

UPSC

Answer Questions in NOT MORE THAN the Word Limit specified for each in the Parenthesis.
Content of the Question is more important than length.
(Specimen Answer Booklet - For Practice Purpose Only)

इस हाशिए में नहीं लिखना चाहिए!
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कृपया इस स्थान में प्रश्न संख्या के अतिरिक्त कुछ न लिखें!

Topic-1

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and to discover that the prisoner was you.

King Dandiputra was on an expedition with his son when suddenly an arrow hit his son's chest. Within minutes the prince collapsed and died.

Infuriated by this cowardise act of the perpetrator, he took the vow to finish off entire lineage of Matsya raj which had been instrumental in prince death.

He left his peace, his family, his kingdom waged wars after wars but to no avail. On one hand he ~~was~~ the demise of his only son shattered him and on the other hand his kingdom once 'a place of glory' was transitioning into 'anarchical society' due to lack of attention by there beloved king.

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Broken in and out, he went to Buddha and narrated his story. Buddha uttered a single word - 'Forgive'. But why did Buddha say so? Did he meant to forget how King had been wronged and carry on business as usual? Is that even a possibility? How will it help the King regain his peace?

To delve in all these questions, and find answers to the same we need to first understand the concept of being wronged and then analyse how forgiveness leads to the prisoner being set free.

In life many times, we may feel being wronged. This may be our perception based on our limited understanding like how Pakistan perceives India had wronged it in 1971 war or in Kashmir.

This may also be dependent on

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truth, facts, evidences. For example an individual might have committed a crime as murder. Further at level of society, it might have wronged people belonging to LGBTQ+ community, nation might have wrong other nation as - USA bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Once these crimes ~~or wrongs~~ being committed or a perceived wrong is done, what is the possible course of action for oneself - be it an individual, society, nation?

The action can be to punish or to forgive. This depends on the degree of crime or the wrong and no one fits all approach applies here.

But even if we take the case of punishment, the prime institution that reinforces it being the judiciary works on the maxim of reformatory justice. The underlying idea is to make the

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person better.

Similarly in case of taking up the action of forgiveness we set the prisoner free. We let him reform, mend ways, change for good. We can see its manifestation in the form of good India - U.K. relations when we no longer remain "the prisoners of history".

Here we should also note that by taking up this act of forgiveness we give acceptance to the principle of fallibility which every being in this world is prone to but also to self-introspect and change. For example - women have been at the wrath of patriarchy since time immemorial be it in form of sati, deplorable conditions of widows, female genital mutilation but situation is changing today. Why? Because some men as Raja Ram Mohan Roy could introspect and see the true picture.

This analysis brings us to the closure of one side of the story that is to say that forgiveness leads to prisoner being set free and changing for better, mending ways and that justifies 'the act of forgiving'. But it still does not answer or decipher Buddha's prescription to Dandaputa - how will this act of forgiving return his peace? How will it return the peace of his kingdom?

So, to understand this perspective and get answer to this question we need to look at the 'broader view of forgiving'.

Forgiving is not just a legal-formalistic connotation it is an emotional and a psychological act done with rational thinking that is to say it involves a degree of emotional intelligence.

Thus forgiveness is not just related to reforming or acquitting, but it is

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प्रश्नों के
अर्थों को
अधिकतर
प्रश्नों के
अर्थों को
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act from the heart. It involves melting away of all the grudges, apprehensions, judgements, biases that one holds. Thus it affects the person at an intensity much more than the person s/he forgives. This act of forgiveness breaks the shackles or chains bounded in one's mind and set one free.

We can take the case of modern day relations. A small mistake committed by one person fractures the years of togetherness. Who does it affect more? To both the parties. It suffocates relation and ultimately its demise. But a simple act of forgiveness can break those chains of judgements, anger and set both individuals free.

Similarly, when Martin Luther King Jr spearheaded the civil rights movement in USA, he took up the non violent path, speaking up of all the atrocities committed against black people but emphasis

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On this point of forgiveness so that African Americans don't carry grudges of the past or resort to violent means rather peacefully integrate as a part of one America.

These cases are testimony to the fact that if an individual or a society or a nation sits on the wrongs of past, keeps contemplating of it then it becomes the biggest prisoner - a prisoner chained by its perceptions and the result is not favourable to anyone.

It takes away the peace as it ~~is~~ happened in Hitler's Germany who wanted to take back revenge of Versailles wrong.

It further amputes one's ability to think rationally and see the multitude of possibilities that lies ahead and in this chained thought process time passes by and with it one's existence comes to an end and then

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realisation strucke that - had I forgiven I would have ventured on a better path altogether.

Further this inability to forgive renders us to look at world with prejudices and can never nurture good relations. This evident in USA-Russia relations.

Now having discussed of the necessity to forgive not just for the reformation of other but also for peace of oneself - it becomes necessary to visualise how this act of forgiveness helps?

For this we can take the analogy of a river. The nature of river is to flow. It may come across many boulders, rocks in between but does it stop? No!

It freely flows, changes it course if a big boulder comes, washes off all the

dirt and yet keeps flowing. This is also the nature of human life - to keep on flowing.

By unnecessarily building up the dirt of anger, frustrations - it only restricts our path of free flow. Rather we need to wash off those dirt and of yet judgements, biases and peacefully keep moving ahead in life. This

~~The second thing to forgive is~~
↳ simplifies our journey of life and this is the biggest help forgiveness provides.

Yet another help or rather to say the importance of forgiveness is perception and its fallacies. In dnekantwada philosophy of Jainism there is a beautiful story of an elephant and 4 men blindfolded each grabbing leg, tail, tusk respectively and considering it as different object

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because they lacked the view of larger picture.

Similarly in life, we may have developed a narrow perspective of a thing and keep on dragging with without knowing the other side of the story and hence missing wider perspective.

Forgiveness thereby opens up the channel of communication to exchange views and thus free oneself from 'guilt of narrow thinking' and wasting chance to mend ways.

~~But~~ Having discussed about the act of forgiving, its necessity, its requirement both for recipient and the person who forgives finally we should also not overlook the cases where it becomes extremely difficult to forgive.

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The case of Nirbhaya whereby four people committed one of the worst crimes that humankind can bear with. Further the case of 'Nithari' of a man killing small children, the terrorist attacks as of 9/11 or 26/12, the holocaust are all unforgivable crimes committed against humanity.

Here we can follow the maxim of Aristotle - The golden mean that is to say balance between punishment and forgiveness. Considering forgiveness as highest virtue thus following it with all capacity yet the underlying idea needs to 'welfare of all' and thus resorting to punishment wherever necessary.

Topic 2

There is more to life than simply increasing its speed.

A little boy named Raghu living in a small village would wake up everyday, do his daily chores, go to school. on his return trip to home would pluck some fruits from the fields along with his friends who would then look forward to meet and play in the evening. After getting exhausted all would then go back, eat from hands of their mother who would keep ready the freshly prepared food and then would sleep peacefully and repeat the same mundane tasks daily.

Many miles away 'Kiran' living in a big metropolis would wake up, do her daily work, go to school. she had been enrolled in a coaching because her parents want her

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to excel in her studies. She hardly gets time to play with her friends. The pressure of exam and coming second also haunts her. Reaching home she completes her task, rushes for coaching then rushes back home. Her mother then orders food due to her busy schedule and this cycle gets repeated.

The two contrasting stories present the reality of today. ~~One of a slow life and other of fast~~ Many of us living in big metropolis would resonate with Kiran. Even Raghu's of today, considering the fierce competition to gain riches would also start resonating with Kiran.

Here we would try to understand how our 'fast and furious' generation is living in a fast and furious world. Then we would try to understand what is their ideology of leading life or

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Increasing the speed of life, next we would try to view the issues in such living. Finally we would explore the essence of life - its dimensions and what it has to offer and how to avoid this race?

Before delving on any of these question let us first analyse the meaning of life.

Aristotle suggests living is about finding happiness in task one is performing. He terms it as eudaimonia. Happiness thus remains central to any form of existence and that is what we all want to experience, but its essence varies.

When we analyse the generation today, its definition of happiness synchronises with Bentham's felicific calculus where he suggests we need to maximise pleasures and its quantity. That is happiness.

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This has become the maxim of today. In all aspects of life, we want to be fast, achieve early, gather as much as possible then retire early.

We ^{also} live in an era of instant gratifications, be it food - cooking the 2 minute maggi or relations.

Our youtube generation do not even have time to peacefully meditate and explore spiritual dimension of life and there as well speed is visible when people search for - 'how to learn meditation in 10 days?' - when it is a life long process.

It is not just being fast but being more consuming have we become today. We want to gather as much as possible - in form of material wealth, property, clothes etc. Horkheimer aptly describes us as 'one dimensional man'.

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It is not just in terms of quantifying all our pleasures have we been wanting to speed up life but also our competing nature is also a driver.

We all are in a race, be it individuals in a race against fellow human beings to be more successful, wealthy, beautiful, intelligent or business groups where there is race to launch IPO, be part of unicorn club, expand and what not.

There is a similar amongst nations to reach so and so trillion dollars, launch as many satellites to space, be leader of emerging technology. There is race to space, in cyber, in technology, in medicine, in education.

What has all of this led to? This inherent race, running after material illusions has created a number of issues starting from

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Environmental tragedies which recent synthesis report also suggests. It had created an unequal world as suggested by Thomas Piketty in 'Capital in 21st century'.

It has given rise to crony capitalism and as Karl Marx suggests it has caused human alienation.

But does this mean to refute the need of increasing speed of life or experiencing pleasures, being competitive?

No!

The view that can be gathered here is this speed is not harmful as long as it is ready to explore the depth of life as well.

That is to say that in this race what we often forget is the essence of life. That life is not in speed but in stillness - in living the present moment. It more in depth than in breadth.

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By being 'fast and furious' the transition has been towards more shallow beings.

We forget that life is about maintaining good relations with our parents, friends whereby we build memories around them. Dr. APJ

Abdul Kalam once said that when I look back I don't remember how many classes I topped but how many friends I made and how they shaped me.

Further life also lies in living in harmony with nature, being in stillness of the mighty forest or experiencing the flow of rain and enjoying this experience

Life also lies in living in harmony with our fellow human beings where more than competition, cooperation prevails. We can learn from people like Bezwada Wilson

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who had been working endlessly to alleviate the misery of manual scavengers.

Further life also lies in reflecting on our past because "past is permanent dimension of human consciousness" and learn from mistake one committed.

It also lies in exploring one's passion and doing those tasks with full commitment. This leads us to see the beauty in the journey itself than reaching the destination. This is the flow state or as Taoist philosopher ~~calls~~ Lao Tzu calls 'wu wei'.

Thus life holds innumerable dimensions that transcends speed or distance or even time but rather the intensity with which one had lived in his limited time on this earth.

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This applies to individuals and can even be extrapolated to societies and nations.

It is based on an wholesome development of the society have the Multidimensional poverty index come up to track different aspects of poverty and alleviate them.

Further, nations had introduced concept of green GDP, gross environment index to track sustainability in development. Going a step further nations like Bhutan had come up with Gross Happiness Index to ensure its population is not at scramble for wealth but is at peace.

Thus having explored the multiple dimension of life and the necessity we need to remember

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the wisdom of philosopher J.S. Mill who refuted Bentham's felicific calculus and stated that quality of pleasure matter as much as its quantity.

Thus by increasing speed we may increasing quantity but by widening our horizons we can see the beauty in life.

we can take wisdom of E.F. Schumacher who in his much acclaimed work 'Small is beautiful' suggests how leading a simple life, finding joy in craft, creating beautiful environment gives much pleasure. This is something we all can regain especially 'Kiran's' of today and thus find joy in stillness than in speed.