



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the Stoic's models of ethics in terms of its suitability for modern civil servants? (150 words)

21 May, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Briefly discuss the Stoics ethical models in Introduction.
- In body mention the ethical notions and cardinal virtues of Stoic.
- Inspect the suitability of the model properly in terms of their utility for modern-day civil servants.
- Conclude the answer suitably.

Introduction

- Stoicism is an ancient Greek philosophy which teaches the development of self-control and fortitude as a means of overcoming destructive emotions.
- It does not seek to extinguish emotions completely but rather seeks to transform them by a resolute Asceticism, which enables a person to develop clear judgment, inner calm and freedom from suffering.

Body

Basic Tenets of Stoicism

- The philosophy of Stoicism is often divided into three parts:
 - Logic: a way to determine if your perceptions of the world are correct;
 - Physics (natural science): a structure to understand the natural world; and
 - Ethics: the study of how to live one's life.
- The main ethical notions held by the Stoic philosophers.
 - **Nature:** Nature is rational.
 - **Law of Reason:** The universe is governed by the law of reason. Humans can't actually escape its inexorable force, but they can, uniquely, follow the law deliberately.
 - **Virtue:** A life led according to rational nature is virtuous.
 - **Wisdom:** Wisdom is the root virtue. From it springs the cardinal virtues: prudence, bravery, self-control, and justice.
 - **Apatheia:** Since passion(anger) is irrational, life should be waged as a battle against it. The intense feeling should be avoided.
 - **Pleasure:** Pleasure is neither good nor bad. It is only acceptable if it doesn't interfere with the quest for virtue.
 - **Evil:** Poverty, illness, and death are not evil.
 - **Duty:** Virtue should be sought, not for the sake of pleasure, but for duty.

Utility for Civil Servants

- The Stoics classified these different forms of virtue under four broad headings, the four cardinal virtues:
 - **Wisdom or Prudence:** Includes excellent deliberation, good judgment, perspective, good

sense.

- **Justice or Fairness:** Includes good-heartedness, benevolence, public service, fair dealing.
 - **Courage or Fortitude:** Includes bravery, perseverance, authenticity (honesty), confidence.
 - **Self-Discipline or Temperance:** Includes orderliness, self-control, forgiveness, humility.
- The goal of Stoicism is freedom from anger through the pursuit of reason.
- It teaches indifference and a "passive" reaction to external events and equanimity in the face of life's highs and lows.

Conclusion

- Public service, unlike many other jobs, includes direct interaction with people to resolve their problems. Any deviation from the side of the public servant could have a multi-fold adverse effect.
- So it becomes essential that he/she should have virtues like wisdom, self-control, fortitude & prudence.
 - It makes a civil servant clear, unbiased and self-disciplined and allows them to understand the things rationally.

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