

NEXT IAS

खण्ड-A / Section-A

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- Q.1 Little strokes fell great oaks.
छोटे - छोटे प्रयासों से बड़ी सफलता मिलती है।
- Q.2 Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers.
किसी व्यक्ति का मूल्यांकन उसके उत्तरों के स्थान पर उसके प्रश्नों से करें।
- Q.3 Great principles, great ideals know no nationality.
महान सिद्धांत, महान आदर्श किसी एक राष्ट्र से संबंधित नहीं है।
- Q.4 In struggling with misfortune lies the true proof of virtue.
दुर्भाग्य से संघर्ष करने में ही नैतिकता का सच्चा प्रमाण निहित है।

Q.2 Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers.

"The Sun revolves around the earth!"

This is what the whole world believed for a very long time until one person with a telescope stood up and asked some questions to this premise. The questions were uncomfortable for the church and the questioner had to bear the consequences of what he said. But as the science progressed and more researches were done, it was realised that the one who asked questions was right and all others, with ready-made answers

were wrong.

The above mentioned story of busting the biggest myth that humanity believed in tells us about the significance of good questions and those who dare to ask them, rather than just relying on answers that everyone takes solace in.

Indeed, what does this quotation "Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers." mean? Isn't it little contradictory to what we are used to seeing everyday? In schools and colleges, in job interviews too, we judge a person by the answers he writes or narrates, however made up or artificial they may be but still we rely on answers.

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Let's try to look at what it means. It directs us to evaluate the abilities of a person based on the sort of questions he/she asks. It tells us to focus on the aspect of curiosity over information, intuitiveness over memorization ability, analytical skills over rote learning.

One might start wondering if it is the new talk of town. Something imported from the west. No. It's not. Heard of the rich Upanishadic traditions of India? Their whole premise is based on ability to create good questions, brainstorming over a plethora of topics and exploring new horizons of knowledge through sharp questioning.

One is filled with awe and respect when small child Nachiketa asks questions like what is atman? what is purpose of this life?

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Doesn't this tell about the depth of persona of that child? Doesn't it express the level of understanding of the puzzle of life at such a tender age?

This is why the title says judge a man by his questions.

Now, one may argue, why shall we do so if answers are serving their purpose of judging students in exams and selecting candidates for a position?

Firstly, the answers may be deceptive, because one can always prepare them beforehand. Nowadays there's a trend on youtube where small children of 4,5 years of age are asked numerous questions about capitals of countries

across the world or names of rivers etc. And they do answer all these questions very diligently without even blinking an eyelid.

But, does that talk about their intellect or ~~just~~ it just is a demonstration of their great memorization skills?

Memory is a good resource. But in today's world where we are surrounded by tens and thousands of memory devices like mobile, PCs, smartwatches, it's time to move beyond that. Even the new National Education Policy 2020 has emphasized on reducing the rote learning part and enabling students to ask questions.

When one asks, one grows.
A good scientist is the one who

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asks good question. Einstein did not become a great scientist when he gave the seemingly unbelievable theory of relativity and his conception of time.

But he became great the moment he asked "Is time really absolute or relative?" or "Was Newton right?" The questions he asked make him great rather than the answers that followed.

This also brings us to a fact that the questions that a person asks are more important as they also decide the answers he may have. A good teacher is the one who himself has learnt through a lot of questioning. If a teacher just knows

what's given in book and not much beyond that, he can't satisfactorily answer the questions of his pupils.

A teacher like APJ Abdul Kalam always encouraged questions from students, rather than giving a monologue, as he knew the importance of asking good questions.

We saw why questioning is vital. Now let's take a look at what do they reveal about a person.

The questions that one asks talk a lot about the personality of an individual. They are a testimony of his/her hunger to know.

Also of the depth of the personality. Swami Vivekananda used to ask, whenever he met

"Have you seen God? If yes, can you show me too?" Such was his quest

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to know which made him the tallest spiritual figure of that times.

One of the greatest business leaders Ratan Tata is known for his humility. He never hesitates to ask questions about new things that he doesn't know about.

Thus, the questioning mind is also a humble mind. It takes sidelining one's ego ~~and~~ to ask question to someone junior and learning from them.

As we learn what questions tell about someone, let's also see how can we use this to judge somebody or something.

For instance, in the premises of Anthropology that studies humans, they study what ways do societies function? Do the societies perpetuate negatives

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and superstitions or do they ask the hard questions to themselves and grow out of it? It tells a lot about a society.

Similarly with organisations. The organisations which fail to ask good questions to themselves or if they do not facilitate the liberty to question, they are bound to fail. The current crisis in many of India's startups including Byju's (the first unicorn of India) tells a lot about this phenomenon. It is by nurturing the culture of healthy accountability that any organisation thrives.

Now we dwelled into the importance of questioning in appraisal of any person or society or organisation.

Does that mean all the answers are

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redundant and we shall throw them away in the dustbin?

Again the answer to this is hidden in question only! 1

Not all answers are redundant.

An answer becomes valuable if the question is good enough. What better illustration of this statement can be than the disruptive technology of generative AI?

The ability of ChatGPT or similar tool to give a good answer depends on how well do you articulate your question, or how well do you use

your prompts. Nowadays people are taking classes on asking better questions to these models. To summarize, it

again boils down to the kind of questions one asks even when we talk about answers.

The answer that Wright brothers gave in form of aeroplane, started with the question "How can we fly?" or the telephone that we use today came from the question that Graham Bell asked. Thus, powerful questions give powerful answers.

So, going forward as an individual or as a society of human beings we must acknowledge the importance of questions in our very lives. And we shall nurture and foster the culture of good questioning from our schools to our biggest institutes and institutions. So, that we do not repeat the mistake that the medieval

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Church did while judging the calibre
of Nicolaus Copernicus.



खण्ड-B / Section-B

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- Q.5 The whole purpose of Education is to turn mirrors into windows.
शिक्षा का सम्पूर्ण उद्देश्य दर्पण को खिड़कियों में बदलना है।
- Q.6 To dwell is to garden.
निवास करना बगीचे के सामान है।
- Q.7 Reality is the shadow of ideas.
सच्चाई विचारों की छाया मात्र है।
- Q.8 We can not despair of humanity, since we ourselves are human beings.
हम मानवता से निराश नहीं हो सकते, क्योंकि हम स्वयं भी मनुष्य हैं।

7. Reality is the shadow of ideas

"Reality is the shadow of ideas,
Sometimes big, sometimes small.
Sometimes dark, sometimes faded.
It's just a shadow, but we feel it's true
Because we're also a shadow of some idea!"

Above lines try to gauge the relationship
between the reality and ideas. How do they
impact on each other and how do
they manifest. ~~It~~ Also highlighting the
fact that we humans are nothing but a

bunch of ideas at the end of day.

To understand the meaning of it, let's understand what a shadow means here.

"Reality is the shadow of ideas." means

reality emerges out of ideas, it takes inspiration from ideas to grow into its present form.

At the same time, it also means that reality is a mere shadow of ideas and not the actual idea. It might be seemingly different than original idea.

Going forward we'd try to understand what does it mean by, "Reality is the shadow of ideas." How does reality comes from ideas and vice versa. We'll also see how shadow differs from original object & reasons for it.

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Firstly understanding the meaning.

Reality is a multifaceted term, we've social reality, physical reality, economic and political reality. And all of them are shadows of subsequent ideas related to them.

For instance the reality of family systems in West vs India is different. Why? Because the underlying concept or idea of family varies in these societies. It's more ~~so~~ inclined towards joint and big family system in India while it's more nuclear in the West.

Another one can be of psychological reality. The data shows high prevalence of mental health disorders in western countries despite huge economic prosperity whereas the proportions in India are smaller. Why it may be so? Probably the

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ideas of being satisfied with less in Indian society, which stems from our spiritual tradition might be the reason as against the consumeristic tendencies of the west.

We took a look at the meaning. Now the manifestation. How does reality come from ideas? How do ideas cause a shadow into form of reality?

For instance, the seemingly unreal world of J.K. Rowling, the Hogwarts, was a reflection of her ideas and imagination.

Through the power of her words she created that reality.

If the Rowling's magic wand is a wonder for us, then the today's QR based payments are no less than

awe striking magic wands for our ancestors
who have only dealt in cash and coins.

This reality of digital payments comes from
the idea of hassle free and transparent
payments that some of us had previously thought.

Not just these things but almost
everything that we see today as a
reality was once an idea in the mind
of somebody.

The democracy that we see today
in so many countries was earlier just
an idea in form of social contract
of Rawls. It took many years for it
to manifest into the reality that it is today.

Similarly, the roads and buildings,
the books and kindles, the spaceships
and submarines all were once

only the ideas in the human mind. Slowly they become into reality.

This also brings us to an interesting question as to what does it take for an idea to become a reality?

How does an idea succeed in causing a shadow?

For a shadow you need a source of light. And that source of light is the leader who provides leadership in form of thoughts and actions and resources.

For instance "Independent India" was just an idea at first. But a Tilak stood up, a Gandhi and the whole India stood up to become a light.

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The result? It caused the shadow of independence for all in 1947.

As we talk about source of light, it also tells us about another dimension of this. The shadow is different sized from object depending upon the distance & size of the source of light.

For instance, if the Freedom Fighters were to witness the situation of independence that they handed over to us, they might be disappointed seeing the corruption and polarization of society. Thus the idea of independence has manifested in different way than anticipated.

One more example, famous Scientist Openhiemer had anticipated that once the world sees the destructive power of nuclear bombs,

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the world would give up on wars and live peacefully. But that didn't happen but rather it created more destruction and a continuous fear.

So, we saw how ideas manifest into reality. Now let's briefly look at how "reality affects the idea?"

The message of liberty, equality and fraternity that the French revolution

gave to the world has its roots in the prevailing socio-economic

conditions of the French society, in the discrimination that was there

in the society. Thus, here the reality

became a motivating force for the ideas to emerge.

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A similar but recent example of this can be the creation of various bodies like UNFCCC, UNEP etc. to tackle the climate change. The world leaders saw the issue of climate change turning into reality and these ideas of climate mitigation came up. That trail was followed by the ideas of decarbonization and greener mobility and today's electric vehicles.

Above illustration also tells us how ideas and reality sometimes create a circle by following each other one after another. One becoming the inspiration for the other.

Buddha has said, "What you think you become." Our lives, both as individuals and as a society are a shadow of ideas that we

nurture. Thus, in order to create better shadows (i.e. better reality, a better world) we must nurture good and positive ideas individually and collectively. An

And while implementing them we must be cautious that the source of light is not misplaced. So, that we create perfect shadows. Dark but beautiful!

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