



Mains Practice Question

Q. The strengthened grassroots democracy would pave the way for enhanced environmental conservation. Comment. (250 words)

30 Oct, 2019 GS Paper 3 Economy

Approach:

- Define grassroots democracy and how it is linked with environmental conservation.
- Explain the importance of grassroots governance for sustainable development.

Introduction

Grassroots governance means involvement of local people in governance. Involvement of local people, community, PRIs, SHGs etc is important for environment conservation and sustainable development. Even though there are powers and responsibilities conferred on citizens under provisions such as the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution and the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, they are seldom used in reality as seen in the Kerala floods in 2018 and 2019.

Body

Importance of grass root governance for conservation efforts and sustainable development:

- Grassroots involvement is important for social accountability. It helps in civic engagement to promote conservation and sustainable development. Pressure by citizens can help to stimulate action. This is helpful in disaster management and handling crisis situations like Kerala floods.
- Deeper outreach of grassroots organizations and SHGs helps information dissemination easier. Moreover, most of them are women centric which provides opportunity to bring behavioural change since women have greater propensity to adapt towards environmental conservation.
- The intermediaries provide structure and resources, such as training, research, or assistance with advocacy, to help establish and maintain various efforts.
- Since local people are directly dependent on ecological resources such as forest produce, pisciculture in local ponds, lakes, etc, they are more sensitive towards ecological conservation and should be given more authority of local development.
 - For ex: Kerala's People's Planning campaign attempted to involve every panchayat in the preparation of a Panchayat Development Report.
 - Plachimada Panchayat of Kerala invoked its constitutional rights and refused permission to the Coca-Cola company due to risks of depletion of local resources.
- Local communities are emotionally attached to the environment around them and should be mobilised and supported to play an active role in sustainable development and environment conservation. Chipko movement reflects the power and emotions of local communities.
- Grass roots governance would allow proper distribution of funds and resources and would help in better implementation of laws and rules.
- It would help in decreasing corruption and would ensure bottom up approach.

Conclusion

- Thus grass root governance can ensure effective strategies for conservation and development efforts. 'Citizen-centric governance' (2nd ARC) is important for inclusive development and people's participation would ensure democratic way of tackling problems.
- 'Develop sustainably, conserve thoughtfully' should be the guiding principle towards effective environmental conservation as mentioned in the Gadgil Committee report.

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