

प्रश्न संख्या
Question No.)

U.P.S.C.

इस भाग में कुछ न लिखें
(Don't write anything
in this part)

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SECTION A

4. The way we see the world
shapes the way we treat it.

Jarhwal region of Uttara-
khand is known for its forested
area. During the 1970-80s, a small
village of the Jarhwal region had
shot to fame over the tussle
between the village women and
local contractors. The issue was
simple — the local contractors
saw the forest land as a land
resource which could be used for
infrastructureal development whereas
the village women saw the forests
as a means of their livelihood,
as a part of their existence.
Hence, they chose to fight for

protecting the trees from felling.

The action of both was based on how they viewed the forests. In one case, that is in the case of the local contractors destroying the nature seemed beneficial but for the village women the maintenance of harmony with nature was of utmost importance.

There are numerous such examples where the action of humans can be traced on the basis of how they view the world and the environment around them. Anthropologists have defined the culture of humans as an adaptation to the environment. This means that every action of individual, every cultural practice is based on the idea of harnessing the resources of environment efficiently.

So, when we see the world as a food supplier we tend to focus on intensive cultivation practices. When we see the world as a treasured house of precious minerals we choose to perform mining operations. Similarly, when tribal societies view nature as a living entity with soul, they treat it with great care and try to preserve its pristine form. Thus, we see that our treatment of the world around us depends upon how we perceive it.

Our perception of the world has shaped our history, polity and economy. In the 18th and the 19th century the European powers believed in the white man's supremacy. They

viewed the world around them as a means to serve their interests. Hence, they invaded different countries around the world. Imperialism and colonialism were a direct consequence of European power's narrowed vision of seeing the world as unequal. It was only in the late 19th century when social reformers like Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar popularised the theme of humanism - universal brotherhood that the spirit of nationalism was ignited. The Indians were able to view themselves as an equal entity in world affairs which then led to the launch of freedom struggle.

This trend can also be seen in contemporary time period. The multilateral institutions like United Nations continues to be dominated by Western nations. This is because these nations view themselves as responsible powers of the world who have the right to determine important international affairs. However, developing countries like India which believes that the world is equal has raised voice to bring suitable reforms. Thus, international relations is also strongly guided by the fact whether the world is viewed through the lens of liberalism or through the lens of realism.

At the societal level too our actions depend upon how we view our community. If

we see our society as a group in which all members coordinate and cooperate to fulfil mutual interests, then we treat all members with utmost respect. However, if we think that the society is trying to limit our freedom by tying us to age-old traditions, we tend to break societal norms and rebel against the society.

At the individual level too, if we view this world as a gift to humanity we tend to accept all the events that occur in our life. If we focus on the love and compassion existing between fellow human beings we too reciprocate with similar emotions. However, if we

view this world as brutal and a selfish place, we treat all our fellow beings as competitors and not friends. This results in the world becoming an unhappy place where people mistrust each other.

Thus, the core idea is to understand whether we see the world as a means to achieve our personal goals or the world and the humanity as an end in itself. An appropriate example would be ~~to~~ to understand the actions of King Ashoka. When he viewed the world simply as an instrument to carry forward his fame and victory stories, he engaged in one war after the other. However, after the Kalinga conquest, he

realised that the world had to be viewed through the eyes of compassion and justice. Hence, he changed his methods from 'bherigrosha' (conquest through wars) to 'dhammagrosha' (cultural conquest).

The Indian philosophy provides us with an answer of how one can view the world. Adi Shankaracharya in 'Advait philosophy' says that the world is a mere illusion. Brahma is the only reality and all the beings ultimately unite to Brahma. Thus, by viewing the world as an illusion we can choose to not to be attached to worldly things. Instead, we

can choose to follow the path of 'jnana' (knowledge) to seek liberation. Similarly, 'Bhagavad Gita' urges humans to view the world as it unfolds. This means we should not focus upon the results but only on our actions. This way we can treat the world in an impartial and objective manner.

These lessons of viewing the world with a touch of care holds great relevance in today's scenario. As we talk about sustainable development it is important to view this world not as a treasure inherited from our ancestors but as a world borrowed from our children. The trees, rivers and air has

be valued for the services it provides to us. While we may not be able to account the economic value of these ecosystem services, it is important to understand that these services are necessary for the well being of humans. Only such an understanding can make us treat natural resources judiciously. The Charvaka philosophy which views the world only as a means to fulfil man's pleasure may lead to the destruction of entire humankind as evident from environmental imbalances such as global warming, heightened pollution levels and frequent occurrences of disasters.

It is important to view

the world as one and not as an association of different countries which collaborate only to pursue their national interests. When countries view themselves as superior to other countries in the world it disturbs world peace as seen in the case of current Russia-Ukraine crisis. In such scenarios, ~~it~~ one needs to recall the teachings of Rabindranath Tagore on internationalism. Tagore was an advocate of viewing the world as one and thus focused on solving the problems of world such as hunger and poverty rather than focusing on issues such as each country trying to establish its dominance over other.

A new approach of 'Eco-Feminism' also provides a different alternative to view this world. Eco-feminists say that world has been largely patriarchal and hence most of the problems of the world such as gender inequality as well as exploitation of world is a manifestation of masculine attributes of dominance. Hence, it argues that the world should be seen as feminine and Mother Nature should be respected. This will bring a change in the way the environment and all the citizens are treated. As the world reels under the Covid-19 pandemic crises

it has become all the more necessary to view this world as an alioide of all communities alike. The spread of infection across international boundaries has reiterated the fact that all humans are equally vulnerable. At the same time concented efforts has also shown that all humans are equally resilient in fighting against threats. This urges us to the view this 'world' as one great family, that is believe in the ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbham', and treat every living entity as a family member and shower each of them with love and care.

SECTION - B.

8. 'The unexamined life is not worth living.'

Prince Siddhartha, in the kingdom of Kosala had all the luxuries of life. A royal life like him was something that every subject in his kingdom wished to have. Yet, Prince Siddhartha was not happy. There was a constant churning within him which ultimately led him to renounce his luxuries and travel far into the woods to discover himself. Only when he was able to examine his life, he succeeded in overcoming the

miseries of life and discover the ultimate truth. Thus, by leading an examined life he became the 'Great Buddha'.

Similar stories and real life events of sages and seers wandering in forests have been commonly heard. The 'Uaenashrama' in Hindu Philosophy also talks about 'Sanyasa' as the final stage before liberation. At this stage, an individual is expected to shed away his/her worldly bonds and start a journey of discovering oneself. This points out to the fact that life remains incomplete unless the bearer of life seeks to understand himself thoroughly.

An ordinary person may

be very successful in his life. He may have fulfilled his responsibilities and duties towards his family and society. He may also excel in his studies or job. Yet, such an individual's life may not necessarily be worth living if he is not a critical moral thinker. This means if before making any choices he does not consider its moral consequences it is bound to bring some or the other problem later at life.

An unexamined life would mean that the individual is not aware of his inherent strengths and weaknesses. Thus, he/she can never reach his/her true potential. This would mean an

injustice to his/her talent
making life not worth living.
Also, an individual living
an unexamined life would
not be able to live a life of
integrity. Since, the individual
would not be prepared to
constantly question his conduct
he may succumb to moral
corruption. He may end up
choosing an easy and short
path to success by compromising
over his ~~to~~ values. This may
undoubtedly bring short term
joy but there would be no
guarantee of permanent happiness.
Thus, a life where ~~an~~ ^{no}
happiness is absent can surely
not be worth living.
In the society too, if all

individuals choose to simply live without asking the larger questions of one's existence, it will make the society static. The society may become narrow-minded bound to age old traditions.

This was experienced during the Dark Ages in Europe.

The society during Dark Ages suffered with inequality and ignorance. It was only in the era of Renaissance

that the society was able to break free from the shackles of stiff customs and progress towards a liberal world. This Renaissance was possible because people developed rationalism and were not afraid to ask

questions and seek answers.

This further led to a spate of discoveries and inventions as the minds of humans became inquisitive.

Living an unexamined life can have consequences at every stage of life and every sphere of life. A student who chooses to ~~to~~ not give exams may not be able to assess his level of learning. Thus, his progress remains unexamined. This was visible when the Indian government under the Right to Education Act chose to forego taking exams for students till class 5. As a result, there were reports of poor learning outcomes. Economically too, choosing not to examine one's action can

prove to be expensive. An industry which does not examine the review of his products may end up losing its customer base. This is because it is not able to produce as per customer expectations.

Not only an individual but the entire nation may suffer if it chooses not to examine itself. A nation must be aware of its economic condition and military power. Only then, it can emerge as a global leader. This is possible only if it continuously assesses its policies and strategies. In 1991, when India was not able to correctly assess its economic position it suffered a Balance of Payment Crisis. This made it necessary

that a uniform policy is in place that can constantly review the fiscal situation of India. Only such an 'examined life of nation' thus can make the life of all its citizens worth living.

Peace and harmony in society can only prevail if every individual chooses to live an examined life. Every individual who is aware of his actions will be a responsible individual. Such an individual will respect values of fraternity, dignity and equality. As every individual will have a respect for human rights it is expected that the ~~society~~ societies and thus the overall world will be a better place to live in. Thus, in such a world

each individual will have equal access to opportunities making the life of every individual worth living.

This brings us to the most pertinent question which is how to live an examined life? The Indian philosophy of Purusshastras provides a guide of living the life right way. It says that life is about the attainment of goals — artha (wealth) and karma (sensual fulfillment).

These goals have to be achieved through the path of 'dharma' (righteousness). This dharma refers to living an examined life which requires

living an ethical life. Only when a 'dharma' base life is lived 'moksha' or liberation can be achieved which promises of making one's life worthy.

Gandhiji also during the course of freedom struggle gave the path of living an examined life. Gandhiji asks citizens to live a life of 'Satyagrahi'. A Satyagrahi is in relentless pursuit of truth. In this journey of seeking truth he remains tolerant and gathers all the knowledge of the world. This makes him experience inner peace. He develops the courage to oppose any kind of injustice. This brings not only satisfaction to himself but by

standing against injustice he also contributes to his community. Thus, the life of Satyagrahi becomes a life worth emulating.

To live an examined life one need not perform an unusual act. Every individual needs to simply focus upon one's 'conscience' or what Socrates calls as the voice of God. The conscience of an individual guides him to take ethically correct actions. Gandhi's Talisman is also based on listening to one's conscience. ~~It talks~~ When an individual faces crisis of conscience the Talisman helps to arrive at

a decision by choosing such a path which promises to help the needy ones. Thus, by deep introspection and by heeding to one's conscience one can be assured of living an examined life. Such a life will bring mental peace as the thought, words and actions of the individual will be in complete harmony. This will surely make life truly meaningful.

Living an examined life is the need of the hour... As our actions become environmentally unsustainable becoming imminent threat to mankind, it is important to analyse each of our actions.

We need to understand how our actions can affect not only other humans but all living beings. Only when we become environmentally responsible we can conserve nature which in turn will assure that the life we live in the lap of nature is a healthy life worth living.

While we may not become 'Buddha' by living an examined life we can surely follow his pathway to be assured that our life is economically, environmentally and morally sound and thus worth living.