

Paper 2**Rural Development:**

Institutions and agencies since independence; Rural development programmes: foci and strategies;

Decentralization and Panchayati Raj; 73rd Constitutional amendment.

Urban Local Government:

Municipal governance: main features, structures, finance and problem areas; 74th Constitutional Amendment;

Global local debate; new localism;

Development dynamics,

Politics and administration with special reference to city management.

2. Local self governments do not have a dearth of funds, but they have the dearth of functions and functionaries. Explain.**15 marks (250 words)****Approach**

The question just asks to explain, how the devolution of funds is sufficient but not that of functions and functionaries. Good clarity of funds, functions and functionaries is a must to answer this question.

From Paper1

Thinkers, quotes and keywords can be brought in wherever necessary. Anyway, these are the best possible things that can be included here, in this question.

Introduction

The Devolution Index, released by Ministry of Panchayati Raj, shows that while the devolution of funds and finances are at an average of 45 to 50% every year. The percentage of devolution of functions and functionaries stand at an average 10% and 15% respectively. It is in this backdrop that the devolution of functions and functionaries is worth discussion.

Body**Funds and finances are being devolved to a considerable extent;**

- The taxation domains for the local self governments are specified in the very constitution (11th and 12th schedules). Further, as per the Devolution Report of Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the tax collection at the local bodies has been in an upward trend in the last two decades.

- The 15th Finance Commission also provides for up to 50% of tied grants (provided to states) to the local bodies. It has also increased the percentage of performance based grants to the urban local bodies.
- Also, most of the non-discretionary grants of the centre are transferred directly to the local bodies in the form of Direct Benefit transfers- LPG subsidies, old age and disability pensions, food subsidies, salaries for MGNREGA workers, etc.
- Further, most of the MPLADS and the MLALADS funds are supposed to be utilized at the grass root level for carrying out various developmental works.
- Over and above even the untied and the discretionary grants are also being spent in the local level, as local self governments become the implementing agencies for most of the state and central pet schemes.

Finally Venugopal committee on Rural Development submitted its report in 2018 stating that there is a gradual improvement in the devolution of funds.

However, the devolution of functions and functionaries has been lax;

Functions:

- Various, subjects have earmarked for local governments in the constitution. However, the actual devolution depends on the discretion of the state. 2nd ARC observes a huge difference between the de-jure and de-facto devolution of constitutional activities, present in 11th and 12th schedule, by the state governments.
- Most of the Central Sector and the Centrally Sponsored schemes do not have proper activity mapping, i.e. the activities carried out by the local governments are not demarcated clearly. As per the 2001 Task force on Devolution of 3Fs, almost one fifth of the states do not perform activity mapping at all, and more than half of the states do not review it periodically.
- Some of the programmes like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Swachh Bharat Mission, etc, provide a clear demarcation of functions in their policies. But, these are not being followed strictly due to lack of matching funds. Ex: Inspection of Mid Day Meal schemes has to be done at the village panchayat level, but matching salaries are not being devolved for the inspectors.

Functionaries:

- On an average only 6 local officer posts are granted for a thousand populations on an average, by the state governments. This has not only increased the work load, but has also resulted in a situation where in one officer performs 6 to 7 functions.

Ex: The revenue secretary of a village is also the Village Accountant, Land Development Officer and also the DRDA representative of the village.

- Further, most of the block and district level officers are working on a deputation from State and Central civil services. And there is no dedicated service and cadre management for the local bodies. Guidelines for devolution of 3Fs provided by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj; recommends the states to set up Panchayati Raj Administrative and Technical Service Institutes, for recruitment and training of secretary level officers for local bodies.
- Also, even if some of the functionaries are granted, no substantial powers are devolved. Added to it, lack of proper training and career progression are discouraging the young aspirants from occupying such functionary positions. This has prompted the local governments to survive by hiring the contractual workers.
Ex: the group C jobs of clerks, computer operators, water men, etc.

Conclusion

Thus, with the help of statistical evidences we can deduce that, the devolution of functions and functionaries is not being carried out hand in hand with the devolution of funds. If this trend continues, even the devolutions of funds will go in vain; because, the utilization of funds is dependent on proper functions and functionaries which are needed to spend those funds effectively.

15th FC also states that “The States are squarely obligated to devolve functions, funds and functionaries – the well-known 3F’s - to the Panchayats”.

1. When Panchayat Raj is developed, public opinion can do what violence can never do. –Mahatma Gandhi. Comment

10 marks (150 words)

Approach

The question asks to explain how Panchayat Raj gives a commanding voice to the public that can even replace violence as means to achieve any goals.

From Paper1

Again the thinkers, quotes and keywords are the only gateways to bring in content from the first paper here.

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi was an apostle of rural self governance. His concepts of Self Reliance and Gram Swaraj are very much related to his idea of non-violence. In one of his essays he writes, “India has had the experience of village republics. I fancy that

they were unconsciously governed by non-violence. An effort has now to be made to revive them under a deliberate non-violent plan.”

Body

These words of Gandhiji indicate that, Panchayat Raj could provide immense power and voice to the commonest of the common people in India. However, how can this voice have the ability to do what violence can never do is the point of discussion here.

- Panchayat Raj provides for Gram Sabhas, wherein every member of the village has the right to take an active part in its meetings. This provides a proper channel for the public to vent out their grievance at the earliest.

It has to be noted here that, if the public is not provided with such a channel to interact with the government, they resort to violence in-order to attract its attention.

Ex: The Naxalbari movement is nothing but a consequence of government ignoring the voice of the landless tenants.

- Along with the grievance redressal, the Gram Sabhas can also act as the platforms for imparting legal and social knowledge to the public. Here the Panchayat Development Officer can act as a friend, philosopher and guide for the local leaders of the village.

This can help the common people to have rational thinking expressed via legal routes, to get their demands fulfilled; rather than rushing to protests and blockades straight away. Moreover, such legal voices are more likely to be heard by the government than the violence.

Ex: How a peaceful demand for Muster Rolls was negotiated in the town of Beawar of Rajasthan by Masdoor Kisan Shaklti Sanghtan (RTI movement).

- History has shown that rural people, more often than not get subjugated by the town dwellers, and the poor villagers silently undergo the pain and humiliation because; they will be dependent on the city people for employment, livelihood and other goods and services.

However, ones their patience and fortitude reaches a threshold they rebel against the persecutors. Ex: Moppilah revolt, Deccan peasants revolt, etc.

But, if the Panchayat Raj, as was dreamt by Gandhiji, is implemented to the letter and spirit; villagers will no more be dependent on the cities, and they also get a moral voice to question their persecution, both in verbal and legal means.

Ex: How the voice of a self-reliant village of Hiware Bazar and its Sarpanch Popatrao Pawar, was heard all over the world.

Conclusion

Finally, we can conclude saying that, while the violence provides only the masculine power which triggers instantaneously and fades away meteorically. A well developed government at the grass root level can provide a perennial knowledge, independent life and an invincible voice with logical reasoning for the villagers to demand their rights from the government.

Hence, Gram Swaraj of Gandhiji provides gold mines of benefits for the Indian rural population in particular and India in general. And lastly, it is not that Gandhiji's ideas are utopian, rather it is our immaturity to live up to the ideals and expectations of Gandhiji.

