

# UPSC

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CENTRE - ONLINE

MEDIUM - ~~HINDI~~ English

1 July, 2023.

Start time : 10 pm , end time : 1 am

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The pursuit of knowledge leads to  
the discovery of truth

Isaac  
Consider, Newton. A young  
man chilling below an apple tree,  
when suddenly an apple falls on  
his head. Instead of scratching his  
head on ~~why~~ how the apple ~~to~~ has  
fallen, he focussed on the why. He  
started pursuing on the why, and  
it led him to discover gravity, in his  
Principia.

The above widely known  
story of <sup>Sir Isaac</sup> Newton acts as a good  
life-lesson, that is, to pursue  
knowledge. To think, do apply a  
critical mind, and this will  
help us know the reality.

This essay deals with how doing hardwork, taking austere measures help us get closer to the reality. Yet how, sometimes this same pursuit may not <sup>lead</sup> ~~reach~~ us to truth, rather it may distort it.

Why does truth discover truth?

Truth, in the simplest sense, refers to the things that exist in reality. It is something that is objective or subjective. ~~Truth has~~ It may be a simple empirical data that is a result of reasoning as well as observation. Or, it may be subjective, not absolute, in sense that it is an end goal — which is achieved through the path of knowledge.

But why should we discover truth? Philosopher Freidrich Nietzsche states that the ultimate goal of mankind is to overcome itself, to make ourselves better. We bear a responsibility towards our future generations - to ensure that they live peacefully and not be misled. knowing the reality helps us identify our strengths and weaknesses, our prospects and challenges.

Knowledge serves as a means to attain truth. It implies applying a critical mind, moral reasoning, observing the nature, the surroundings and everything around us. Aristotle has rightly said that 'knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom'.

History is replete with



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examples of great men and women whose pursuit of knowledge helped in attaining the truth. Buddhism Gautama became Buddha after he wanted to know the meaning of life, his existence. He asked questions - why is there so much misery. His quest helped him attain Nirvana.

likewise, attaining truth through pursuit of knowledge also happened for Adi Shankaracharya ji. His philosophy of Advaita Vedanta stated that Mind and the divine are one. You are the divine.

This also involved differing perceptions of truth, although the pursuit of knowledge is common. Unlike Adi Shankaracharya, Vallabhecharya ji emphasised on ~~Rachit~~ Dvaitavada which meant that mind and the divine are separate. Indeed,



the pursuit of knowledge ~~may vary~~ on the same question can lead to differing perceptions of truth.

Come to medieval India. The emergence of Bhakti movements was also one of enlightenment. Kabir was the symbol of syncretism and tolerance because of his critical reasoning. The lingayat movement in South India stressed on anti-untouchability, the belief that God, the ultimate truth - believes in equality of humankind.

Knowledge's pursuits for truth have been relevant for none other than Gandhiji. Gandhiji through 'his experiments with truth' stated that his philosophy of Ahimsa, Satyagraha, Sarvadharm Sambhav was a result of his ~~own~~ observation and moral thinking.

Contemporary pursuits to knowledge have also resulted in gaining

6

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a true picture of reality. eg finding a new tribe in the deep woods in Amazon - is a result of expeditions.

This is along the same lines as when Christopher Columbus discovered the land of Americas and Captain Cook found out about Australia & New Zealand.

Modern pursuits in domain of science has helped attain the true status of our lives and our realities.

Scientists are working day and night to make the world a better place.

Research is ongoing on unresolved issues like cancers, stem cells, degenerative disorders and the like.

likewise, to make inter-generational equity a reality, Countries have been making continuous investments on cleaner energy sources. Indeed, for a cleaner



environment as a reality, the path of research is essential.

Pursuit of knowledge may lead to distortion of truth

While pursuit of knowledge generally leads to desirable and ethical outcomes - as in getting a clearer picture of reality. Sometimes, the end goal is not truth, but a farce, a false idea, a manipulation of what many call 'truth'?

Take a simple example from daily life. You ~~use~~ browse through Twitter, which is displaying a set of news. Its veracity is not guaranteed. Millions of people across the globe, with a pursuit of knowledge, may see a distorted truth, or a fake news.



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The ultimate truth, the ultimate goal is world peace. As per the UN Charter, all the nations shall strive to attain international peace and security. Yet, the pursuit of knowledge to attain these is often manipulated by vested interests. For example, nuclear technology which can have peaceful uses - is being used as weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear other paths like nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are not followed in true spirit. News of Iran deciding to ~~re-~~ resume its nuclear weapons is a case in point. This shows that truth, that is the ultimate peace and tranquility, is twisted in pursuit of knowledge.

Making continuous improvements at a field may defy ethical considerations. Consider designer babies: Parents may choose the skin ~~the~~ colour, the color of the iris of their prospective child. While ~~this~~ there is a path of knowledge for better and healthy outcomes, these can have detrimental ends. A violation of Kantian categorical imperative - which stresses on preserving the dignity of the means.

## ETHICS AS THE GUIDING LIGHT

As illustrated in above sections, that pursuit of knowledge can have disastrous outcomes - it is imperative that such a pursuit is righteous. This will ensure righteousness of the means as well as the ends.

On an individual level, a person on a pursuit of knowledge

101

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must be guided by democratic socialisation. He must be provided a value-based education - having teachings of great men and women, religious scriptures like the Ramayana and Mahabharat, Gita and the Quran.

At the organisational level, there must be a proper code of ethics to follow & to shun divergent paths to knowledge. <sup>Common</sup> People, likewise, must be aware of the fact-checking methods to not be swayed by fake news and hate speech.

MILES TO GO BEFORE WE SLEEP

Indeed, the pursuit of knowledge helps us achieve the truth. It helps us become self-aware and emotionally intelligent. In turn, this helps in better interpersonal management and ultimate harmony in society and nation:

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which is the ~~goal~~ end goal, the absolute truth. India during her Amrit Kaal aims to become a knowledge economy - and to this end, treading an ethical path is a must.

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