



Mains Practice Question

Essay Topics

1. Power reveals character more than adversity ever could.
2. Morality is not taught, it is awakened.

12 Apr, 2025 Essay Essay

1. Power reveals character more than adversity ever could.

▪ Quotes to Enrich the Essay:

- **Abraham Lincoln:** "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."
- **Plato:** "The measure of a man is what he does with power."
- **Chanakya:** "He who is overly ambitious cannot remain virtuous for long."

▪ Philosophical and Ethical Dimensions:

- **Adversity** often brings out **resilience, courage, or humility** due to compulsion. But power offers **freedom of choice**, making one's ethical compass visible.
- **Power tests restraint.** While adversity may limit options, power expands them, what we choose to do with that freedom defines our **moral maturity**.
- **Ethical theories** like Kantian deontology emphasize the role of intention; power exposes those intentions.
- In **Indian philosophy**, "**Dharma**" must guide those in power. Mahabharata is a narrative of kings (Yudhishtira, Duryodhana) facing moral tests in power.

▪ Historical and Political Illustrations:

- **Moral Leadership in Power:**
 - **Ashoka after Kalinga War:** Transformed from a conquest-driven emperor to a ruler guided by Buddhist dharma and compassion.
 - **Nelson Mandela:** After decades of adversity, he used power to unite rather than avenge, his true character surfaced in power.
- **Power Revealing Flaws:**
 - **Hitler and the Nazi Regime (Germany):** Rose from adversity in post-WWI Germany, promising national rejuvenation.
 - After acquiring power, he unleashed **authoritarian rule, genocidal policies, and world war**, resulting in global catastrophe.

▪ Institutional and Structural Context:

- **Constitutional checks and balances** exist because power tends to corrupt. Ambedkar emphasized **constitutional morality** to discipline power.
- **RTI Act, judicial review, civil society**, these exist to watch how power is exercised, not how people handle adversity.
- Power tests one's ability to balance authority with accountability, reflecting humility or hubris.

▪ Personal Psychology:

- Power lowers inhibitions, letting true motives surface, while adversity may suppress individuality.
- Power reveals **ego, empathy, values, or lack thereof**.

- In careers (bureaucrats, CEOs), some exploit power for gain; others use it for **reform and public service**.
- Whistleblowers often emerge when they observe unethical use of power.
- **Metaphorical Reflections:**
 - Power is like fire, **it illuminates or destroys**, depending on the wielder.
 - **Mirror metaphor**, Adversity shows resilience, but **power shows reflection** of one's inner self

Conclusion

True character is not forged merely by surviving hardship, but by how one behaves **when they no longer have to suffer**. Power, thus, is the real test—whether it corrupts, restrains, or transforms depends on the strength of character. Hence, societies must nurture **ethically grounded leadership**, not just resilient individuals. Power, unlike adversity, offers a stage to enact one's deepest values. India's journey from ancient raj-dharma to modern democracy shows character shapes and legacies. Future leaders must wield power as a tool for justice, not dominance.

2. Morality is not taught, it is awakened.

- **Quotes to Enrich the Essay:**
 - **Swami Vivekananda:** "Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man."
 - **Socrates:** "I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think."
 - **Albert Einstein:** "A man's ethical behavior should be based on sympathy, education, and social ties; no religious basis is necessary."
- **Philosophical and Ethical Dimensions:**
 - Morality is not imposed externally; it is **realized internally** through self-awareness and empathy.
 - **Plato's Theory of Forms:** Moral knowledge already exists in the soul and needs to be "recollected."
 - **Indian philosophy (Vedanta):** Atman is inherently pure; ignorance (Avidya) obscures it.
 - **Moral awakening** is linked to **conscience**, not just compliance.
- **Psychological and Educational Perspective:**
 - **Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development** show that moral reasoning evolves with cognitive maturity, not rote teaching.
 - **Moral intuitionism** (Jonathan Haidt): Morality arises from deep-seated intuitive responses, not only rational training.
 - **Value education** in schools is necessary, but moral awakening comes from **life experience, reflection, and empathy**.
- **Historical and Contemporary Examples:**
 - Gandhi's morality was not taught in law school, but awakened through *Tolstoy Farm, South Africa experience, and Bhagavad Gita*.
- **Societal and Institutional Reflections:**
 - **Laws can enforce compliance, not morality.**
 - True ethics in civil service must go beyond rules (conduct rules, code of ethics) and reflect inner moral sense.
 - **Gandhian ethics:** Self-purification and self-awareness awaken moral strength.
 - **Online misinformation**, trolling, mob mentality, despite formal education, many fail morally.
- **Metaphorical Reflections:**
 - Morality is a **seed**, not a script. Teaching is watering it, but awakening is when it **germinates from within**.
 - A lamp may be given, but **only when the oil of awareness is present, can it shine**.

Conclusion

Morality is not about rulebooks or authority—it is about **conscious realization** of what is right. It cannot be downloaded; it must be awakened through experience, empathy, and inner growth. The purpose of education and leadership is not just to inform, but to **awaken this deeper moral consciousness** in

individuals and society.

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