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Q2

Given are two quotations of moral thinkers/philosophers. For each of these bring out what it means to you in the present context. (a) "The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of strong." (10) (b) "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light" (10 marks).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS IV · 12 marks · Moral Thinkers and Philosophers
Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and the world.

Core demand of the question

- Two quotations in the present context
- (a) The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong
- (b) We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy is when men are afraid of the light

Revision summary

Forgiveness is the choice of someone who could retaliate and does not need revenge to remain whole.

It is not a command that victims of grave crime hug offenders; justice can come first.

In public life, strength is a firm file without spite, and peace after law, not a blood feud.

Fear of the light is adult refusal of truth, RTI, science and dissent.

The tragedy is punishing the lamp; administration should default to openness, not to a locked cupboard.

Introduction

Two sentences, often linked to **Gandhi** and to **Plato**, still test a republic that remembers injury and sometimes prefers a comfortable lie. Each quote asks for strength, not for theatre.

Body**(a) Forgiveness as strength**

- The line means that forgiveness is not the surrender of a person who cannot hit back. It is the choice of a person who could hit back and does not need that hit to stay whole.
- Weakness here is the need to keep the wound open because the wound is the only identity left.
- **Strength is self-command:** you name the wrong, you seek justice where justice is due, and you refuse to live as a permanent enemy.
- In the present context this is not a demand that a rape survivor hug the accused, or that a riot widow forget a killing. Cheap "move on" talk from the powerful is not this quote.

- Forgiveness in public life is the end of a blood feud after law has worked: a truth-telling, a penalty, then a refusal to hunt the next generation.
- South Africa's truth and reconciliation idea, and India's own need after communal riots, show the same structure: memory without a licence for endless revenge.
- For a civil servant the quote is practical. A file delayed to punish a critic is weakness. A speaking order that is firm and not spiteful is strength.
- Between States, prisoner swaps and talks after a crisis can be strength if they do not erase accountability for terror. Humiliation of a whole people is weakness wearing a flag.

(b) Fear of the light

- A child fears the dark because the dark is unknown. An adult who fears the light fears truth, scrutiny and the end of a convenient story.
- Light here is knowledge, RTI, a free press, a court record, a scientific fact, and a citizen who asks why.
- **The tragedy is a society that punishes the lamp:** the whistle-blower, the honest auditor, the teacher who says the textbook is wrong, the officer who puts a dissent on the note.
- In the present context, fake news, paid news, and attacks on universities are forms of this fear. So is a company that destroys emails, and a ministry that stamps every inconvenient paper secret.
- **Plato's cave is the same picture:** people chained to shadows, angry at anyone who turns them toward the sun.
- For administration, fear of the light is the locked cupboard as default. The **Right to Information Act, 2005** is a legal lamp; suo motu disclosure under **Section 4** is lighting the room before anyone knocks.
- **Personal ethics:** it is easier to stay in a caste myth, a communal rumour, or a family lie than to admit harm. The quote calls that adult fear a tragedy, not a private taste.
- Courage of conviction is walking into the light with a file that can be read, not with a slogan about transparency.

Flow diagram

Named wrong -> Justice
 Justice -> Forgiveness as strength
 Endless feud -> Weakness
 Truth and scrutiny -> Adult duty
 Comfortable lie -> Tragedy of fearing the light

Conclusion

Forgiveness is strength when it follows truth and justice, not when it is forced on the weak. Fear of the light is the adult refusal of scrutiny. Public service needs both: a firm peace after a wrong is named, and a habit of working in the open.

Facts & figures

Mahatma Gandhi on forgiveness

The first quotation is widely attributed to **Gandhi**: forgiveness as a quality of the strong, not of the helpless.

Plato's cave

In the Republic, prisoners take shadows for reality and resist the person who brings them toward the light; the second quote is often linked to that teaching.

Right to Information Act, 2005

A statutory lamp: citizens may demand official information so that adult fear of scrutiny has a legal answer.

Section 4, RTI Act

Suo motu disclosure so that the State lights the room before a citizen has to knock.

Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014

A (still imperfect) path so that the person who brings light is not only a target.

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