

(Please do not write anything except the question number in this space) कृपया इस स्थान में प्रश्न संख्या के अतिरिक्त कुछ न लिखें।

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उम्मीदवारों को इस स्थान में नहीं लिखना चाहिए। Candidates must not write on this margin

Essay-1 (MGP) - Cohort 22

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Date: 29/6/2025



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Essay-1

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'The Glass Ceiling is not Frisible, it is just too high for many to see'

It is a Jubilant day for the people of France. The revolutionaries had finally ended the disastrous and exploitative rule of the incompetent Louis the XVI. The Bastille had been stormed and the Billotire had been used to free the men from clutches of the monarchy.

The Terris Court meeting had been called and the People's leaders like Voltaire, Rousseau and other glorious freedom fighters had won. It had been declared that all men were entitled to freedom and thus the day had come when the French people could finally breathe a sigh of relief from poverty and hunger and look in the glory of the liberty

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Equality and freedom provided at last.

But there were some, who could not help but be disgusted with what had been said. It was Mary

Wollstonecraft, the mother of feminism.

What she could hear was 'Men' and not 'People'. The rights had been declared

for men and women had been sidelined as always. Could this have been a mistake?

Even if it was a mistake committed despite the wisdom of numerous

brilliant minds being present, it certainly did not remain so. The Tasleir rule that

followed proved once again to the

women that exploitative rule had ended

only for the men and not for the people.

The Wheels of Time: A Reflection of  
the Glass Ceiling

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What happened as pointed out by ~~Wollstonecraft~~ Wollstonecraft was not an isolated occurrence. Since ancient times, the glass ceiling that restricts the ascent of women has been in place. It is a glass ceiling because the height of the sky being endless can be seen from this trap, but one cannot hope to reach there.

We find numerous instances of this in the popular literature. Aristotle in his "Republic" has not differentiated between slaves and women, both of which he considers to be under the protection of the master. Similarly, the Manusmriti while comparing women with the essence of God has called them as sources of misery.

Betty Friedan has tried to explain

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this through the lenses of liberal feminism. She took a survey of women in USA to gauge at the extent of the problem. All women were able to express the problem they have, but no one was able to describe why it was and what it was.

This 'problem with no name' has been described by Friedan as 'Patriarchy'. Even extremists like Shulamith Firestone has called heterosexual families as a source of constraint for women. This problem has been clearly present since the dawn of time and <sup>not</sup> restricted by Space and time.

Example of Razia Sultana can be given in this regard. While she had leadership qualities superior to any of her siblings, the Chahalgiri rejected her

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leadership, not because of her inability to govern, but because they refused to be led by a woman. Even the Governor of Jalandhar, Altonia rebelled, just because he refused to consider a woman as his leader.

Similar examples can be reflected in contemporary times with the prevalence of practices such as 'Panchayat Pati' or 'Pradhan Pati', where villages with reserved seats for women consider the husbands as their leader.

This phenomenon shows that despite the leadership qualities of women, the glass ceiling which is quite evident is so infused into the patriarchal mindset that it refuses to yield to the appeals of logic and rationality.

Even after the end of World

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War - II, the men who had come back from war, refused to allow their mothers & wives to work, even though it was the women who had been running the businesses and the economy in their absence.

These war returned fighters tried to showcase how they had been fighting for the protection of women, but as Aur J. Tickner points out, the war that is fought to save the respect associated with women, ends up horribly working against the same. But does the same criteria apply to every woman? Are all women equally affected?

## The Debate on Intersectionality

The proponents of intersectionality such as Kimberle Crenshaw propose that

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the glass ceiling though ever-present, differs in height. In other words, some women are differently affected than others.

Feminists such as Bell Hooks suggest how the ceiling placed over African-American women are higher.

Sirilary Sarojini Sahoo talks about the disproportionately worse consequences of the entrenched patriarchy on the women of former colonies like India.

They contend that while discrimination still exists potentially everywhere, the developed countries and richer women find it easier to climb out. Not easy at all, just easier. This can be seen in the less incident of Texas, where Rosa Parks faced a discrimination level that doubled down. Similar examples exist all

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across the world.

The National Commission for Women itself has been criticized for a masculine approach. A member once said that women should dress appropriately to avoid becoming victims of criminal activities. Another restriction tilting towards victim-sharing and suggested by a woman member.

The Justice Hema committee too pointed out how the Malayalam film industry had acceptance of sexual misconduct towards women. These women are relatively powerful actors with a huge fan base, but even they find it difficult to escape the clutches of monstrous patriarchal systems.

Ushering in a New Renaissance

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The travails of injustice have been sufficiently voiced in today's world with empowering steps such as the '#MeToo movement' and the 'Chappal Maerungi movement', but what is required is to gauge at possible social engineering methods to alter this system through piecemeal changes.

The pages of history provide us with examples of discrimination, but history is never one dimensional and always has a progressive page to re-assure humankind about the possibility of progress.

While examples of Marusmiti's blatant discrimination exist, there are also examples of Ramayana and Ramunaki.



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Sitaji has her own story with her own strength, enough to break the earth apart. Draupadi in the Mahabharat has been depicted as a strong character with a bold voice, who stands up to the one's like Duryodhana.

Similarly Kanvaski, Ashoka's wife, has her own inscriptions such as the one at Birnar near the Sudarshan Lake. Even the strong empire of the Satanaharas prefixed the names of their Mother's as a sign of power. An example can be given of Gautamiputra Satakarni, whose Mother Gautami even got the Nasik inscription made.

The examples in the recent past can be of Begum Hazrat Mahal and Marikarika of Thansi. The Ravi Thansi

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regiment of the INA named after her was also led by one of our strongest freedom fighters Captain Lakshmi Sahgal.

This indicates the fact that feminism is not a fight to make women stronger, it is a struggle to make the already strong women's voices heard. The Naxi Shakti Vandan Adhivyanam in this respect would not be creating women leaders, rather it would bring out the potential of the women who already are leaders.

It is high time that we learn from the restrictions of the past to break the chains of ignorance and shire the light of knowledge into the bright eyes of society to bring emancipation for half of humanity. As Ambedkar said, "I measure the progress of society by looking at the progress that the women have achieved."

## Section - B

Judge a Man by his question, rather than his answer

The subjugation of the Indian spirit was being considered as the goal of the regime.

The colonial exploiters were at the peak of their power. The annexation of one kingdom after another through duplicious means was in full swing.

The expansion of the British empire was experiencing favourable winds of success, when the inflated balloon of ego that had been filled was popped with a loud bang. The revolution started by the Revolt of 1857 was not truly because of the revolt, but the question that the courageous men and women of India had dared to ask.

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The question was, "How can someone snatch our spirit from us?" It was this question that led to the end of the British Raj 90 years later. The answer in the form of the revolt does not seem to matter to us for the weapons that were taken or the number of Britishers that surrendered, but it matters for the question that created the wave of nationalist consciousness that it created for generations to come.

The nationalists who followed strengthened the question from autonomy to self rule, from self rule to Swaraj and Swaraj to Purna Swaraj. The Early nationalists presented their answer in the form of prayers and petitions which through criticism for its low impact changed to rule



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breaking under extremists and non-cooperation under Bandhiji. The revolutionaries used violence, while the INA used complete military power. Each of these answers had their own role to play, but what allows us to judge all of these glorious personalities as freedom fighters is the question they posed to the British.

To the Victor Goes the Question

Since ancient times till the modern conceptions in scholastic, a continuous chain becomes evident. It is clear as day that the champions of philosophy are recognised by their methods of questioning rather than the answers they provided.

Starting from Plurchus by Socrates, where he questions the prevailing

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morality by a series of further questioning, we arrive at Plato, who devises Dialectics.

Under dialectics, he proposes a thesis as a question, which he counters with the anti-thesis to arrive at the 'Synthesis', the answer. This paradigm explains that the answer itself is hidden in the questions.

The answer given to the question of "What is an ideal state?" by Plato is the Philosopher King. But this answer is questioned by Karl Popper through his concept of falsification, where he intrigues himself by putting any theory to the test by asking any question that it cannot answer. This is to create a maze to trap the answer.

Popper says that it is the question which is important and anybody

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who claims to know the true answer is a totalitarian with holist and essentialist features.

This chair is continued by Karl Marx, who questions the conceptions of capitalism for exploiting the worker class. Communist Manifesto, which proposes the establishment of a classless society is however considered to be utopian and remains a dream post the disintegration of the USSR. So was Marx wrong?

No, he was not. Although the answer he gave proved to be a bit extreme, but it was the questioning of exploitation that truly changed the world as we see it. The society changed the structure of the state from the completely capitalistic state of Neo-liberalism

to the Welfare state that we see today in countries such as India and Norway.

## Revolution: Questions or Answers?

The French revolution is known for the modern values of equality, liberty and fraternity that it converted through the questioning of morality. But the transition to this conception was not exactly smooth.

The new republic brought in by the revolutionaries eventually led to the 'Reign of Terror' under the Jacobins.

This new morality was also unable to stop a reversion to ~~monarchy~~ monarchy under Napoleon. But with the winds of time, France did eventually become a democratic state and has continued to remain so.

This shows why questions are



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the true agents of destiny. It cannot be expected for a question to change the world with a perfect answer. It takes the dialectical motion of ideas through hit and trial to eventually find a panacea.

But this panacea is also a temporary feature, with emerging questions having the potential to change it again. So panaceas don't exist in actuality. They are just a potentiality that get altered with improvements in what the question should be. When 'What Ought to be' is turned into 'What is', there emerges a new set of possibilities to enter into a better tomorrow.

Post the French Revolution, the example of American revolution can also

be taken. The revolution did lead to freedom and creation of the USA as a democratic entity, but women and slaves were still victims of bondage.

When the slaves were freed by Lincoln and efforts of countless individuals, it was progress based on the same questions that gave ~~the same~~ <sup>different</sup> answers. Even today they remain the same, but the subject of enquiry has changed from freeing the slaves to gender equality.

## The Indian Way of Spiritualism

The Indian philosophical debate has also focussed on the importance of questions rather than fixed answers. The oral nature of our texts and reluctance of our great sages and philosophers to write down the Vedas and Shruti

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texts was the recognition of the fact that answers may change, but the spirit of questioning must remain alive.

The Buddhist conception of society opposed the rigidities of caste and Brahmanism to usher in a new religious discourse for inclusion of all.

This was also the case with the Jain philosophy as well as the Lokayata school, which opposed the prevailing conditions but came up with differing opinions on change.

This historical movement of ideas does not stop there and reappears in the form of the Bhakti and Sufi movements during the medieval times, which again changed the

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way of thinking.

We may be separated by the path in life that we choose to follow, but we are united by our beliefs in progressive change and that answers to the same question can differ, while our human spirit to question the old remains energised.

The Golden conception of 'Ik Onkar' or one God, given by Guru Nanak echoes this concept. The entire humankind is engaged in finding the truth and that makes us one. It does not matter what thinking we prescribe to, if it is the search for truth.

'Anekantwada' of Jainism also explains how truth is fragmented and

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Many truths can coexist, but it is this understanding of our common morality that makes Homo Sapiens the most advanced species.

As Martin Luther King Jr has explained in his wise words, "I have a dream for a better tomorrow". It is this dream and this question that explains our character as a person as this question has the power to create its own answer sometime in the future. It is to have this question in the mind that describes a progressive human, as eventually just like the Emancipatory Freedom struggle ~~someone~~ we have given this question to will find the answer.

It is the question that we inherit and the answer that we are destined to find.