



Mains Practice Question

Q. What teachings of Buddha are most relevant today and why? Discuss. (UPSC GS-4 Mains 2020)

11 Feb, 2021 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the main goal of Buddhist philosophy.
- Discuss the conceptual framework of Buddhist thought & its relevance.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The main goal of Buddhism philosophy is to eliminate suffering and unhappiness. As the world increasingly grows interdependent and is beset by conflicts, Buddha's philosophies will only grow more relevant.

Body

Conceptual Framework of Buddhist Thought & Its Relevance

The essence of Buddha's teaching is contained in the Four Noble Truths. These Four Noble truths set out the path for an individual's enlightenment. These four noble truths are as follows:

- **The truth of dukkha:** According to Buddha all sources of happiness are transient, any feeling of happiness is accompanied by dissatisfaction.
 - Thus, there is a need to look for happiness in external things rather than in our internal feelings and attitudes.
 - This doctrine of Buddhism is relevant in the light of increasing materialism and consumerism in society.
- **The truth of the origin of the dukkha:** The origin of dukkha is traced to craving conditioned by ignorance.
 - Ignorance implies a misunderstanding of the self and reality.
 - This can find relevance in developed countries ignoring climate change and its impact, which will affect whole humankind in the medium to long term.
- **The truth of the cessation of dukkha:** Cessation of dukkha is the objective of Buddhist spiritual practices.
 - Buddhism lays down special emphasis on meditation, which is an activity of training the mind and helping to develop more beneficial attitudes toward life.
 - Meditation can help people to deal with increasing mental disorders in the age of smartphones and lead to moral and mental self-improvement.
- **The truth of the path leading to the cessation of dukkha:** The fourth noble path is the way to end dukkha. It is called the eightfold path.
 - It consists of: Right Understanding; Right Thought; Right Speech; Right Action; Right

Livelihood; Right Effort; Right mindfulness; and right concentration.

- Right Speech envisages abstaining from telling lies and speaking deceitfully. This can be applied to tackle increasing hate speech and growing intolerance in society.
- Right livelihood implies that one should follow righteous means of earning wealth. This finds relevance in growing inequalities and corruption in the economic sphere.
- Right effort can lead to self-discipline, honesty, altruism, and compassion, which can tackle ongoing social decay.

Conclusion

The relevance to Buddhism can be traced from the words of Dalai Lama who stated that the 20th century was a century of war and violence, it was the work of humanity to ensure the 21st century goes on the way of peace and dialogue.

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