



Mains Practice Question

Essay Topics

1. The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.
2. The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

16 Aug, 2025 Essay Essay

Introduction:

In 1965, during the peak of the **Civil Rights Movement** in the **United States**, **Martin Luther King Jr.** addressed a crowd in **Montgomery**. People who had suffered centuries of slavery, racial discrimination, and humiliation stood weary but hopeful. King reminded them with timeless words: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” His message was not of instant triumph, but of **patient faith** — that **history**, though slow, inevitably bends towards what is **right** and **just**.

This profound insight is not confined to one nation’s struggle. From **India’s independence movement** to the **dismantling of apartheid** in **South Africa**, and even the ongoing quest for climate justice and gender justice, history reminds us that while injustice often appears entrenched, humanity’s conscience and **perseverance** steadily bend the arc towards justice.

Body:

Philosophical and Ethical Foundations

- **Moral Universe** → refers to the collective conscience of humanity.
- **Justice** → ultimate moral goal, as seen in Plato’s Republic, Aristotle’s Justice as virtue, and Rawls’ Justice as fairness.
- **Ethical dimension:** Virtue ethics (justice as cardinal virtue), Utilitarianism (justice promotes maximum happiness), Gandhian ethics (ahimsa as path to justice).

Historical Illustrations of the Arc Bending to Justice

- **Abolition of Slavery** → Though it persisted for centuries, the world moved towards abolition.
- **Decolonization** → India’s independence, African liberation, showing justice delayed but ultimately achieved.
- **Civil Rights Movement (USA)** → MLK himself as an example of the arc bending toward racial justice.
- **Fall of Apartheid in South Africa** → Mandela’s leadership in aligning the moral universe with justice.

Indian Context

- **Freedom Struggle** → from 1857 to 1947, demonstrating moral resilience. Gandhi’s satyagraha showed patience and moral conviction.
- **Social Justice** → abolition of untouchability (Article 17), reservations for Scheduled Castes/Tribes, women’s empowerment.

- **Judicial interventions** → Kesavananda Bharati (Basic Structure), decriminalization of Section 377 (LGBTQ+ rights), Right to Privacy.
- **Grassroots justice movements** → Chipko, Narmada Bachao Andolan, RTI movement.

Contemporary Global Relevance

- **Climate Justice** → Global South demanding equity in climate negotiations, though slow, shows an arc bending toward environmental justice.
- **Gender Justice** → #MeToo movement, increasing representation of women.
- **Digital Justice** → debates on privacy, AI ethics, data protection.
- **International Law** → ICC, UN declarations, though slow, bring hope for human rights justice globally.

Counter-Arguments (The Arc is Not Always Smooth)

- **Delays in Justice** → “Justice delayed is justice denied.”
- **Rise of authoritarianism** → suppression of freedoms in some nations.
- **Economic inequality** → growing divide despite moral progress.
- **Climate change injustice** → wealthy nations continue exploitation.

Role of Institutions and Human Agency

- **Democratic institutions** → legislatures, judiciary, media uphold justice.
- **Civil society & movements** → pressure governments to align policies with justice.
- **Global frameworks** → UN, WTO reforms, Paris Agreement.
- **Individual responsibility** → ethics in personal conduct and leadership.

Way Forward

- Justice requires **patience, persistence, and collective action**.
- Need to strengthen the rule of law, democracy, and human rights institutions.
- Use of technology for justice → e-courts, digital inclusion.
- Promote global solidarity → South-South cooperation, equitable development.
- Build a culture of ethical leadership where justice becomes a lived value.

Conclusion:

- Justice is not merely a promise of the past but the **compass of humanity’s future**. The arc of the moral universe may be long, but its bending depends on our collective will to nurture truth, compassion, and equality. For nations like India, with its civilizational ethos of “Satyameva Jayate” and constitutional pledge of justice for all, the challenge is to transform moral vision into living reality — in governance, society, and global leadership.
- If humanity can align its scientific progress with ethical responsibility, its economic growth with social equity, and its political power with universal dignity, then the arc will not only bend toward justice but also illuminate a just, inclusive, and sustainable future for generations to come.

Q2.Ans:

Introduction :

In **1930s Germany**, as Hitler rose to power, most ordinary citizens — **teachers, workers, lawyers, even clergy** — chose silence, believing politics was not their concern. Their inaction gave space for tyranny to grow, leading to one of history’s darkest chapters. Edmund Burke’s timeless words — “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing” — capture this truth with **piercing clarity**. Evil rarely succeeds because of its strength alone; it thrives when **apathy, fear, or indifference** paralyse those who know what is right.

This idea resonates across **ages**: whether in **colonial India, apartheid South Africa**, or modern

struggles against corruption, injustice and climate crisis, the lesson remains the same — silence in the face of wrong is itself a form of complicity.

Body :

Philosophical and Ethical Foundations

- **Moral philosophy:**
 - **Aristotle:** virtue requires action, not passivity.
 - **Kant:** duty to act in accordance with moral law.
 - **Gandhi:** Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good.

Historical Illustrations

- **Rise of Hitler and Nazism:** The indifference of the global community allowed atrocities to grow.
- **Apartheid in South Africa :** persisted because the majority remained silent until global and local resistance intensified.
- **Civil Rights Movement in the US:** Silence allowed racism to continue, but protests, Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership, and legal victories broke it and brought change.
- **Indian Freedom Struggle:** Gandhi mobilized ordinary citizens, breaking the silence of a colonized population.

Indian Context

- **Social reformers** like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ambedkar acted against entrenched evils like sati, untouchability, and caste discrimination.
- **Constitutional ethos:** Directive Principles, Fundamental Duties — urging citizens to actively work for justice.
- **Public apathy in modern India:** corruption, communal violence, and environmental degradation thrive when citizens remain passive.
- **Example:** Nirbhaya case protests (2012) — collective action vs silence.

Contemporary Global Relevance

- **Climate change:** Inaction of leaders and public complacency allows ecological destruction.
- **Digital misinformation and hate speech** thrive when responsible voices remain silent.
- **War and humanitarian crises:** e.g., global silence during the Rwandan genocide, current conflicts.
- **Gender inequality and harassment:** silence perpetuates discrimination.

Counter-Arguments & Nuance

- Sometimes **silence is strategic:** diplomacy, negotiation, or Gandhian non-violent resistance.
- Not all evils can be tackled by individuals — it requires systemic action.
- Distinguish between **responsible silence** (to reflect or prevent escalation) and complicit silence (that enables evil).

Role of Institutions and Individuals

- **Institutions:** the judiciary, media, and civil society must prevent the normalization of evil.
- **Citizens:** vigilance, activism, whistleblowing, voting responsibly.
- **Leaders:** ethical leadership, moral courage to speak truth to power.

Way Forward

- Cultivating **moral courage** in education and civic life.
- Strengthening **accountability mechanisms**.
- Encouraging **participatory democracy**, active citizenship.
- Promoting **whistleblower protection, RTI, and transparency** to empower good individuals.

Conclusion:

Evil triumphs not by its strength but through the silence, **fear**, and **apathy** of the **righteous**. As Hannah Arendt observed, "Most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil." The future of justice, freedom, and human dignity depends on active citizenship and moral courage. When **good men and women act**, the arc of history bends firmly toward justice and hope.

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