



Chanakya Mandal Pariwar

1st July 2023

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UPSC Mains 2023 Test Series

ESSAY - 1

Time : 3 Hrs. & Marks : 250

Question Paper specific instructions

(Please read each of the following instructions carefully before attempting the questions)

- The essay must be written in the medium authorized in the Admission Certificate which must be stated clearly on the cover of this Question-cum-answer (QCA) Booklet in the space provided. No marks will be given written in medium other than the authorized one.
- Word Limit, as specified, should be adhered to.
- Any page or portion of the page left blank in Question-cum-Answer Booklet must be clearly struck off.
- Write two essays, choosing one topic from each of the following Sections A and B, in about 1000-1200 words each. **125 x 2 = 250**

THE DEATH OF DOGMA IS THE
BIRTH OF MORALITY

The 15th century Europe is well known for enabling age of Enlightenment and discoveries. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg is one such event that enabled the death of dogma and the birth of a new morality.

The shackles of religious dogma were demolished by leaders such as Martin Luther who translated the Bible in vernacular language. The forces set in motion by this led to the reformation of social norms that were against human dignity and agency.

As Max Weber writes in 'Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism', the new morality of Protestantism helped question all dogmas hitherto considered to be infallible.

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It also led to breakdown of feudalism and the rise of Capitalism which catapulted the economy to larger heights. Individual agency was brought to the forefront, and liberal-democratic norms like freedom of speech, expression, assembly and rule of law became a part of the new social morality.

However, in India, the dogma of caste and its emphasis on purity and pollution persists. It has not resulted in a change to birth of morality. Many commentators have criticized it for relying on religious dogma to justify practices detrimental to human dignity.

This essay endeavours to show how dogma — the uncritical acceptance of social/religio-political norms — militates against morality. It also examines the relation and distinction between dogma and morality, and also shines light

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on certain modern morals that are similar to dogmas.

Origins of dogma and its rationale

The age of hunter-gatherers involved humans living a relatively unorganized life. However, after the agricultural revolution, humans entered the era of civilizational triumph. Great achievements were made in science, political systems, agricultural systems, ~~the~~ art and culture and the like.

However, the need to consolidate and perpetuate the gains made humans status quest. They craved for stability, especially from a privileged point. Thus, as Plato advocated, various myths were perpetuated - like myth of metals and the earth born, socio-religious dogma, patriotism, tribal affiliations and the like. Humans who did not toe the popular dogma were disciplined through

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prisons, hospitals, schools, etc - as said by Michael Foucault. His idea of 'discourses'

blows the lid off dogmatic practices.

So dogma also helps instrumentally

in the personal sphere. For instance, parents inculcate in kids a tendency to not venture out after dark, to not talk

to strangers, to be a good student and worship God. This is the path that

is tried and tested, and assures parents of their children staying away from

conflict.

Dogma is also used to establish a social division of labour between and among classes, castes and

gender. For instance, a woman's unwavering commitment to household duties is

expected to enable the husband to earn and children to study. The dogma of

'jaini system' in India established

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division of labour among castes.

However, such imposed values do not constitute morality. Morality is moral only when it is voluntary.

Herein, individuals should have the tendency to question authority and demand answers. A wife should have the opportunity to question her husband and in-laws about the need to confine herself to domestic chores. The lower castes should be allowed to break the dogmatic shackles of the caste system to decide their future and occupation. Sexual minorities, agnostics and atheists should be allowed to break established dogma and fashion their relations with God as they deem fit. As the Rigveda says, 'Let Noble thoughts flow from all directions'. The Jain doctrine of 'Anekantavada' permits the existence of

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multiple strands of reality, without any one claiming dogmatic superiority. Amartya Sen (Argumentative Indian) says that Indians are usually not accepting of dogma in an unquestioning way, and cites the example of Gargi - Yajnavalkya debate.

Today, modernity assumes that local ties and parochial perspectives give way to universal commitments; that the truths of utility and science take precedence over those of emotions and non-rational, the individual rather than the group be the primary unit of society and politics, mastery rather than fatalism orient their attitudes towards life, that identity be chosen and not ascribed, associations in which men live should be based on choice.

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and not birth, and work be separated
from family in a bureaucratic organization
(... Rudolph and Rudolph, 1967)

Similarly, in the domain of personal
laws, the scriptural interpretations that
are theological dogma should unify into
a single constitutional morality. Thus, the
death of dogma can result in the
birth of morality.

Morality or dogma - who is to decide

As Edward Said (Orientalism) says,
today, the Western world has managed
to impose its dogma over the rest
as liberal democratic values. Grandhi
said that the Western culture is
materialistic, utilitarian, militaristic, consumerist
and individualistic. It is not conducive
for environmental sustainability or
economic prudence. However, the past



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World war-2 dominance of Western institutions and pacts like UDHR has resulted in this situation.

"A moral system common for all is basically immoral"

Lee Kuan Yew said that non-Western world have their own morality that is the natural outcome of society's organic evolution over centuries. To dismiss it as dogma would be unfair. Asian values like Confucianism, filial piety and respect for authority may seem like dogma to the West, but it is a way of life (morality) to its adherents.

The African value of 'Ubuntu' encourages social solidarity against the liberal dogma of acquisitive possessive individualism. Thus, promotion of human rights / liberal values is

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simply dogma dressed up as morality.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions good ✓

John Rawls, the normative philosopher, had endeavoured to devise a fully fair system of procedural justice free from the dogma of identities. He said that the 'veil of ignorance' is the ultimate thought experiment to devise a theory of justice that includes empathy for the least advantaged. ✓

However, as Amartya Sen argued, the morality of non-liberal western societies does not allow individuals to forget their identities even for a thought experiment. Rawls' advocacy stems from the dogma of liberal morality that he is born and brought up in (Sen's communitarian critique of Rawls) ✓

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Thus, morality has to evolve naturally, lest the principle of self-determination of people be violated. Social reform is best when it is voluntary and endogenic (inside out)

The modern world has seen other dogmas - of science and rationality. However, science promotes instrumental rationality. An individual's act of taking medicines prescribed by the doctor unquestioningly is not very different from blind faith to quack doctors or astrologers. Thus, the element of trust is common between dogma and rational morality.

Besides, just because dogma has waned, it doesn't mean that a fully moral system has taken birth. For instance, USA is considered as the land of liberal morality. However, the

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gun violence stems from deeper structural crises. Sociologists point towards deteriorating family systems, increasing drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, increasing crime rates, decline in social capital, weakening of work ethic, decreasing commitment to learning as markers of a deteriorating civilization. Thus, a healthy balance of traditional dogma (read - wisdom) and morality are required. It is like taming a wild horse. One can progressively increase the size of the rope, but still keep it tethered to the stake.

Besides, for certain groups like children, who are not possessing evolved personalities, dogma might help in keeping them off the wrong path. Though self-learning is the best, alternate parenting models (Indian parenting) may work just as adequately.

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JS Mill's harm principle might help decide if dogma should die or persist.

To conclude, it is true that death of dogma is the birth of morality.

However, what constitutes dogma and morality itself is complicated, as was examined earlier. Thus, healthy respect for traditional wisdom, in food habits, sleeping patterns as well as social conduct can go hand in hand with modern morality. Aristotle and Buddha's golden mean (Madhyam marga) are a case in point.

As Hegel said, human evolution takes place in a non-linear fashion, through dialectics. The tension between opposing forces (Yin-Yang) can lead humanity on path of progress.

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→ We must raise both the ceiling and the floor

✓ The Multidimensional Poverty Index 2020 published by the UN said that India had extracted over 270 million people from absolute poverty between 2005 and 2016. This was the outcome in an era when per-capita incomes also grew astronomically high, and GDP rose from USD 2 trillion to USD 3 trillion, and poverty definition changed from USD 1.9 per head per day to USD 3.25.

— "Rising tide lifts all boats" ✓

As this saying goes, in times of high growth, there is a chance to increase the ceiling as well as the floor. As incomes rise, the tax collection of the state increases. This augments state

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Capacity to provide for welfare schemes for the least advantaged. In this manner, a virtuous cycle of organic growth and healthy competition can be created for raising both the ceiling and floor.

This essay discusses the need and the manner to raise both the ceiling and floor in various aspects of life, and also delves into situations where this might be counter-intuitive.

In India, a pattern of skewed migration is seen, wherein rural to urban and North to South/West-ward migration is seen. This is caused by economic and social distress in the rural areas and hinterland of the North.

However, alternative modes of development have been suggested wherein

hub-and-spoke Model of growth and skill-development through schemes like National Rural Livelihood mission are promoted to prevent distress migration. In this manner, while cities become hub of development (raising of ceiling), migration can be kept in check by economic growth and welfare in ~~the~~ rural areas also.

This can help improve the lives of the historically disadvantaged groups also, like women, dalits and tribals. For instance, the head of Dalit Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DICCI), Mr. Chandrabhan Prasad, was of the view that caste oppression in Indian villages was on account of caste-based segregation of occupations and limited resources. Imagine a situation where an agricultural caste

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comes into conflict with a pastoral caste over access to grazing rights for the latter. Prasad was of the view that rapid economic and social mobility would help to increase the size of the resource pie and dilute the class-occupation overlap. Thus, increasing both the floor and ceiling is necessary.

Even when it comes to standards of social morality, transformative constitutionalism is seen as a way to challenge the fundamental social mores by raising both the ceiling and floor of what is considered accepted or not. For instance, raising the floor of marriageable age was a continuous exercise right since the British era. This culminated recently in the increase of women's



age of marriage from 18 to 21 years. This helps women break the glass ceiling of social restrictions. Even the criminalization of marital rape and de-criminalization of adultery should be seen in this direction.

In the international arena, UN secretary General has pointed out the 4 horsemen that are the biggest challenge to global cooperation - cybercrimes, climate change, populist nationalism and terrorism. Such problems without passport like the COVID-pandemic require countries to increase the ceiling of economic cooperation. India has rightfully undertaken the initiative of providing digital public goods like CoWIN, UPI, Aadhar to the world through G-20.

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This should be accompanied by international consensus on minimum acceptable conduct during conflict. ✓

Raising the floor on conduct like cybercrime, use of weapons during warfare can be incorporated in an updated Geneva Conventions. ✓

However, one pressing area to increase both the floor and the ceiling would be the area of freedom of speech and expression. In India and internationally, the censoring of free speech at the altar of hurt sentiments has long sacrificed the fundamental rights. Such mindsets also lead to silencing of subaltern voices. Thus, it is necessary to increase both the ceiling and the floor in free speech. Any impediments should

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be subject to higher order necessities (national security) that are well-defined.

However, it is time to look at certain areas where raising both the floor and ceiling might have undesirable consequences.

It was discussed earlier as to how the economic forces of creative destruction (Adam Smith, Schumpeter) can raise minimum wages as well as GDP. However, the problem of the economy overheating soon occupies center-stage, as inflation starts to hurt the less fortunate, as was seen in the second half of the 2000s in India.

The clamour for quick growth also leads to destruction of the environment - As Gandhiji said - There is

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enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. This shows the limits of raising the economic floor and ceiling.

That is why in ancient India, the purusharthas elaborated on securing all aspects of life - Dharma, Artha,

Kama, Moksha. Pursuing spiritual along with economic pursuits can lead to all-round well-being. Here, it is about balancing floors and ceilings of various aspects (Golden)

Mean of Buddha). ३१ & २१ २१

The blind pursuit of ambition also led Alexander of Macedon to wage countless wars and capture vast territories. He believed in increasing the ambit of his floor as well as ceiling. However, this led to

tremendous bloodshed and the problem of managing his vast empire post his death. The lack of a succession plan led to internecine battles and a fragmented polity. Even Hitler's goal of Lebensraum met with similar fate.

In the domain of individual liberty, gun laws in USA are leading to the rampant shootouts with loss of life. The technological developments like Machine Learning, AI, Industrial Revolution 4.0, block-chain and the like threaten to upend human civilization as we know it. Thus, while it is necessary to increase the floor, some mutually agreed ceiling might be desirable. Otherwise, generative AI becoming sentient will not be a thing of the future.

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However, one strand of thought also believes that while the floor should be raised, the ceiling should be lowered. This idea applied in the economic sphere ~~leads to~~ is an aspect of Marxism. (equality of outcome)

W O In India, the Economic survey 2016-17 discovered that the economic and social indicators among Northern/Eastern states and Southern/Western states need to converge. This is the solution for reducing distress migration. Individuals will always be enticed towards better growth prospects elsewhere, and they should witness a convergence of floor ~~growth~~ and ceiling to be compelled to stay put.



Aristotle, in his theory of revolutions, had suggested that individual and social resentment towards the wealthy class can lead to violent socio-political upheavals. Thus, the goal of the statesman should be to enable convergence between the well-to-do and the disadvantaged sections.

The Bhakti movement in India also tried to forge convergence among various social groups, while bringing them on the path of weldless devotion. The ceiling of the upper castes was to lower as the floor of lower castes was to rise.

However, technological advancements have led to a fourth type of situation, where the floor is to be constant, But ceiling is set to rise.

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Vertical farming, in a space constrained world, aims to achieve this. Medical supplements endeavour to increase immunity while guaranteeing a sense of minimum well-being (floor).

An ode to the future:

Human progress, according to Hegel, does not occur in a linear manner. Rather, through dialectics (thesis, antithesis and synthesis), civilization moves along.

Thus, while it is important to increase the floor and ceiling, it is important to also know exceptions and limitations. Indian knowledge and wisdom like Sthitaprajya (wisdom),

Kavalajyan (enlightenment) and Buddhist nirvana and Nadhyana Marga can reduce suffering while pursuing development.