



Mains Practice Question

Q. Mahatma Gandhi's concept of trusteeship was an instrument of human dignity. Is it relevant in contemporary society? (250 words)

30 Apr, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Briefly describe Gandhi's idea of trusteeship.
- Discuss the aspects of material prosperity and human dignity of Gandhi.
- Discuss the relevance of the idea of trusteeship in contemporary society.
- Mention the initiatives adopted in India based on trusteeship.
- Conclude appropriately.

Introduction

- Gandhi's idea of trusteeship arose from his faith in the **law of non-possession**. It was founded on his religious belief that everything belonged to God and was from God.
 - Therefore the resources of the world were for His people, as a whole, not for any particular individual.
 - When an individual had more than his respective portion, he **became a trustee** of that portion for people.

Body

Trusteeship and Gandhian Economics

- **Material prosperity and human dignity:** Gandhi aims at a distribution of material prosperity keeping only human dignity in view. Thus it is dominated more by moral values than by economic ideas.
 - Trusteeship is the only ground on which he can work out an **ideal combination of economics and morals**.
- **Resolving all social and economic conflicts:** This doctrine was an answer to the economic inequalities of ownership and income.
 - It is a **nonviolent way** of resolving all social and economic conflicts which grew out of inequalities and privileges of the present social order.

Relevance of Idea of Trusteeship

- **The prevailing socio-economic condition across the world makes the idea of trusteeship even more relevant today.**
 - **Prevailing inequality:** Oxfam report reveals "India's top 10% population holds 73% of the wealth".

- **Degrading environment:** the emission of greenhouse gases is affecting the global climate, and causing various catastrophic disasters and diseases.
- **Overexploitation of natural resources:** Minerals, oil, gas and coal are non-renewable resources. Their use as materials and energy sources leads to depletion of the Earth's reserves.
- **Trusteeship provides solutions for various challenges of the 21st century.**
 - **Sustainable consumption:** consume what is enough for the need without harming others.
 - **Exploitation of natural resources:** taking care of the resources that nature has provided.
 - **Dignity of labour:** ensuring decent minimum living wage and humane working conditions.
 - **Equitable distribution of wealth:** moral responsibility of the rich to take care of social welfare of underprivileged.

Initiatives in India

- Corporates today affect the lives of the people both positively and negatively. While they provide employment and economic growth, other externalities like pollution and unsustainable exploitation of resources also occur.
 - The huge leverage of capital and technology that businessmen and industrialists have at their disposal, it can be used for smart solutions in various sectors and even improving health, education and sanitation.
- **Corporate social responsibility (CSR):** It brings in the participation of the upper strata in building a just society and decreasing inequalities.
 - The present CSR is based on the principle that - corporate sectors which earn profit through the sale of its goods & services in the society also have some responsibility towards it.
 - India is the first country in the world to make CSR mandatory through Company Act, 2013. Businesses can invest their profits in areas such as education, poverty, gender equality, hunger.
- **CAMPA fund contribution:** In 2002, the Supreme Court (SC) ordered that a **Compensatory Afforestation Fund** had to be created in which all the contributions towards compensatory afforestation and net present value of land had to be deposited.
- **District Mineral Foundation (DMF):** It is a trust set up as a non-profit body, in those districts affected by the mining works, to work for the interest and benefit of persons and areas affected by mining related operations.
 - It is funded through the contributions from miners. Its emphasis is on improving the Human Development Indicators such as health centres, schools etc.

Conclusion

- The distribution of benefits arising from genetic resources, polluters pay responsibility etc arises out of the principle of trusteeship, which makes them useful in recent times.
- The core of Gandhian idea of trusteeship is the development, upliftment, and enrichment of human life rather than a higher standard of living with scant respect for human and social values.