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कृपया इस स्थान
में प्रश्न संख्या के
अतिरिक्त कुछ
न लिखें।

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Name - SRISHTI DABAS

Test Date - 18 August 2023

Time - 7:45 - 10:35 am

MGP+ (Essay Test 3
620303)

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The power of perception shapes our
understanding of reality.

Flying fish... dancing ants.... singing
birds... and giggling elephants.... such
was the 'perception' of the little boy
in the movie 'Tare Zameen Par'.

His imaginations shaped his realities.
He enjoyed being in his world of
dreams, distancing himself from
the utterly 'real' world.

Such is the power of perceptions,
our beliefs and convictions shaping
our victories and failures. The
perception of beauty, the perception
of intelligence or even the perception
of happiness — everything begins
from the head and then becomes reality.

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Through this essay, let us explore the various dimensions of perception, the factors shaping it, positive and negative perception and their impacts on reality.

Decoding the Power of Perception

One is often asked whether the glass is half full or half empty?

The reply depends on the perception of the person - whether optimistic or pessimistic.

An optimistic person will find opportunity in every difficulty while a pessimistic person finds difficulty in every opportunity.

The outer world perhaps remains the

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same. What differs are our thoughts and beliefs. We perceive the world how we are.

For instance, someone who has a 'Transphobic perception' will shape his understanding of reality as 'exclusive' and 'intolerant' towards the LGBTQIA+ community. On the other hand, someone with a 'Transfriendly perception' will shape his understanding of reality as 'inclusive' and 'respectful' towards all sexualities.

And hence, it won't be wrong to say that what manifests outside, first occurs inside.

Be it our success or failure, first we win or lose in our

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conviction and then only do we
rise or fall in reality. Because
it is our perceptions which shape
our values, our beliefs, our
attitude and eventually our behaviour.

This takes us to two diverging
roads - one towards positivity
and progress, while the other
towards negativity and disdain.

Prospects of a Positive Perception:
The path to prosperity

It is said that someone who
has love filled in her heart
will shower immense love on
the outside world. Such was the

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epitome of kindness - Mother Teresa.
Her positive outlook towards life made her help the needy and feed the hungry.

Same goes for social reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who could perceive positivity and take the society towards a progressive path and ultimately change the reality for many.

Great leaders like A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela - all share one thing in common, their firm belief in reforming their nations and taking them to path of success. Such were these visionaries!

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It was the perception of Dashrath Manjhi that made him carve a way across the mighty mountains, or of Sonu Sood who extending a helping hand to poor during covid crisis.

The list of such personalities just goes on and on. Be it Elon Musk who perceives a world with sustainable mobility or Sonum Wangchuk who perceives a world of sustainable living. First, they changed themselves by adopting environment friendly practices (eg: Sonum plants trees whenever he takes a flight) and then only would they aim for changing the world. Wish everyone was like them. but it is not the case.

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Pitfalls of a Negative Perception:
The Distorted understanding of reality

There are people who could not control their negative outlook, thereby causing havoc in the society. Be it Duryodhana who perceived himself to be all mighty and shaped his understanding of reality as one where he and only he is the centre of the universe.

Or be it Hitler who, because of his negative perception of Jews, undertook their genocide. Even the Britishers had perception of whiteman's burden when they treated Indians as barbaric and inferior, leading to the spectre of Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

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Fast forwarding to the 21st century, we see that humans have created a perception of themselves as 'Demigods'. They are tampering with the nature and shaping the reality of climate change. Changing courses of rivers, creating artificial rain, developing genetically modified crops — all are taking us towards fury of nature through extreme weather events.

Not just ecologically, but also ethically, we are treading towards an ethical apocalypse where our negativities, vices and hatred are taking us towards the doomsday.

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Be it the rise in terrorism, xenophobia, fundamentalism or extremism, or be it the intolerant mindsets, which led to the death of Mahsa Amini or attacks on Salman Rushdie.

All these negative perceptions of hatred, anger, revenge and superiority complexes, have denied us true liberation.

The treatment given to women as seen from rising cases of marital rape, acid attacks, dowry deaths and sexual harassment at workplace, including online abuse in today's world — all reflect the negative perceptions of a society as a whole.

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When so much is going wrong,
have we reached the dead end?
Is there no way to alter our
perceptions and reshape our
realities? Certainly there is!

Treading the path of Transformative
Perceptions: Changing our world views

The issue with all of us is
that our perceptions are not truly
ours, but are shaped by the
outside world.

Remember the Snowwhite story →

“Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
who is the beautiful of them all?”

Similarly, we humans try to
seek validation for our

actions and gain conformity for our decisions. This approach of being a part of the 'majoritarian' group and not taking the 'Road not Taken' is the cause of our sufferings.

We must remember and remind ourselves time and again that —

"Ships do not sink because of the outside waters but because of the water that gets inside."

And hence, we need to delve deeper within our own selves and ask ourselves whether our beliefs and perceptions are right or wrong. The inner voice of conscience will give the most pure and authentic reply.

Once we get the reply, it is our job to rectify the wrong perceptions and nourish the positive ones. There is no shame in accepting the faults and correcting them. If the Great Ashoka can, why can't we?

Let us subside the perceptions of love, humility, forgiveness, compassion and kindness, and transform our understanding of reality — for a peaceful, prosperous and progressive world!

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Culture can unite what history and
geography has divided

Bloodshed and violence cries of
helplessness and heartbreaks of separation
.... Such was the scenario when
India and Pakistan partitioned ... The
forces of history and geography shaped
this division ... The Divide and Rule
policy of the British broke India
from both sides and cut off her
two arms...

Yet, we see the commonalities of
cultural practices, be it the shared
heritage of Indus Valley Civilization
or the roots of Sanskrit giving
rise to Hindi and Urdu. India
constitutes ^{one of} the largest Muslim
populations. The Punjab-Lahore

bus and the Kartarpur corridor connects not just two nations but billions of hearts.

But, are we really appreciating these convergences? The situation of ultra pressure during cricket matches between India and Pakistan are testimony to the fact that we are heading towards more confrontation than collaboration.

Let us explore through this essay the divisions of history and geography, and the cohesions of culture. Further, we will see how cultures also clash and the need for peaceful coexistence of cultures.

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The Divisive Tendencies of History and Geography

Numerous nations have been sliced into fragments of territories by the colonial masters. African nations are a case in point. The almost straight vertical and horizontal divisions reflect the thoughtless acts of the so called developed nations.

It was during the World Wars that new nations emerged — Iceland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the division of Austria - Hungary.

Germany was partitioned into East and West and the Berlin Wall was erected.

The spectre of past haunts the present

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of many nations. Be it the conflict
over the islands in South China
Sea (like Spratley or Pratacl) or
be it the Russian revanchist
tendencies over Belmia and Ukraine

And not just nations, history also
divides states within the nations.

The State Reorganization Act of 1956
of India split it into numerous
states, though for administrative
convenience. This led to conflicts
over resources and rivers
(Lawry water dispute).

Even the neighbouring nations of
India - Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh
- share so much common, yet
divided by boundaries. Still their
culture provides ties of affinity.

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COHESION OF CULTURE : COMMONALITIES AND CONVERGENCES

Culture knows no boundaries, neither geographical nor historically constructed barriers. Instead, it provides a cohesive & adhesive glue to people, bringing them closer and together.

We can see how cuisines vary in tastes, yet people enjoy the variety of Chinese, Japanese and continental foods. Art forms like dance and music is yet another binding factor.

Be it Kathak or Garwalis, it provides immense contentment to the audience - irrespective of their nationality.

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There is a certain sense of
'Transcedance' in arts and artists,
as the King of Romance Shahrukh
Khan says.

Cinema brings not just people but
societies closer. The Korean dramas
are famous all across the globe.
Who does not know Michael
Jackson or Ema Watson? The
cross cultural cinema has seen
a boost in today's time. We
have Bhianka Chopra taking the
Indian image to Hollywood
and making the country proud.

Besides art, it is the traditional
aspects of a culture that spread
in the air like fragrance.

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India's belief in 'Atithi Devo Bhava' (Guest is God) is well reflected in the way we treat tourists, more so evident during the G20 summits. The slogan call for 'Padhara Mahre Desh' (welcome to our nation) depicts the inclusive and welcoming nature of India's culture.

The belief of 'Sarva Dharma Sambhav' also emanates from India; yet applies all across the globe. People celebrate Diwali, Eid, Christmas and even Halloween with full vigour and happiness. Practitioners of one faith respect other religions, for instance the Buddhist ideals of 'Karuna' (compassion)

And it is not that such unity develops on its own. People as well as nations have to take proactive steps to build such connections.

For instance, the recently held Kashi-Tamil Sangam aimed to bring cultures together.

Not just within India, but globally as well, we see a cosmopolitan culture developing. The culture of western clothes, pop music and liberal ideas.

But, is all this always so rosy? Are cultures always cohesive without any clashes? Certainly not.

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CULTURAL CONFLICTS: CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

For cultures to promote unity, it is necessary to be tolerant and accomodative, inclusive and appreciative of differences.

However, we usually start glorifying our culture while demeaning the others. We start assimilative practices - forcefully and insensitively.

We can see the cultural demise of the 'tribal traditions' because of the pressures of mainstreaming them. The clashes between Islam, Judaism and Christianity in Middle East are a ugly face of non-reconciled cultures.



Be it the conflicts among Sikhalise, Tamilians and Buddhists in Sri Lanka or the 'othering' of the North-Eastern communities of India, all this shows the real picture.

Even while we talk of globalization, we need to be aware of the fact that excessive homogenization of cultures is never good. English has become the lingua franca while sidelining the linguistic diversities.

Where has the culture of letters gone? Where are the Guru-Shishya parampara of Gurukuls and the street plays? Where are the pure shayaris? Have we lost all of this? Definitely not!

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REVIVAL OF CULTURE: TRANSCENDING THE WALLS OF HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

Today is the era of fusion - of the old and the new, the coexistence of modernity & traditions, spiritualism and materialism.

What we need is a fine balance between all the cultural practices to adopt the 'MADHYAM MARG'.

Even if we don't appreciate certain cultures, we must never demean or disrespect them.

Our culture, our heritage, our traditions should always be adopted with pride. As shown in the movie Swades, the roots of our culture should never be up forgotten.

Page



We must adopt the belief of -

“UNITY WITHOUT UNIFORMITY,
DIVERSITY WITHOUT FRAGMENTATION.”

There should always be scope for reformation and accomodation; learning from the other cultures while also sharing our traditions.

As Gandhiji says -

“We must open our windows
to let the breeze of all cultures
refresh us, but not get uprooted
by the winds & storms.”

Hence, let us all pledge to spread love, peace and harmony and the belief in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The world is One family)