

NEXT IAS

खण्ड-A / Section-A

- Q.1 If you look into someone's face long enough, eventually you feel that you are looking into yourself.
यदि आप किसी के चेहरे को काफी देर तक देखते हैं, तो अंततः आपको महसूस होता है कि आप अपने भीतर ही देख रहे हैं।
- Q.2 We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.
हम उस बच्चे को आसानी से क्षमा कर सकते हैं जो अंधेरे से डरता है; जीवन की वास्तविक त्रासदी तब होती है जब लोग रोशनी से डरते हैं।
- Q.3 It is the province of knowledge to speak and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.
बोलना ज्ञान का क्षेत्र है और श्रवण करना बुद्धि का विशेषाधिकार है।
- Q.4 Drop the question what tomorrow may bring, and count as profit every day that fate allows you.
यह प्रश्न छोड़ दें कि कल क्या हो सकता है, और हर उस दिन को लाभ के रूप में गिनें जो भाग्य आपको अनुमति देता है।

Little children are some of the most inquisitive creatures. Often, adults are dumbfounded by the nature of the questions and demands that children have. Wherever there is light, a child follows, unafraid. It is only the unseen, the unknown, the dark - that scares children. Being afraid of the unknown is easily forgiven. In fact, it is even encouraged because fear then pushes one to find out, to be curious, to know - so that they are no longer afraid.

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But as the child progresses into adulthood, she is reared to fit a certain identity and she wears a lens through which she sees a specific perspective of the world. Taking off these lens would mean stepping out of one's identity. And slowly, any new light makes the individual uncomfortable, even afraid. No one faces the truth of the reality because ignorance is bliss. As reason & truth become inferior to conformity and orthodoxy, people and ideologies clash, causing tragedy.

Reign of Darkness - Historical Instances

Historically, the "dark ages" of every civilization have occurred in periods of blind hatred & unreasonable injustice led by men unwilling to see the light of reason and reality.

For instance, Khoon Pandyan Vikesari (a Pandyan King) ordered the prosecution of Jains in his kingdom due to a blind

belief that Jain were intrinsically evil. Similarly, Aurangzeb ordered complete obedience to the sharia law failing which subjects were put to their death. In both situations, leaders of the time were unwilling to see the reason of human life value and the reality of diversity in their kingdoms.

International historical examples point to the same kind of tragedies when men were led by passion rather than reason. Hitler's blind hatred of the Jews and the use of stereotyped propaganda helped mobilize an entire nation against an innocent community. Depictions of Jews as fat, wealthy, aristocratic in pamphlets aroused anger in the German population. People turned against one another, unwilling to see what ~~that~~ was clear as day - that Jews were suffering just as much and were not the root of their problems. As world war II took an unprecedented number of lives, it was difficult to believe that reason would shine its light on these men ever again.

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Obscurantism & Prejudice -The Longest Darkness

The tragedies of the past have continued into the present in the form of communal hatred, regionalism and terrorism. The 9/11 attacks, New Zealand church attack, and Mumbai Taj Hotel attack all resulted from the unwillingness of faith to see the reality of a diverse but united world.

men are afraid of change, of newness and they prefer to stick to what they recognize and understand, forgetting curiosity for comfort. This results in ghettoization, creation of localities that are divided on communal lines. Discrimination and fear breed in this environment. Relative deprivation soon pits communities against one another, creating havoc like the Godhra riots of 2008.

On the other hand, when men welcome the light of reason and logic, it leads to a social "Renaissance" or "rebirth". 19th century social reformers like Raja

NEXT IAS

Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Syed Ahmad Khan advocated for the growth of reason to purge society of its socio-religious evils. Jyotiba Phule worked to remove caste prejudice in Hindu communities while revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh called for equality amongst all men and women. Sati was outlawed and widow remarriage legalized as women were seen as humans instead of objects.

But obscurantism and stereotypes continue to keep society in the darkness of poverty and prejudice. marital rape, inadequate political representation, low corporate success all point to an inability of patriarchal society to "see" the value that ~~the~~ women can add to an organization, and so women continue to suffer the tyranny and oppression of gender-discrimination. The "fear" that women may outperform men keeps society hobbled of the value addition that women have to offer. Thus, being afraid of the light doesn't just cause tragedy, it perpetuates it.

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The Light of Knowledge & Progress

Just as society and religion are enlightened by reason, science feeds on the light of knowledge. Fear of this light endangers societies and institutions. Theories like heliocentricity and evolution questioned the church's pronouncement that God created Earth and its being and the universe revolved around it. Societies that were open to such knowledge saw Golden Ages ~ like the Gupta Golden Phase allowing for the creation of treatises on medicine (Sushruta Samhita on surgery and Charaka Samhita), mathematics (Aryabhata), metallurgy. ~~On the~~ In contrast, men like Socrates were put to their death for treason.

Even today, fearing advancement will only lead to being left behind. India continues to make strides in science, space, arctic exploration, cyberspace, nuclear technology. New developments like cryptocurrency.

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Artificial Intelligence, robotics, geospatial technology are the "light" of the 4th Industrial Revolution. If India remains behind in these advancements, it will face the tragedy of under-development and backwardness. Thus, if India is to be a leader amongst nations, it must welcome the light of modernity instead of fearing its outcomes.

The Darkness of the mind

Light permeates space and time. But it also permeates the mind. Mental health issues like depression and anxiety are a constant tussle between light and dark. Whereas one part of the mind cries out the positives of existence, the other overstates by screaming the negatives. The mind, and by extension - the individual - is a product of a subtle balance between these two parts. When one part blocks out all light i.e. reason, reality, truth and joy - it becomes a petri-dish for negativity and retrogression.

NEXT IAS

The mind thus feeds on positivity, and getting too complacent with the ignorance that breeds within only results in the destruction of potential, leading to suicide of young students, farmers & doctors.

Thus, light is a symbol of truth, reason and happiness. Whereas children epitomize these values, adulthood robs individuals of the ~~this~~ ability to let light enter. Tragedies of all kinds become common, leading to death, destruction, backwardness. It is time to bring back the child within us, to question and remain curious, to fear the unknown and strive towards knowledge and wisdom. If we are to be free and happy, we must not fear the light, but instead follow it.

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खण्ड-B / Section-B

- Q.5 Truth, like a torch, the more it is shook, it shines.
सत्य, मशाल की तरह है, इसे जितना अधिक हिलाया जाता है, यह उतना ही चमकता है।
- Q.6 Art is I; science is We.
कला मैं है, विज्ञान हम है।
- Q.7 Only the dead have seen the end of the war.
केवल मृतकों ने ही युद्ध का अंत देखा है।
- Q.8 Act as if it were impossible to fail.
कार्य ऐसे करें जैसे कि विफल होना असंभव ही था।

On the eve of Indian Independence, when the world was asleep, India was celebrating its "tryst with destiny" and millions of Indians alongside Jawaharlal Nehru promised posterity peace and love. In another part of the country, Mahatma Gandhi found himself in the midst of unending violence and hatred, helplessly calling for fraternity and non-violence. 75 years on, India has yet to achieve the promise that her forefathers made - the promise of the end of war.

War has been a constant just as much as time and change. Whether that is amongst men, between man & nature, ~~or~~ within nature itself, or within man himself, war is unending.

NEXT IAS

Sometimes it is the harbinger of destruction, other times it is the war of good over evil. Still other times it is the necessary war of survival & evolution while other times it is part of the cosmic balance - the law of nature, i.e. destruction and creation, two sides of a coin.

(Nature vs. Man)

Nature and mankind have constantly fought for supremacy. From the domestication of plants and animals all the way to ozone depletion and global warming, mankind has dealt severe blows to mother nature. In return, nature has responded through sea level rise, frequent and intense natural disasters and irreparable loss in carrying capacity. The war between nature and mankind continues as countries continue to pollute the Earth despite international summits like COP27, under UNFCCC and commitments like NDCs under Paris Climate Agreement.

As even our daily lives are a constant war with nature: using electricity (light, fans) that is

NEXT IAS

produced by burning fossil fuels, using air conditioning that releases ozone depleting substances into the stratosphere, travelling by car (release of nitrogen and sulphur oxides). Even consuming a plastic-packaged item is waging a miniscule war on earth. ~~white~~ Thus, only a man who is 'dead' can be said to be free from this form of war.

[The War of Good vs Evil]

As mentioned in both the Ramayana and the Mahabharat, sometimes war is inevitable because it is a war of good over evil. When Arjuna rode out to the Kurukshetra, Krishna explained why he must fight not just out of duty but also a sense of righteousness. It was (and still remains) a reminder to act as a counterforce to evil wherever and in whichever form it is present.

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In everyday life, there is constant good and bad. Whether it is in seeing one's father abuse one's mother, or prejudice at the workplace or injustice or inequality, an individual is constantly and sub-consciously at war with these elements.

Much of this war takes place within: a war of heart against mind, the crisis of conscience. Often, one is puzzled whether to follow one's heart or to follow the well-tread path of social conformity and group norms. It is only when that heart stops beating that this war ceases to trouble the human soul.

Political Wars

The world was offered many chances for peace, but it seems that mankind falls into the trap of violence very early. Beginning with wars for loot and conquest, like Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Ashoka and Samudragupta, wars have travelled time and are seen ^{today} in the form of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, Myanmar military coup, Taliban take over in

NEXT IAS

Afghanistan and governments toppled in sub-Saharan nations of Africa. If a country is not fighting physical wars, it is doing greyzone warfare (cyberspace attacks). If a country is not warring with a neighbouring nation, there is Civil strife within: Meitei and Kuki issue of Manipur. Thus, political sovereignty and its recognition have perpetuated war. The nature of land (territory) is that it is limited. It can be claimed only by denying the claim of another. Thus, war is unending, unceasing in the political space.

Economic warfare

Just as politically-induced wars are never-ending, so are economic ones. Colonialism was an economic and ideological war that sought to acquire raw material for the growth of capitalism. As exploitation through slavery and drain of wealth continued another war emerged: that of nationalism, self-determinism and democracy. Today a similar form of

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neo-colonialism contrives in the form of tacit economic warfare like dumping, dependency, beggar-thy-neighbour policy and devaluation. China launches war through debt-trap diplomacy - pulling in both economic and political gains.

4th Industrial Revolution is introducing a data-driven competition amongst nations as data becomes the new gold. Quantum technology, artificial intelligence, satellite technology and space advancement can define the new era of data. Colonization which could raise concerns of privacy (a state-individual war front) and global supremacy (nation to nation war front). Thus, war is not obsolete. Instead it is a virus that mutates quickly to adapt and feed on ever-growing resources.

Social Warfare

The most common form of warfare is that of society. From the most violent forms like mob-lynching to the most

NEXT IAS

subtle kinds (stereotypes and thoughtless commenting) - society is constantly waging a war from within.

The most common war is that of women empowerment. Orthodox society oppresses the girl child from the womb itself : killing a girl child, followed by female genital mutilation, sacrificial offerings, denial of access to adequate healthcare and education, and forced household lifestyle. The counterforce is women speaking up, gaining education, becoming successful.

Similarly, the LGBTQIA+ community faces discrimination, as do senior citizens, differently-abled communities, "lower" caste individuals. In almost all walks of life, people feel judged for their appearance (racism), their body image (fat-shaming), & their thoughts (intolerance). Movements like anti-slavery, Rainbow movement, anti-racism (#Blacklivesmatters), #MeToo Campaign are a reminder that society is constantly at war between its traditional, narrow elements and modern, open-minded elements.

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Thus, it can be said that war is constant, never ending. In fact, it is a testimony to life - it is evidence that we live and thrive, as does nature. Conflict, is thus unavoidable. However, it is how we deal with that conflict that defines our humanity. Even men who believed in non-violence like Mahatma Gandhi and Buddha were involved in a perpetual struggle against those who were unwilling to yield to the truth. So it is ~~clear~~^{said} that ~~no~~ death is the only escape from an eternity of war.

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