the role of women in the freedom struggle with examples.

Introduction

- For Gandhiji, Swaraj was not just liberation from foreign rule. It is a multi-dimensional concept.

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- According to Gandhiji, women are the torchbearers in achieving Swaraj. Gandhian movements played a crucial role in the mobilization of women in the social, economic and political sphere despite India being a highly patriarchal society.

Body

Gandhiji's view on women's empowerment:

- According to Gandhiji, traits like perseverance and peaceful resistance of authority should be the ideals of women in India. They are the symbol of moral power.
- Gandhian movements helped women shed their deep-rooted sense of inferiority and rise to dignity and self-esteem.
- Gandhiji was against evil socio-religious practices like child marriage, purdah system, dowry system, etc.

Influence of Gandhian ideas on women:

- Women's active participation in mass movements began with the Swadeshi Movement in 1905 and only grew in later movements. Women played an active role in the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- Women had a special role in Gandhi's constructive program like the promotion of Khadi, ending untouchability.

Some women leaders during the Gandhian struggle are as follows:

- **Anusuya Ben** — Accompanied Gandhi in his tours and actively participated in 1918 Ahmedabad Textile mill strikes.
- **Sarojini Naidu** — Led the raid on Dharasana salt works during the Civil Disobedience Movement following Gandhi's arrest.
- Some other women leaders like Lakshmi Menon, Sushila Nayyar, and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur rose to prominence adhering to Gandhian ideas.

Conclusion

- In the words of Gandhi, "Women's entry into national politics through non-violent methods brought miraculous results. On the one hand, women became aware of their inner strength, and on the other, the process brought human and moral elements into politics."
- Gandhian movement and the struggle for swaraj witnessed huge participation by women. Gandhian tools for struggle like fasting and praying were majorly popularised by women.