



Mains Practice Question

Q. What is the relevance of Buddha's teachings in contemporary societies? (250 words)

16 Apr, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach:

- Discuss briefly the problems associated with contemporary societies. Mention four noble truths of Buddha and the eightfold path.
- Discuss the relevance of Buddha's teachings in contemporary times.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The societies across the globe are facing serious issues ranging from **moral and cultural degradation** to **religious conflicts, corruption, lack of food and water security, lack of economic opportunity** and **employment, environmental degradations** etc. It is in these times that the values like compassion, solidarity and peace become even more relevant.

Body

- With every advancement that man has made in recent time, there has been an associated negative impact in society.
- **Physical and Mental Dissatisfaction:** Today in this scientifically and technologically developed global village, though there are many amenities, for easy living and pleasure, people are both physically and mentally not satisfied and do not have a feeling of security.
- **Alienation:** consumerism is causing the breakdown in community and leading towards hyper-individuality, and alienation from the families and communities. This has further led to a lack of empathy towards others suffering, essentially invoking selfishness and greed in society.

The relevance of Buddha's Teachings

- Buddha's teachings emphasise on learning based on one's observations and perception and believe that knowledge is not possible without experience.
- **Greed and desire, Ignorance or delusion** and **Hatred and destructive urges** have been considered to be the main causes of suffering, according to Buddha.
- The Buddha stressed in his teachings that the way to extinguish desire, which causes suffering, is to **liberate oneself** from attachments like greed, desire, ignorance, delusion, hatred and destructive urges.
- Buddha prescribed an eightfold path, the middle way for liberation. The **eightfold path** revolves around **Wisdom** (right understanding and intention), **Ethical Conduct** (right speech, action and livelihood) and **Meditation** (right effort, mindfulness and concentration).
- **Right understanding and intention** can open the path for knowledge and can liberate the people from ignorance and delusion.
- **Right speech** can liberate from the hatred that is spread across the world on the name of race, ethnicity, religion etc.
- **Right action and livelihood** can liberate society from corruption, it can ensure food and water

- security and will enhance economic opportunity and employment giving way to prosperity for all.
- **Right effort**, mindfulness and concentration can ensure mental peace and enrich moral and cultural values.
 - **Loving-kindness, a meditation practice**, which brings about positive attitudinal changes as it systematically develops the quality of 'loving-acceptance'.
 - Loving-kindness produces four qualities of friendliness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity. This can make societies more inclusive and empathetic towards the vulnerable sections.
 - **Bhavana or meditation** is the most significant aspect of the Buddha's preachings. It means the training of the mind. Buddha believed that everything emanates from the man's mind. A pure mind, a trained mind, a well-developed mind is **man's greatest treasure**.

Conclusion

- The Buddhist teachings inculcate compassion, calmness & composure, joy among humans and they can help maintain a sustainable balance between man and nature.
- Buddha's teachings can transform the societies into their better and more humane forms as reflected by Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama "the 20th century was a century of war and violence, now we all need to work to see that the 21st century is of peace and dialogue.'

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