



Mains Practice Question

Essay Topics

1. Truth is not what we see, but what we choose to acknowledge
2. The past is a compass, not a map.

29 Mar, 2025 Essay Essay

1. Truth is not what we see, but what we choose to acknowledge

▪ Quotes to Enrich Your Essay:

- George Orwell: "The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. Lies will pass into history."
- Friedrich Nietzsche: "There are no facts, only interpretations."
- Carl Jung: "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."

▪ Theoretical and Philosophical Dimensions:

◦ Truth vs. Perception:

- Human perception is inherently limited and subjective. What we see is often filtered through our biases, experiences, and cultural conditioning.
- **Cognitive biases** like confirmation bias, selective perception, and the Dunning-Kruger effect shape our interpretation of reality.

◦ Acknowledgment as a Moral and Intellectual Act:

- Acknowledging the truth requires courage, honesty, and awareness. Denial often stems from convenience or fear.
- **Moral psychology** shows that individuals often avoid uncomfortable truths to maintain cognitive consistency or social harmony.

◦ Truth in a Post-Truth Era:

- In today's information age, facts are often drowned in narratives. What gains visibility is not necessarily what is true, but what is **amplified** or **chosen** by masses or media.
- "Truth" becomes a **function of collective agreement**, not objective verification.

▪ Policy and Historical Examples:

◦ Selective Acknowledgment in History:

- **Climate Change Denial:** Despite overwhelming scientific evidence, denial persists due to vested interests and short-term political/economic gains.
- **Caste Discrimination in India:** Though legally abolished, societal structures continue to deny the deep-rooted reality of caste-based inequities.

◦ Truth in Transitional Justice:

- **South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC):** Instead of burying the atrocities of apartheid, the TRC promoted national healing by **acknowledging** painful truths.
- **Holocaust Education in Germany:** A model of how acknowledging historical atrocities builds moral responsibility in future generations.

▪ Contemporary Examples:

◦ Media and Algorithmic Reality:

- **Echo Chambers:** Social media platforms show users content aligned with their beliefs, distorting perception and leading to ideological polarization.
- **Deepfakes and Misinformation:** The line between reality and illusion is increasingly blurred, making “truth” a matter of algorithmic validation.
- **Personal Psychology:**
 - Many people ignore emotional or psychological trauma rather than confront it, illustrating how truth is not always **seen**, but must be chosen to be dealt with.

2. The past is a compass, not a map

▪ **Quotes to Enrich Your Essay:**

- **Confucius:** “Study the past if you would define the future.”
- **Winston Churchill:** “Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.”
- **Yuval Noah Harari:** “History began when humans invented gods, and will end when humans become gods.”

▪ **Theoretical and Philosophical Dimensions:**

- **Compass vs. Map:**
 - A **map** suggests fixed directions and certainties, while a compass offers orientation without prescribing a single path.
 - History cannot be mechanically replicated; it can guide principles but not outcomes.
- **Danger of Historical Determinism:**
 - Blind reliance on past models (e.g., nationalism rooted in glorified history) often leads to **regressive policies** or **conflict**.
 - Human agency and context evolve — what worked in the past may become irrelevant or even harmful in a different socio-political landscape.
- **Use of History in Identity and Morality:**
 - The past offers ethical benchmarks and collective memory. It helps societies remember what must never be repeated—like genocide, slavery, or colonial oppression.
 - Philosophically, history offers **existential grounding**, but should not be a chain shackling future innovation.

▪ **Policy and Historical Examples:**

- **Productive Uses of the Past:**
 - **Indian Constitution:** Borrowed features from various global constitutions, not as templates but as guiding **philosophical principles** (e.g., UK’s parliamentary system, US’s federalism).
 - **European Union Formation:** Learning from the devastation of two world wars, European nations chose integration over nationalism, using the past as a **moral compass**.
- **Misuse or Overreliance on the Past:**
 - **Nazi Germany’s mythic past:** Hitler’s glorification of the Aryan race and ancient Germanic identity led to fascism and genocide.
 - **Taliban’s imposition of Sharia law:** Attempts to recreate a past societal order, ignoring modern values of gender equality and human rights.

▪ **Contemporary Examples:**

- **History-Inspired Reforms:**
 - **South Korea’s rise from colonization and war:** Instead of lamenting the past, it became a tech and education hub by redefining its national narrative.
 - **Truth and Reconciliation in Rwanda** post-genocide: Rebuilt society by acknowledging the past but not being trapped by vengeance.
- **Dangers of Living in the Past:**
 - **Cultural nostalgia movements** often resist progressive laws, from LGBTQ+ rights to gender equality, by citing “traditional values”.
 - In geopolitics, **revanchist ideologies** (e.g., Russia invoking Soviet-era glory) create global instability

