



Mains Practice Question

Q. Gandhi believed that even for attaining noble objectives, men have to only adopt good means. Examine. (150 words)

09 Feb, 2019 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Introduce by giving emphasis on how Gandhiji rejected dichotomy between Means and Ends.
- Explain by giving examples from his life how he kept Means before the ends.

Introduction

- Most political and social thinkers have been concerned with the desirable goals of political system and competing ends that men actually desire, and then pragmatically considered the means that are available to rulers and citizens.
- It has been observed that in the western tradition there is a tendency of claiming that the end entirely justifies the means - moral considerations cannot apply to the means except in relation to ends.
- Gandhi, however, rejects the dichotomy between means and ends; states that it is means, rather than ends, that provide the standard of morality

Body

Gandhi made a distinction between the objective of life and the objectives of living. With some justification we might call simplicity of life and non-violence to be the objectives of living and the realization of self is the objective of life. When we compare the objectives of living and the objective of life, the former appear as means to the attainment of the latter.

According to Gandhiji:-

- Although we can choose our ends, we do not have much control over it - we cannot know in advance whether these ends will be achieved. The only thing that is completely within our control is therefore the means with which we approach our various ends.
- It is not the end that we can work with but only means. Different means will lead to different ends. This is not to say that both violence and non-violence cannot both lead to the independence of a country, but that the country thus created will be one based on violence if the means are violent and pacific if the means are non-violent.
- In his moral and political thought, Gandhi gave Satya and Ahimsa the highest importance and said that ahimsa is the means to reach satya, which is the end. The pursuit of satya leads to the recognition of the need for ahimsa to a point where we hold to ahimsa as the immediate, tangible part of the ultimate Truth.
- Man is different from and superior to animals. Animals are concerned with the satisfaction of their appetites, while man aims at realization of truth. For Gandhi, truth is God. The purpose of man's life is to conquer evil and move towards good. He advocates Ahimsa not only towards man but also towards animals and the environment. Ahimsa of both thought and action.

- His means to achieve end (freedom) includes 'Satyagraha' which is not a weapon of weak. A person who has conquered fear and is ready to sacrifice can practice it.

Conclusion

- Gandhiji suggested non violent means to achieve the idea of 'Ramrajya' and to end the exploitative regime of the British. An ethical state which is non-exploitative or moral cannot be established through violent and non-ethical means.
- In his book 'Hind Swarajya' he says it is impossible to gain good ends with bad means. "You cannot expect a rose by sowing the seeds of Babool".
- "They say 'means are after all means.' I would say, says Gandhi, 'means are after all everything. "As the means so the end."

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