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Q7(b)

The blueprint of Gram Swaraj is the key to understanding the Gandhian perspective on planning. Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · PSIR GS 1 · 15 marks · Political Theory

Political Theory: meaning and approaches.

Core demand of the question

- State **Gandhi's** Gram Swaraj as a political and economic blueprint (15 marks)
- **Show what planning meant for him:** village, swadeshi, trusteeship, and limits on the modern state
- Discuss against Nehruvian planning
- Keep the answer on the Gandhian perspective on planning

Revision summary

Gram Swaraj is village self-rule with local production, bread labour, and a panchayat public, not a miniature **Planning Commission**.

Gandhian planning ranks needs, crafts, and moral self-restraint above a central industrial big push.

Trusteeship and a minimally violent state complete the blueprint.

Nehru's Planning Commission chose national heavy industry and central allocation, which **Gandhi** feared as a machine against individuality.

The **73rd Amendment's** local government and later environmental localism show the blueprint's partial afterlife as a criterion, not as the official plan.

Introduction

- **Gram Swaraj is Gandhi's name for village self-rule:** a republic of largely self-sufficient communities, morally self-disciplined, and only lightly tied to a distant centre. The statement that this blueprint is the key to his perspective on planning is right. **Gandhi** did not reject all foresight about production. He rejected a **Planning Commission** that treats the village as a site of extraction for national industry.

Body

The blueprint

In Hind Swaraj and later constructive-programme writings, the village is the unit of swaraj. Bread labour, spinning, local crafts, and a panchayat that knows its people are the plan. Need, not multiplying wants, is the standard. **Trusteeship** asks the rich to hold surplus as a trust. The state that remains should be close to the people and low in violence. This is planning as moral economy: what to produce, for whom, and at what human cost.

Gram Swaraj is therefore a map of investment priorities. Irrigation that the village can manage, sanitation, basic education, and khadi come before a steel mill that uproots. The

73rd Amendment and the Gram Sabha later gave a constitutional shadow of this local public, without accepting **Gandhi's** full civilisational critique.

Planning in a different key from **Nehru**

Nehru's Planning Commission planned from the Centre for heavy industry, dams, and a scientific state. **Gandhi** feared that this machine would destroy individuality and the village republic. The two perspectives clash on unit, on technology, and on the meaning of development. **Gandhi's** plan is federated villages; **Nehru's** is a national mixed economy. After 1947, official planning followed **Nehru** more than **Gandhi**. Khadi boards and community development were partial concessions.

A discussion should not pretend that Gram Swaraj solved capital goods or defence. It should say that Gandhian planning is the criterion by which those national plans are judged: do they enlarge self-rule in the locality, or only output statistics? Environmental movements such as **Chipko** later used a related local claim against a development state that planned forests from elsewhere. That is the continuing key: planning, for **Gandhi**, is answerable to the village as a moral and political community.

Flow diagram

Gram Swaraj -> Village republic
Gram Swaraj -> Need-based production
Gram Swaraj -> Trusteeship
Nehru plans -> Centre industry dams
Gram Swaraj -> Criterion for any national plan

Conclusion

- **Gram Swaraj is **Gandhi's** plan:** local production, limited wants, panchayat self-rule, and a state that does not replace the moral person. It is the key to his perspective because it fixes the unit and the end of planning. Nehruvian plans took another unit. Indian development policy still lives in the argument between those two blueprints.

Facts & figures

Hind Swaraj, 1909

Gandhi's critique of modern civilisation and centralised machinery, the starting point of Gram Swaraj as an alternative order.

Constructive programme

Spinning, sanitation, communal unity, and village industries were **Gandhi's** practical planning instruments.

73rd Amendment

Constitutional panchayats and Gram Sabhas institutionalise a local planning public without adopting **Gandhi's** full rejection of the modern state.

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