



Mains Practice Question

Q.Rural tourism can help in realizing the idea of Gram Swaraj as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi. Comment (150 Words)

13 Apr, 2019 GS Paper 3 Economy

Approach

- Elaborate on Gandhian Gram swaraj
- Discuss the challenges faced in its attainment and how and why rural tourism can change it.
- Discuss scope and constraints of rural tourism
- Suggest ways to improve it.

Introduction:

Gandhi's idea of Gram Swaraj was of a complete republic, independent of its neighbour for its own vital wants and yet interdependent for many in which dependence is necessity. The village as envisaged by Gandhi is human-centred non-exploiting decentralized, with simple village economy providing for full employment to each one of its residents on the basis of voluntary co-operation and working for achieving self-sufficiency in its basic requirements.

Body

- Though India tried to take steps in this direction through PRIs, DPSP, SHG and cooperative society the attainability of Gram Swaraj has remained ever-elusive.
- The problem was further compounded by the fragmentary village society, migration and a grant dependent Panchayati Raj system.
- But, with the scope of community tourism or impact tourism this can change. There are many instances in which many villages across India got much professed Gandhian autarky, for example Sunda village in Ladakh (Homestay for tourist), or village cluster on Gujarat which showcase its 16 types of embroidery work.
- Like in the above scenario, India's rural heritage is prolific and exotic enough to elicit world interest including domestic Indians. The diverse rural terrain of India allows its tourism to be diverse and is based on preservation of culture, heritage and tradition and is located in natural settings.
- With the shift of tourism ethics from 'leisure' to 'experience', the scope of rural tourism got immense potential to attain Village Swaraj.

How tourism can help in attaining self-sufficiency

- As per the NITI Aayog an investment of Rs. 10 lakh creates 78 jobs in the tourism sector as compared to 18 jobs in manufacturing and 45 in agriculture sector. This aptly positions tourism in India as a 'livelihood generator' at village level. For example, Development of Sunda village generated an income of 5000\$ from 200 tourists.
- Greater worldwide prosperity is expected to create demand for newer tourist destinations across the world. Recently, Kenya and Tanzania became a popular tourist destination due to Maasai opening to the world.
- Rural tourism is inclusive in nature due to its cooperative character. Cooperative model brings all

aspects of a tourism product under the ambit of a cooperative structure, which not only controls the structure and volume of tourist activity, but also ensures that the entire destination is promoted rather than remain as fragmented independent entities.

Constraints

- Indigenous tourism strategies and skilling are required as the local people are best placed to provide the goods and services that tourists require. While appropriate policy frameworks exist at both national and state levels, the lack of a cohesive policy for an implementation interface tends to hamper greater community participation, leading to Indian tourist destinations being largely characterized by monuments and landscapes, but not communities and ecosystems.

Way forward

- Through Rural Tourism Schemes, Ministry of Tourism has started developing and financing villages on the basis of their USPs like culture and bamboo craft, eco-tourism, spiritual life, Himachal heritage, gurukul structure, folk dance, historical and tribal culture, mirror work, embroidery, and other essential talents. This scheme needs to be properly implemented.
- Moreover, investment in better physical and digital infrastructure is needed to connect rural areas and make sure they can equally benefit from and contribute to the country's development. This is even more important given that India's workforce is the largest and youngest.

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