



Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the contemporary relevance of Ashoka's Dhamma in the context of India's pluralistic society. **(150 words)**

12 Aug, 2024 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Introduce the answer with history of Ashoka's Dhamma
- Discuss the Contemporary Relevance of Ashoka's Dhamma in India's Pluralistic Society
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Ashoka's Dhamma refers to the moral and ethical code that Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire propagated during his reign in the **3rd century BCE**. After the devastating **Kalinga War**, Ashoka embraced Buddhism and sought to promote values such as non-violence (ahimsa), compassion, tolerance, and social welfare throughout his empire.

- It remains relevant in modern India's diverse society by offering timeless principles for addressing issues like **religious tolerance, social inequality, and ethical governance**.

Body

Contemporary Relevance of Ashoka's Dhamma in India's Pluralistic Society:

- **Non-violence and Conflict Resolution:** The principle of non-violence (ahimsa) in Dhamma is highly relevant in **addressing various conflicts in modern India**, from communal tensions to regional disputes.
 - **Example:** The use of dialogue and peaceful negotiations in resolving interstate water disputes, such as the **Cauvery water issue between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**, embodies this principle.
- **Social Welfare and Inclusive Development:** Ashoka's focus on public welfare resonates with India's developmental goals.
 - The emphasis on building public infrastructure and caring for the marginalized sections of society is reflected in various government initiatives.
 - **Example:** The **Ayushman Bharat scheme**, which aims to provide healthcare to underprivileged sections of society, mirrors Ashoka's concern for public well-being.
- **Environmental protection:** Ashoka's edicts mention the protection of animals and plants, which is particularly relevant in the face of current environmental challenges.
 - **Example:** India's commitment to increasing forest cover and protecting biodiversity, as seen in projects like **Project Tiger**, aligns with this aspect of **Dhamma**.
- **Religious Tolerance and Secularism:** Ashoka's emphasis on respect for all faiths aligns with India's secular ethos.
 - In today's India, **where religious tensions occasionally flare up**, the principles of Dhamma can serve as a guideline for promoting interfaith harmony.

- **Example:** The **Interfaith Dialogue initiatives** organized by various NGOs and government bodies across India reflect the spirit of Ashoka's religious tolerance.
- **Ethical Governance:** The principles of Dhamma emphasize just and moral governance, which is crucial for modern India's democratic system.
 - **Example:** The **Right to Information Act, 2005**, which promotes transparency in governance, reflects the ethical administration advocated by Ashoka.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Ashoka's approach to spreading Dhamma through peaceful means can inspire India's soft power diplomacy.
 - **Example:** India's global promotion of **yoga and Ayurveda** as part of its cultural outreach echoes Ashoka's method of peaceful propagation of ideas.

Conclusion

Ashoka's Dhamma continues to be relevant in modern India's pluralistic society by providing a framework for **religious tolerance, ethical governance, social welfare, and peaceful coexistence**. Its principles align well with India's constitutional values and can serve as a guide in addressing contemporary challenges in maintaining unity in diversity.

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