



Mains Practice Question

Q. The idea of Gram Swaraj has not materialized in its essence. Critically Examine (250 words)

04 Mar, 2019 GS Paper 2 Polity & Governance

Approach

- Give a brief about Gram Swaraj.
- Critically examine how it has not materialized in its essence

Introduction

- The Idea of Gram Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth.
- It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding ganja, tobacco, opium and the like.
- The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own water works ensuring clean water supply.

Body

Gram Swaraj has not materialized in its essence—

- **Adoption of western model of industrialization:** Gandhiji was conscious of the fact that far industrialization would destroy the Indian society by eliminating our decentralized rural industries. Gandhiji found the only way of bringing hope of good living to the rural people is by making the village the central place in the economic programme. But India adopted top down planning through Planning Commission.
- **Gram Swaraj not on priority after independence:** Gandhi wanted to revitalize village panchayata that would ensure direct democracy at the grassroots level. But in the Constitution of independent India revitalisation of village panchayat is primarily a matter of State Policy and it was mentioned only in the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 40).
- **Lack of power with local institution:** The basic principle of village Swaraj as outlined by Gandhiji are trusteeship, swadeshi, full employment, bread labour, selfsufficiency, decentralisation, equality, Nai Talim etc. But true decentralization and inclusive development is still absent.
- **Khadi:** Khadi idea meant decentralization of production and distribution of the necessities of life. Khadi has to play an important role in the village economy of India. However this sector lags behind powerloom sector.

However Gram Swaraj has materialized in its essence in many ways—

- **Constitutional status to Panchayat:** The 73rd Amendment Act 1992, which came into effect on April 24, 1993, is a watershed in the decentralisation process. The most significant aspect of this amendment is that it bestowed constitutional sanction to institution of Gram Sabha. This body can be effectively used as a stepping stone for attainment of gram swaraj or local self governance

visualized by Gandhi.

- **Renewed focus on Khadi:** Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) has been announced on 15th August, 2008. It is launched for creation of employment in both rural and urban area of the country. Also SFURTI is a Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries has been launched in the year 2005 with the view to promote Cluster development.
- **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA):** It is for developing and strengthening the capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for rural local governance to become more responsive towards local development needs, preparing the participatory plans that leverage technology, efficient and optimum utilization of available resources for realizing sustainable solutions to local problems

Conclusion

- Gandhiji believed that India will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in palaces. He held this conviction by saying that "If village perishes, India will perish too".
- The task before us is to strengthen and revitalize local institutions and gradually move forward towards the Gandhi's concept of Gram Swaraj.

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