NITIN SIR CLASSES

THE HINDU
INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Daily News Analysis

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Monday, 03 Nov , 2025

Edition : International Table of Contents

Page 01 Syllabus : GS 3 : Science and Tech / Prelims	ISRO launches advanced GSAT-7R, India's heaviest communication satellite
Page 06 Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity / Prelims	Barring MP, Leh now has no elected representatives
Page 08 Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations / Prelims	Engage the Taliban, don't recognise them
Page 11 Syllabus : GS 3 : Science and Tech	Are social media platforms dying a slow death?
Page 13 Syllabus : GS 1 : Social Issues / Prelims	Growing Indian women power on global ships
Page 08 : Editorial Analysis Syllabus : GS 2 : Indian Polity	The vision of Model Youth Gram Sabhas

Daily News Analysis

Page 01 : GS 3 : Science and Tech / Prelims

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched GSAT-7R (CMS-03) — India's heaviest indigenously built communication satellite — aboard LVM3-M5 from Sriharikota. Designed to enhance the Indian Navy's communication and surveillance capabilities, the mission marks a significant leap in India's defence and space self-reliance.

ISRO launches advanced GSAT-7R, India's heaviest communication satellite

Saurabh Trivedi
Vasudevan Mukunth
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

The Indian Space Research Organisation on Sunday successfully launched the Indian Navy's advanced communication satellite GSAT-7R (CMS-03) from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The indigenously designed and developed satellite, weighing approximately 4,400 kg, is India's heaviest communication satellite to date and marks a major milestone in strengthening the Navy's space-based communications and maritime domain awareness.

The ISRO launched the rocket aboard its most powerful launch vehicle, the LVM3, on its M5 mission. The lift-off took place at about 5.26 p.m. from the second launch pad, and mission control soon confirmed that the satellite had been successfully inserted into a geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO).

This is the heaviest Indian-built communications satellite launched from Indian soil so far. Because of the high mass of the GSAT-7R, the launch vehicle targeted a standard GTO; once there, the satellite will raise and circularise its orbit using its onboard propulsion systems.

Boost to self-reliance

The Navy said that equipped with state-of-the-art indigenous components, the GSAT-7R would provide robust and secure telecommunication coverage across the Indian Ocean Region. Its advanced payload features transponders supporting voice, data, and video links over multiple communication bands, ensuring seamless connectivity between the Navy's ships, submarines, aircraft, and Maritime Operations Centres.

The launch highlights India's growing self-reliance in space technology and the Navy's commitment to safeguarding national maritime interests, it said.

It stands as a testament to Aatmanirbhar Bharat, enabling the armed forces to operate with enhanced situational awareness and secure, high-capacity communication links in complex maritime environments, it added.

The launch also demonstrated the capacity of the LVM3 rocket to routinely handle four-tonne-plus satellites to GTO from India, reducing dependence on foreign launchers for heavy communications satellites as well as feeding directly into ISRO's preparations for Gaganyaan, its maiden human spaceflight programme, which plans to use an evolved LVM3 variant.

"ISRO has successfully launched the heaviest GEO communication satellite from Indian soil," ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan posted on X following the successful launch. "The Indian space sector is soaring high to provide valuable services to the user community in and around the Indian region," he added.

LVM3-M5 lifts off carrying the GSAT-7R communication satellite from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Sunday. X/@isro

Key Analysis

1. **Technological Significance**
   - Weighing around 4,400 kg, GSAT-7R is the heaviest communication satellite launched from Indian soil.
   - It showcases the LVM3's proven capacity to handle four-tonne-plus payloads to geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO), reinforcing India's capacity for heavy-lift launches without foreign assistance.
   - The satellite's advanced payload includes multi-band transponders supporting secure voice, data, and video links for naval operations.
2. **Strategic and Security Dimensions**
   - GSAT-7R is part of the GSAT-7 series, following GSAT-7 (Rukmini) and GSAT-7A, which serve the Navy and Air Force respectively.
   - It will strengthen network-centric warfare, enhancing connectivity among ships, submarines, aircraft, and Maritime Operation Centres across the Indian Ocean Region.
   - The system enhances Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) — crucial amid growing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific.
3. **Boost to Self-Reliance and Aatmanirbhar Bharat**
   - The mission underscores India's indigenous capability in satellite design, payload development, and launch infrastructure.
   - It reduces reliance on foreign launch vehicles and supports the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision in the space and defence sectors.
   - The LVM3's performance also feeds directly into ISRO's Gaganyaan programme, India's first human spaceflight mission.
4. **Economic and Institutional Impact**

- The mission strengthens India's dual-use space assets — promoting both civilian and defence applications.
- It reflects the growing synergy between ISRO and the armed forces, as well as India's transition toward a self-sustaining space ecosystem involving public and private players.

Conclusion

The successful launch of GSAT-7R marks a milestone in India's march toward strategic autonomy and technological advancement. By enhancing maritime communication, surveillance, and security, it reinforces India's position as a credible regional power and a self-reliant spacefaring nation. The mission not only strengthens the Indian Navy's operational readiness but also showcases ISRO's expanding role in supporting national defence and space ambitions.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: With reference to the GSAT-7R satellite, consider the following statements:

1. GSAT-7R is India's first communication satellite designed exclusively for the Indian Army.

2. It was launched aboard the LVM3 launch vehicle from Sriharikota.

3. The satellite will enhance maritime communication and surveillance for the Indian Navy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: The launch of GSAT-7R marks a milestone in India's pursuit of self-reliance in defence and space technology. Discuss the significance of this mission for India's maritime security and strategic autonomy. **(150 Words)**

Daily News Analysis

Page 06 : GS 2 : Indian Polity / Prelims

Leh district in Ladakh has entered a politically sensitive phase as the five-year term of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh, ended on October 31, 2025. With no fresh elections announced yet, the region is currently without any elected representatives, barring its lone Member of Parliament, Mohammad Haneefa. The delay in elections is linked to ongoing talks between civil society groups and the Union Government over Ladakh's constitutional and administrative status.

Background and Context

Daily News Analysis

After the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, Ladakh was made a Union Territory (UT) without a legislative assembly. Governance in the region is carried out primarily through two autonomous hill development councils — one each in Leh and Kargil — formed under the LAHDC Act, 1997.

Barring MP, Leh now has no elected representatives

The five-year term of the hill council came to an end on October 31 and fresh elections may be held only after talks between civil society groups and Union Home Ministry take a decisive turn

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

As Leh district in Ladakh ceases to have any elected representatives from October 31, with the five-year term of the hill council coming to an end, elections to the local body are likely to be held only after ongoing talks between civil society groups and the Centre take a decisive turn, officials said. Ladakh MP Mohammad Haneefa is now its only representative.

On October 22, a month after after four people were killed in police action against protesters seeking Statehood, the civil society groups Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) – representing the two districts in Ladakh – resumed talks on the region's status with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

The groups were asked by the government to prepare a draft framework, including a road map for constitutional safeguards for Ladakh. Though dates for the next meeting are yet to be announced, the LAB and KDA have taken the help of legal experts to argue for their existing demands, including inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution (tribal status) and Statehood, members of the groups said. "The LAB and KDA are drafting their suggestions and would share notes to present a common proposal," said Sajjad Kargili of the KDA.

Special provisions

At the October 22 meeting, Ministry officials indicated to the two groups that special provisions guaranteed under Article 371 of the Constitution can be considered for Ladakh.

On October 31, an order by the Ladakh administration cited ongoing process for creation of new districts and the consequent need for redrawing boundaries of council areas and constituencies, for the delay in holding elections. Besides, it also highlighted the need for implementation of the amendment to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC) Act, 1997, providing one-third reservation for women in the LAHDCs, and said "holding elections to constitute a new LAHDC, Leh, is not practicable at this stage, as it would lead to representational anomalies and administrative inconsistencies".

The order delegated the hill council's functions to the Deputy Commissioner "until a new council is constituted following fresh elections".

The new districts were announced in 2024 and women's reservation was notified on June 3 this year.

Detrimental effect

Konchok Stanzin, former councillor of Chushul along China border, said barring an MP, there were no public representatives in Leh. "This is particularly detrimental for people living in the regions bordering China. If they have an issue, they will have to come to the district headquarters in Leh city, hundreds of kilometres away. Most people do not have the resources for that. As a councillor, I used to take care of their demands pertaining to connectivity, education, health, and livelihood, among others," Mr. Stanzin told *The Hindu*.

He said the hill council is empowered to take decisions on 40 functions and each councillor has a development fund of ₹1.5 crore.

The election to the 30-member LAHDC, Leh was last held in 2020, with the BJP winning 15 seats and the Congress nine. Four councillors are nominated by the Lieutenant-Governor. The LAHDC for Kargil district was constituted in 2023 and its term will come to an end in 2028.

For 2025-26, the Leh hill council was allocated ₹255 crore by the MHA.

Delay in election: The election to the 30-member LAHDC, Leh was last held in 2020. FILE PHOTO

The LAHDC, Leh, plays a key role in planning and executing development activities across 40 functional areas, with councillors receiving individual development funds. The council's absence, therefore, creates an administrative vacuum, particularly in remote and border areas where access to higher authorities is limited.

Current Issue

The delay in conducting fresh LAHDC elections stems from two main reasons:

1. Ongoing talks between the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) regarding Ladakh's constitutional safeguards.
2. The restructuring of districts and the recent amendment to the LAHDC Act mandating one-third reservation for women, which requires redrawing of boundaries before polls can be held.

Until elections are held, the Deputy Commissioner of Leh will perform the council's functions — a move that raises concerns over the dilution of grassroots democracy.

Demands and Negotiations

Civil society groups (LAB and KDA) are seeking:

- Statehood for Ladakh
- Inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution (granting tribal status and local autonomy)
- Protection under Article 371 (special provisions for certain states/regions)

At the October 22 meeting, MHA officials indicated that Article 371-type provisions could be explored as an alternative to Sixth Schedule inclusion. The groups are currently preparing a joint draft framework with legal experts to present a unified proposal to the Centre.

Implications

- Governance Vacuum: The absence of elected councillors weakens local representation, especially in border regions like Chushul near China.
- Administrative Challenges: Without councillors, citizens must rely on district headquarters for addressing local issues, undermining participatory governance.
- Security and Strategic Impact: Given Ladakh's sensitive border with China, effective local governance is crucial for maintaining stability and public trust.
- Political Sensitivity: The prolonged uncertainty could fuel local discontent, especially if constitutional safeguards are delayed or diluted.

Conclusion

The end of LAHDC Leh's term without a successor council highlights the ongoing political flux in post-2019 Ladakh. While the Centre's engagement with local bodies on constitutional safeguards is a positive step, delayed elections risk weakening democratic accountability and alienating local communities. Going forward, balancing administrative restructuring with timely elections and meaningful autonomy will be vital for ensuring inclusive governance and regional stability in Ladakh.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Consider the following statements about the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC):

1. It was constituted under a Central Act passed after the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019.

2. It has the power to make laws on subjects listed under the State List of the Constitution.

3. Each councillor in LAHDC is allocated a development fund and participates in district-level planning and implementation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: The demand for Sixth Schedule status and Statehood for Ladakh reflects the deeper concerns of cultural preservation and political representation in India's frontier regions. **(150 Words)**

Daily News Analysis

The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 marked a significant geopolitical shift in South Asia. For India, which had invested over $3 billion in Afghanistan's reconstruction and enjoyed strong goodwill under the previous regime, this development posed a strategic dilemma: whether to engage with the Taliban or isolate them. As tensions between Pakistan and the Taliban grow, the debate over India's approach has gained renewed attention.

Engage the Taliban, don't recognise them

Stanly Johny

As the saying goes, the enemy's enemy is a friend. When the Afghan Taliban were an insurgency, they were clients of the Pakistani military establishment. Now, they are the state in Afghanistan. Their return to power in Kabul also brought back old fissures between Pakistan and Afghanistan, two neighbours divided by a disputed 2,640-kilometre border, to the centre of inter-state relations. As tensions between the two rise, often spilling into cross-border clashes, India may be tempted to see the Taliban, its enemy's enemy, as a 'friend'.

It may not be a coincidence that Pakistan bombed Kabul earlier in October, just as Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi was visiting India. Mr. Muttaqi's visit, the highest-level contact between the Sunni extremist Taliban and India, was the clearest indication yet that both sides are keen to improve ties. India has since decided to upgrade its technical mission in Kabul to a full embassy and resume stalled infrastructure and welfare projects with Mr. Muttaqi giving his assurance that the Taliban regime "will not allow any group to use our territory against others".

The case for engagement is well known. When the Taliban, then backed by Pakistan, returned to Kabul in August 2021, India, which had backed anti-Taliban forces in the 1990s, faced the prospect of losing the influence it had built in Afghanistan over the previous two decades. The question before New Delhi was whether to remain engaged with the new rulers or distance itself from them.

India's objectives

Broadly speaking, India has three objectives when it comes to dealing with Afghanistan. First, it had invested some $3 billion in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021 – after the collapse of the first Taliban regime. It seeks to protect those investments, and build on the goodwill it earned during the period. Second, unlike in the 1990s, New Delhi does not want Afghan soil to be used by anti-India militants. Third, it does not want the Taliban to become an external arm of Pakistan's establishment, which would give Islamabad-Rawalpindi strategic depth in the region. As an Indian diplomat told this writer in 2021, soon after the Taliban's reconquest, "India would like to explore the autonomy of the Taliban from their masters". To meet these goals, India has opted for a policy of conditional and gradual engagement with Taliban 2.0.

Mr. Muttaqi's visit to New Delhi and the decision to upgrade the Indian mission in Kabul to an embassy suggest that India is expanding the scope of this conditional engagement. The dramatic deterioration in Pakistan-Taliban relations adds a new geopolitical dimension to India's approach. These developments have prompted calls for India to move faster in formally recognising the Taliban regime. There is, indeed, a case for recognition. The Taliban appear more consolidated than they were in the 1990s, and unlike in the past, no regional power seems interested in backing anti-Taliban forces – at least for now. The National Resistance Front, the primary anti-Taliban group, remains weak, with its leadership in exile in Tajikistan. The Taliban's most serious military challenge comes from the Islamic State-Khorasan, a transnational terrorist outfit that threatens regional security. Russia has formally recognised the Taliban, and China has exchanged ambassadors with Kabul.

Long-term risks

While recognition of the Taliban could allow India to fast-track cooperation with the regime, further deepening Pakistan's anxieties, it would also carry significant long-term risks. The Taliban, who emerged from the anarchy of the Afghan civil war in the early 1990s, have not fundamentally changed. Nor have they ever claimed to have changed – either ideologically or programmatically.

To be sure, the Taliban are not the only totalitarian regime in the world, and states, even democracies, should do diplomacy with different political systems. But the Taliban's totalitarianism is distinct. It is perhaps the only regime that bars girls from attending school beyond the primary level. It has enforced strict segregation between men and women in public spaces, and largely banned women from workplaces. The regime, headed by its reclusive Kandahar-based supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, and run by the Kabul Taliban, has maintained high levels of repression at a time when the economy is in serious trouble. Afghanistan's economy has contracted by around one-third since the Taliban seized power. Nearly 22.9 million Afghans – almost half the population – require humanitarian assistance this year. The exclusion of women from the workforce and education will have economic and social consequences. While the Taliban claim to have improved security over the past four years, they have also overseen a near-collapse of the economy.

Amid high-decibel repression and mounting economic distress, it is far from certain that the Pashtun, men-only regime of the Taliban has truly consolidated power in Afghanistan, a country of deep ethnic diversity that has seen almost continuous conflict since the mid-1970s. In the early 2000s, after the Taliban were toppled and the Islamic Republic was taking shape, Afghanistan enjoyed a period of relative calm and stability. Many believed that the country had embarked on a path towards democratisation and socio-economic modernisation. But it was only a matter of time before the Taliban re-emerged from the mountains of Pakistan's tribal belt to challenge the republic. So today's relative calm should not misguide anyone that the Taliban had won absolute lasting control over Afghanistan. It makes sense for India to adopt a wait-and-watch approach.

Deep networks

In their second stint, the Taliban have sought to project an image of having severed ties with transnational jihadist organisations. The Taliban learned a key lesson from 2001: it was not their repressive policies at home that led to their downfall but their open alliance with al-Qaeda. This time, they have adopted a more pragmatic posture. In public, their leaders insist that they will not allow transnational groups to use Afghan territory. Yet, this does not mean that the Taliban have genuinely severed ties with such groups. The Haqqani network, which has long maintained close ties with al-Qaeda, is now deeply integrated into the Taliban establishment.

According to a recent report by a United Nations Security Council monitoring group, the Taliban have allowed al-Qaeda to consolidate "through safe houses and training camps scattered across Afghanistan". It notes that the Taliban remain "the primary partner of all foreign terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan", including al-Qaeda, Pakistani Taliban, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The only exception is the Islamic State-Khorasan, which opposes Taliban rule. For now, these groups have been allowed to operate quietly without posing an immediate security threat to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries or the wider region. But if domestic pressures mount, and the Taliban's grip on power weakens, these networks could easily resurface, because they haven't given up their commitment to global jihadism. In that case, the enemy's enemy may well turn out to be India's enemy too.

If India recognises the Taliban regime and allows the so-called Islamic Emirate to take over its embassy in New Delhi, that would grant the Taliban legitimacy they have long sought. It would also strengthen the Taliban's regional standing and prompt more countries to do the same. But such a move would also shut one of the few remaining windows New Delhi can press the Taliban to reform. Rather than pursuing short-term realpolitik, India should adopt a long-term strategic approach. Faced with a hostile Pakistan across the border and a collapsing economy at home, the Taliban need India's assistance far more than India needs the Taliban. While engaging the regime, both bilaterally and through regional and international mechanisms, New Delhi must urge the group to respect at least the fundamental freedoms of the Afghan people. If India's interests lie in stability in Afghanistan, Afghanistan's stability will ultimately depend on economic recovery, political inclusion and regional integration – not on the Taliban's guns.

While engaging the regime, both bilaterally and through regional and international mechanisms, New Delhi must urge the group to respect at least the fundamental freedoms of the Afghan people

stanly.johny@thehindu.co.in

Main Analysis

India's Strategic Objectives in Afghanistan

India's Afghanistan policy is guided by three key objectives:

1. Protecting past investments and goodwill built between 2001–2021.
2. Preventing Afghan soil from being used by anti-India terror outfits like Jaish-e-Mohammad or Lashkar-e-Taiba.
3. Ensuring that the Taliban do not become a proxy of Pakistan, which could threaten India's regional interests.

To achieve these aims, New Delhi has pursued a conditional and calibrated engagement — maintaining contact with the Taliban leadership without legitimising their rule.

Shifting Regional Dynamics

Recent deterioration in Pakistan–Taliban relations, including border clashes and Islamabad's airstrikes inside Afghan territory, has altered the geopolitical context. With the Taliban asserting independence from Pakistan and seeking better ties with India, New Delhi finds a potential opening. The visit of Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to India and the decision to upgrade India's Kabul mission reflect a deepening engagement.

However, while countries like China and Russia have recognised or exchanged ambassadors with the Taliban, India has refrained from formal recognition — aware of the long-term risks.

Risks of Formal Recognition

1. Ideological rigidity and repression: The Taliban remain unchanged in their fundamentalist outlook, enforcing harsh restrictions on women's education, work, and public presence.
2. Economic collapse: Afghanistan's GDP has contracted by one-third since 2021; nearly half of its population requires humanitarian aid.
3. Terror networks: The Taliban maintain close ties with extremist groups such as al-Qaeda, Jaish-e-Mohammad, and the Haqqani Network, as per UN reports. Their promise to prevent Afghan soil from being used for terrorism remains questionable.
4. False stability: The Taliban's control may appear consolidated, but deep ethnic divisions, economic distress, and lack of inclusivity make Afghanistan's political stability uncertain.

Recognising the Taliban now would legitimise their authoritarian rule and reduce India's leverage to push for reforms or inclusive governance.

The Case for Conditional Engagement

Engagement without recognition offers India strategic flexibility. By maintaining contact and humanitarian cooperation, India can:

- Safeguard its projects and influence in Afghanistan.
- Monitor terror activity closely.
- Build goodwill among ordinary Afghans through aid and infrastructure.
- Use diplomatic channels to encourage moderation and press for basic freedoms.

As Stanly Johny notes, the Taliban need India more than India needs them, given their economic isolation and fragile legitimacy.

Conclusion

India's Afghanistan policy must balance realism and principle. While engaging the Taliban is necessary to protect national interests and regional stability, formal recognition would undermine India's moral and diplomatic standing. New Delhi should continue its wait-and-watch approach — using engagement as leverage to promote stability, economic recovery, and political inclusion in Afghanistan. Ultimately, lasting peace in Afghanistan will depend not on the Taliban's guns, but on their willingness to reform and integrate with the region.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques. Consider the following statements regarding India's policy towards the Taliban regime in Afghanistan:

1. India has formally recognised the Taliban government in Kabul.

2. India has reopened its embassy in Kabul and resumed certain humanitarian and infrastructure projects.

3. One of India's key concerns is that Afghan soil should not be used for anti-India terrorist activities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans : b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : India should engage the Taliban but not recognise them. Discuss this statement in light of India's strategic, economic, and security interests in Afghanistan. **(250 Words)**

NITIN SIR CLASSES

THE HINDU
INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Daily News Analysis

Page : 11 : GS 3 : Science and Tech / Prelims

In the digital age, social media platforms and online services have become integral to communication, entertainment, and commerce. However, users increasingly feel that these platforms are becoming less user-friendly and more exploitative. This phenomenon has been aptly described by Canadian writer and activist Cory Doctorow as "enshittification" — a process where digital platforms degrade over time due to profit-maximising behaviour by corporations at the expense of users and creators.

Are social media platforms dying a slow death?

'Enshittification' is a term used to describe how digital experiences and services have become worse over time. However, the word's creator says this is a deliberate process, and that pushing back is possible

Sahana Venugopal

Not too many years ago, you could watch endless YouTube videos with ease, but now you must sit through unskippable ads to access the content you want – unless you pay. Twitter used to be a space to collect views, engage with verified figures, and discuss world events, but is now teeming with verified scammers. Instagram was once an app to post and admire photos, but it now prioritises scrolling through viral and commercial short videos chosen by an algorithm. Google helped you find articles of repute and academic papers for projects, but now serves up an AI-generated middle mash of content that you will have to further vet. What has caused this degradation across platforms and apps? One theory that has gained traction is enshittification.

What is enshittification?

In 2022, the Canada-born author, tech journalist, and activist Cory Doctorow coined the term 'enshittification'. The now-viral term helped put a name to a change that internet users are noticing: the feeling that many of your digital experiences, transactions, and services are not improving with time, but are actually becoming worse because of their makers' ruptures.

Enshittification, according to Mr. Doctorow, is a way of ruining the process through which internet platforms are being made deliberately worse for customers, by their decision-makers, until they decay completely. "Here is how platforms die: first, they are good to their users; then they abuse their users to make things better for their business customers; finally, they abuse those business customers to claw back all the value for themselves. Then, they die," wrote Mr. Doctorow in 2023.

Enshittification is also used to refer to a range of symptoms that degrade your experience as an internet user or customer. Some examples include the insertion of advertisements, self-preferencing by tech companies, unfair links in search results, once free features becoming paid, genuine products being replaced with lower-value dupes, and more. Mr. Doctorow also points out how apps offer massive potential for enshittification, because app users often have less freedom to block ads when compared to users who are accessing the same platform via the web.

Why does enshittification matter?

Last year, in his Marshall McLuhan lecture at the Transmediale festival in Berlin, Mr. Doctorow pointed to four factors that could either constrain or enable the enshittification of platforms. Based on how strong they are. These factors were – competition, regulation, self-help measures by users, and the anti-erosion of tech workers. When these four factors are strengthened, according to Mr. Doctorow, internet platforms are forced to become better for users. When weakened, however, customers are more vulnerable to being exploited by tech giants. In other words, when your experience with a shopping app or a streaming platform grows worse, much of this enshittification can be traced back to the dominance of just a few Big Tech players, looser antitrust enforcement by authorities, customers' diminished capacity to control their digital experiences, and/or the inability of tech workers to say no to exploitative bosses, according to the author.

How have social media companies changed their user experience?

Meta-owned Facebook is an example that Mr. Doctorow frequently cites to demonstrate enshittification. Originally meant to serve users and help them stay connected, Facebook users are now "locked in" along with advertisers and publishers, according to him, meaning that content from these latter two groups now take precedence over less profitable posts, such as content from friends and those you are following.

Instagram is yet another example of this enshittification, with advertisements and recommended content now often crowding out updates from those you actually care about – without your consent. Now, with AI-powered accounts joining the fray, human users compete for attention with non-human accounts.

Switching platforms becomes difficult because a large number of people need to depart at once in order for the move to be effective, but it can happen. "All it takes is one Cambridge Analytica scandal, one whistleblower, one livestreamed mass-shooting, and users bolt for the exits, and then FB discovers that network effects are a double-edged sword," noted Mr. Doctorow in his 2024 speech.

Enshittification can also be seen with X (formerly Twitter) after Elon Musk's takeover. Once a platform where verified world leaders, journalists, celebrities, and other noteworthy figures could connect with audiences, Twitter under Mr. Musk soon made its free blue tick verification a paid feature that could be bought by anyone ranging from neo-Nazis to scam bots in order to boost their presence, degrading the platform experience for everyone. Dating apps such as Bumble and Hinge have also been accused of becoming "enshittified," with certain profile selections, profile exposure, profile filters, and viewing features being put behind paywalls, in order to encourage subscriptions. For instance, the feature to undo a mistaken 'swipe left' gesture that rejects a profile is a paid privilege on Bumble.

Enshittification could further explain the recent changes made to browsers like Google, which has applied its Generative AI-powered overviews into the search experience, so that users are first shown a medley of search results pulled from random sources across the web, with more errors likely to appear. This also predecesses Google as opposed to other, more authoritative news sources and/or smaller publishers.

How have streaming and entertainment platforms changed?

Amazon Prime, Netflix, YouTube, and Spotify are all examples of how enshittification can affect even daily activities such as watching your favourite TV show or listening to music. Rising subscription prices have nudged users to either pay more in order to again access to the ad-free content they were enjoying at lower prices, or be forced to watch ads.

YouTube, for example, has degraded its free experience with multiple unskippable ads, even as it tries to push users to opt for its ad-free YouTube Premium subscription service. YouTube has also sacked to obstruct the user experience of those who rely on external ad-blocking extensions in order to continue watching videos without forced commercial breaks. The company further announced a 'Hype' feature in certain countries that allows users to help lower creators in the YouTube Partner Program (those with 500 to 5,00,000 subscribers) and increase their exposure; this leads to users being shown fan-promoted content.

Meanwhile, users have taken to social media to complain how the free version of Spotify is close to unusable, with non-paying users unable to even have control over the order in which they listen to their chosen songs. This dissatisfying experience pushes people to opt for a paid subscription or forces them to find an alternative. Mr. Doctorow further alleged that Spotify replaces the artistes' artists in its most popular playlists with soundalikes who aren't entitled to royalties.

How have e-commerce platforms changed?

In a 2022 blog post, Doctorow used the case of e-commerce giant Amazon to give an example of enshittification, noting that "Amazon is an unlimited endless scroll of paid results, where winning depends on ad budgets, not quality."

Mr. Doctorow went on to highlight how both sponsored product listings as well as Amazon's own products often take precedence while a user is searching for items, meaning that they are not necessarily being shown the best products first. Google, Apple, and Spotify have also been accused of this kind of self-preferencing, where content that is more profitable to the companies is shown first, to the loss of other business rivals.

Meanwhile, the difficulty of cancelling an Amazon Prime account has became a legal challenge it itself. Per a U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) lawsuit, Amazon allegedly enrolled millions of customers in Amazon Prime subscriptions without their consent, and also complicated the cancellation process.

The e-commerce giant will have to pay $2.5 billion to settle the case – a slap on the wrist for a company with a market cap of over $2 trillion.

Main Analysis

1. Understanding Enshittification

- Definition: Coined by Cory Doctorow in 2022, enshittification refers to the gradual degradation of online platforms as they prioritise profit extraction over user experience.
- Process:
  Doctorow explains this process in three stages:
  1. Platforms are initially good to users to attract them.
  2. They then exploit users for the benefit of business customers (advertisers, vendors).
  3. Finally, they exploit business customers to maximise their own profit — leading to collapse.

2. Manifestations Across Digital Platforms

- Social Media:
  - Facebook & Instagram: Once user-centric, now dominated by advertisements, influencer marketing, and AI-generated or recommended content that reduces organic reach.

- Twitter (now X): Verification and reach monetised under Elon Musk, leading to misinformation and scam proliferation.
- Dating Apps (Bumble, Hinge): Basic functions like undoing swipes or profile visibility locked behind paywalls.

- Streaming Platforms:
  - YouTube, Netflix, Spotify: Rising subscription fees, intrusive ads, and restricted free versions. Users' control over content is increasingly limited.
  - Amazon Prime: Ad-supported plans and automatic enrolment controversies exemplify exploitative monetisation.
- E-commerce & Search Engines:
  - Amazon: Search results prioritise sponsored listings and Amazon's own products rather than user value.
  - Google: AI-generated overviews and self-preferencing distort authentic search results and undermine smaller publishers.

3. Causes and Enablers of Enshittification

Doctorow identifies four key factors determining whether platforms become exploitative:

1. Competition: Reduced market competition allows monopolies to dominate.
2. Regulation: Weak antitrust enforcement enables anti-consumer practices.
3. User Self-Help: Limited user capacity to block ads or switch platforms due to "lock-in effects."
4. Worker Unionisation: Tech workers' inability to resist unethical corporate policies.

When these safeguards weaken, platforms exploit users more aggressively, eroding digital trust and experience.

4. Broader Implications

- Economic: Concentration of market power among Big Tech players stifles innovation and harms smaller businesses.
- Social: User frustration, misinformation, and reduced authenticity of online interactions.
- Ethical: Questions of digital autonomy, privacy, and fair competition.
- Policy: Necessitates stronger digital governance, consumer protection, and antitrust enforcement.

Conclusion

The enshittification of digital platforms represents a deliberate shift from user-centric to profit-centric design — a form of corporate decay driven by monopoly power and weak regulation. While users may feel powerless, the process is not irreversible. Strengthening competition laws, enhancing digital literacy, encouraging platform accountability, and supporting ethical tech development can help restore the internet's original promise — a space built for openness, innovation, and user empowerment.

Daily News Analysis

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : With reference to the term "Enshittification", recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. It refers to the process by which digital platforms gradually deteriorate in quality due to profit-maximising decisions.

2. The term was coined by Elon Musk to describe changes in social media after 2020.

3. Enshittification primarily occurs due to weak competition, regulation, and user control.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2, and 3

Ans: (b)

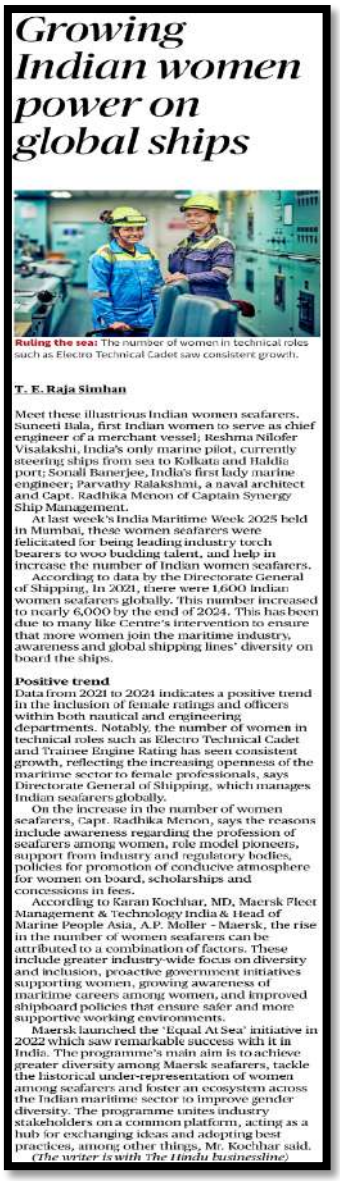
UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the role of competition, regulation, and user empowerment in preventing the degradation of social media platforms. How can India ensure ethical and user-centric digital platforms? **(150 Words)**

Page 13 : GS 1 : Social Issues / Prelims

Daily News Analysis

The maritime sector, traditionally male-dominated, is witnessing a remarkable transformation with Indian women increasingly taking on crucial roles at sea. The India Maritime Week 2025 in Mumbai celebrated this change by felicitating pioneering women seafarers like Capt. Radhika Menon, Suneeti Bala, and Reshma Nilofer Visalakshi — symbols of breaking barriers in one of the toughest professions.



Growing Indian women power on global ships

Ruling the sea: The number of women in technical roles such as Electro Technical Cadet saw consistent growth.

T. E. Raja Simhan

Meet these illustrious Indian women seafarers. Suneeti Bala, first Indian women to serve as chief engineer of a merchant vessel; Reshma Nilofer Visalakshi, India's only marine pilot, currently steering ships from sea to Kolkata and Haldia port; Sonali Banerjee, India's first lady marine engineer; Parvathy Balakshmi, a naval architect and Capt. Radhika Menon of Captain Synergy Ship Management.

At last week's India Maritime Week 2025 held in Mumbai, these women seafarers were felicitated for being leading industry torch bearers to woo budding talent, and help in increase the number of Indian women seafarers.

According to data by the Directorate General of Shipping, in 2021, there were 1,600 Indian women seafarers globally. This number increased to nearly 6,000 by the end of 2024. This has been due to many like Centre's intervention to ensure that more women join the maritime industry, awareness and global shipping lines' diversity on board the ships.

Positive trend

Data from 2021 to 2024 indicates a positive trend in the inclusion of female ratings and officers within both nautical and engineering departments. Notably, the number of women in technical roles such as Electro Technical Cadet and Trainee Engine Rating has seen consistent growth, reflecting the increasing openness of the maritime sector to female professionals, says Directorate General of Shipping, which manages Indian seafarers globally.

On the increase in the number of women seafarers, Capt. Radhika Menon, says the reasons include awareness regarding the profession of seafarers among women, role model pioneers, support from industry and regulatory bodies, policies for promotion of conducive atmosphere for women on board, scholarships and concessions in fees.

According to Karan Kochhar, MD, Maersk Fleet Management & Technology India & Head of Marine People Asia, A.P. Moller – Maersk, the rise in the number of women seafarers can be attributed to a combination of factors. These include greater industry-wide focus on diversity and inclusion, proactive government initiatives supporting women, growing awareness of maritime careers among women, and improved shipboard policies that ensure safer and more supportive working environments.

Maersk launched the 'Equal At Sea' initiative in 2022 which saw remarkable success with it in India. The programme's main aim is to achieve greater diversity among Maersk seafarers, tackle the historical under-representation of women among seafarers and foster an ecosystem across the Indian maritime sector to improve gender diversity. The programme unites industry stakeholders on a common platform, acting as a hub for exchanging ideas and adopting best practices, among other things, Mr. Kochhar said.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Key Developments and Data

According to the Directorate General of Shipping, the number of Indian women seafarers rose from 1,600 in 2021 to nearly 6,000 by the end of 2024 — a near fourfold increase. This growth reflects both government initiatives and private sector efforts aimed at gender inclusivity.

- Technical Inclusion: The number of women in technical roles such as Electro Technical Cadet and Trainee Engine Rating has grown steadily, showing greater acceptance of women in demanding technical positions.
- Institutional Support:
    - Government interventions have created awareness and ensured better opportunities.
    - Private sector programmes like Maersk's "Equal At Sea" (2022) focus on diversity, inclusion, and safe working environments on ships.
- Role Models: Trailblazers such as Capt. Radhika Menon (India's first woman captain) and Reshma Nilofer Visalakshi (India's only marine pilot) serve as inspiration for young women to join maritime careers.

Reasons for the Positive Trend

1. Awareness & Outreach: Increased understanding of seafaring as a viable career option for women.
2. Policy Support: Scholarships, fee concessions, and conducive onboard policies.
3. Corporate Initiatives: Industry-wide focus on diversity and safer working environments.
4. Cultural Shift: Changing perceptions about women's roles in technical and leadership positions.

Significance for India

- Economic Empowerment: Expanding women's participation in the maritime workforce boosts inclusivity and productivity.
- Global Representation: Strengthens India's reputation as a supplier of skilled maritime professionals.

- Social Impact: Acts as a catalyst for gender equality in other male-dominated sectors like aviation, defense, and logistics.

Conclusion

The steady rise of Indian women seafarers marks a powerful stride toward gender parity in global shipping. Backed by government policies, private initiatives, and inspiring role models, the maritime sector is evolving into a more inclusive domain. As Capt. Radhika Menon and others continue to inspire, India's growing women power at sea stands as a testament to both empowerment and excellence — steering the nation toward equitable growth across all horizons.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : With reference to women participation in the maritime sector in India, consider the following statements:

1. The number of Indian women seafarers has increased almost fourfold between 2021 and 2024.

2. Maersk's 'Equal At Sea' initiative was launched to promote gender diversity among seafarers.

3. Directorate General of Shipping is responsible for managing Indian seafarers globally.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: d)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: The growing participation of Indian women in global shipping marks a new era of inclusivity and empowerment. **(150 Words)**

NITIN SIR CLASSES

THE HINDU
INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Daily News Analysis

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

The vision of Model Youth Gram Sabhas

In India's democratic architecture, the Gram Sabha holds a significance that is as fundamental as that of the Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha. Yet, the Gram Sabha, the constitutional cornerstone of grassroots democracy, remains an unsung hero in popular conversations and civic awareness. Unlike the Bal Sansad (Children's Parliament), Youth Parliament, and the Model United Nations, the Model Youth Gram Sabha is an unfamiliar concept for most. Yet, it is in these village assemblies, not the grand chambers of Parliament, that democracy finds its purest expression – direct, participatory, and accountable.

Article 243A of the Constitution, introduced by the 73rd Amendment Act of 1992, defines the Gram Sabha as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system. It represents every registered voter in a village and empowers them to deliberate on budgets, development plans, and governance priorities. This institution embodies participatory democracy, empowering rural citizens to shape decisions affecting their community, fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusive development. But despite its revolutionary potential, participation remains minimal.

Why aren't Gram Sabhas aspirational?

Ask any young person if they dream of leading a village or becoming a Sarpanch, and you will likely be met with a puzzled silence. The educational curriculum largely focuses on Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, parliamentary governance, or global models such as the United Nations. It remains silent on the Panchayati Raj institutions that form the bedrock of Indian democracy. This absence from classrooms has turned the Gram Sabha into a distant administrative concept rather than a living democratic experience. To build a 'Viksit Bharat', the Gram Sabha must be positioned as aspirational, empowering rural youth, women, farmers to lead at the grassroots, shaping development and democracy. This requires embedding Gram Sabha simulations into school and college curriculum.

Sushil Kumar Lohani

A 1995 batch IAS officer of the Odisha cadre and currently Additional Secretary in Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India. Email: s.lohani@nic.in

Manmohan Singh

CEO-Aspirational Bharat Collaborative, Piramal Foundation. Email: manmohan@gandhifellow-ship.org

If the Model United Nations cultivates global citizenship, the Model Youth Gram Sabha can nurture civic pride and local leadership

It was to bridge this gap that the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tribal Welfare and the Aspirational Bharat Collaborative, launched the Model Youth Gram Sabha in 2025. Simulating real Gram Sabha processes, students play the roles of Sarpanch, ward members, health workers, and engineers discussing village budgets and development plans. The programme is supported by teacher training and offers incentives such as prizes and certificates to encourage enthusiastic participation. The exercise transforms abstract civics into lived experience, cultivating local governance knowledge, and making democratic participation concrete and engaging for the future generation.

In Phase 1, the Model Youth Gram Sabha is being launched in over 1,000 schools across 28 States and eight Union Territories (UTs). These include more than 600 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, 200 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, and select Zilla Parishad schools in Maharashtra. A team of 126 master trainers is leading nationwide teacher training. So far, 1,238 teachers from 24 States and UTs have been trained. More sessions are in progress.

Prior to the national rollout, successful pilots were held at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh and Eklavya Model Residential School Alwar in Rajasthan. The Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Sitapur, in Bundi district, Rajasthan, became a living classroom of democracy as more than 300 students participated in a Model Youth Gram Sabha. In Phase 2, the initiative intends to expand beyond central institutions and Zilla Parishad schools to include all State-run schools across India.

From simulation to transformation

In a democracy such as India, active citizen participation is not just a right but a responsibility. If the Model United Nations cultivates global citizenship, the Model Youth Gram Sabha can nurture civic pride and local leadership. By being introduced to the Panchayati Raj systems, students are better able to understand the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic setup. The experience of conducting debates, passing resolutions, and negotiating consensus instils critical life skills.

This model has the potential to redefine civic education. By expanding it to all schools and colleges, India can make participation aspirational again. A future IAS officer or parliamentarian who once "chaired" a Youth Gram Sabha in school is more likely to value the power of local governance in real life.

The vision of Viksit Bharat cannot rest on policy alone. It depends on citizens who see governance not only as the government's responsibility but as a shared civic duty. The Model Youth Gram Sabha is more than a classroom exercise; it is a seedbed for democratic renewal.

When young people learn that their village meeting is as vital as Parliament, democracy ceases to be an abstract system – it becomes a lived culture. And when every child in India grows up believing their voice matters at the Gram Sabha, the dream of a truly participatory, self-reliant, and compassionate nation will no longer be a distant aspiration. It will be the everyday rhythm of Indian democracy.

GS. Paper 2 Indian Polity

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Discuss the significance of the Model Youth Gram Sabha initiative in strengthening participatory democracy at the grassroots level in India. **(150 Words)**

Daily News Analysis

Context :

The Gram Sabha, envisaged under Article 243A of the Indian Constitution through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, forms the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system and represents the essence of participatory democracy in India. However, despite being the bedrock of grassroots governance, it has remained underappreciated and underutilized.

To address this gap, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Tribal Affairs, launched the Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS) initiative in 2025. The initiative aims to revive civic participation and instill democratic values among youth by simulating Gram Sabha proceedings within educational institutions.

Significance of Gram Sabha in Indian Democracy

- Constitutional Mandate: Article 243A empowers the Gram Sabha to deliberate on budgets, development plans, and local governance priorities.
- Foundation of Participatory Democracy: It allows citizens to directly participate in decision-making, fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in governance.
- Link to Viksit Bharat: True realization of Viksit Bharat (Developed India) requires not just policy reforms but active citizen engagement at the grassroots level.

The Problem: Why Gram Sabhas Are Not Aspirational

1. Lack of Civic Awareness: Schools and colleges focus mainly on national and global governance structures like the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and the United Nations, while local self-government institutions remain neglected in curricula.
2. Cultural Perception: Young people rarely see leadership at the village level—such as becoming a Sarpanch or ward member—as aspirational. This weakens the democratic connection between youth and local governance.
3. Limited Participation: Despite their potential, Gram Sabhas often witness poor attendance and weak deliberative culture, undermining the spirit of participatory governance.

The Initiative: Model Youth Gram Sabha (2025)

Objective:
To make democracy experiential by introducing Gram Sabha simulations in schools and colleges, thereby connecting youth with grassroots governance.

Implementation Highlights:

- Collaboration: Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and the Aspirational Bharat Collaborative.
- Phase 1 Coverage:
  - Over 1,000 schools across 28 States and 8 Union Territories.
  - Includes 600+ Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, 200 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, and select Zilla Parishad schools.
- **Capacity Building:**
  - 126 master trainers leading nationwide teacher training.
  - 1,238 teachers from 24 States/UTs trained so far.
- Pedagogical Approach: Students simulate real Gram Sabha processes—playing roles such as Sarpanch, ward members, health workers, or engineers, discussing budgets, local plans, and governance issues.
- Incentives:
  Prizes and certificates to encourage participation and enthusiasm among students.

Pilot Success:

- Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Baghpat (U.P.) and Eklavya Model Residential School, Alwar (Rajasthan) demonstrated strong engagement.
- In Sitapur, Bundi (Rajasthan), more than 300 students participated, transforming classrooms into living laboratories of democracy.

Analytical Perspective: From Simulation to Transformation

1. Democratic Learning in Practice: The initiative transforms abstract civics into experiential learning, helping students understand rights, responsibilities, and deliberative decision-making.
2. Nurturing Local Leadership: Like the Model United Nations (MUN) promotes global citizenship, the Model Youth Gram Sabha fosters grassroots leadership and civic pride.
3. Bridging the Governance Gap: It helps urban and rural students alike appreciate that effective governance begins locally, making participation in Gram Sabhas both meaningful and aspirational.
4. Capacity for Democratic Renewal: Students who experience this process are likely to become responsible citizens, Panchayat members, bureaucrats, or politicians who value local self-governance.
5. Long-term Impact: Embedding the Gram Sabha concept in education can reshape civic culture, making participation a shared responsibility rather than merely a right.

Challenges Ahead

- Scaling Up: Ensuring uniform implementation across all States and schools.
- Teacher Preparedness: Adequate training and motivation are essential for effective simulations.
- Assessment Mechanisms: Need for robust monitoring and feedback systems to measure impact.
- Cultural Change: Overcoming societal biases that undervalue Panchayati leadership compared to parliamentary politics.

Daily News Analysis

Conclusion

The Model Youth Gram Sabha initiative is a transformative step toward embedding participatory democracy in education. By empowering students to experience governance first-hand, it bridges the gap between democratic ideals and lived reality. If effectively scaled, it can cultivate a generation that not only votes responsibly but also participates actively in local governance, seeing democracy as a shared civic duty rather than a distant political process.

As Sushil Kumar Lohani rightly notes, when every child in India grows up believing their voice matters in the Gram Sabha, democracy will cease to be a system—it will become a culture. This vision, rooted in grassroots empowerment, truly aligns with the spirit of Viksit Bharat and the Gandhian ideal of Gram Swaraj.