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Q7

(a) The crisis of ethical values in modern times is traced to a narrow perception of the good life. Discuss. (150 Words, 10) (b) Increased national wealth did not result in equitable distribution of its benefits. It has created only some "enclaves of modernity and prosperity for a small minority at the cost of the majority." Justify. (150 Words, 10).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS IV · 10 marks · Ethics and Human Interface

Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in-human actions; dimensions of ethics; ethics - in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators; role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.

Core demand of the question

- (a) The crisis of ethical values in modern times is traced to a narrow perception of the good life. Discuss
- (b) Increased national wealth did not result in equitable distribution of its benefits. It has created only some enclaves of modernity and prosperity for a small minority at the cost of the majority. Justify

Revision summary

The ethics crisis is fed by a good life defined as private consumption and rank, which turns neighbours into tools.

A wider good life includes dignity, enough goods, care, ecology and a civic role.

GDP can rise while benefits sit in gated, English, private-service islands.

The majority often pays in land, insecure labour and pollution.

The stem is justified as a pattern, not as a claim that no poor person ever gained.

Introduction

If the good life is only a private score of money, status and sensation, public ethics will look like a fool's hobby. Part (b) then tests whether India's growth story has been a nation or a few gated islands.

Body**(a) Narrow good life and the ethics crisis**

- **The good life, in a wide sense, is a life that is worth living:** health, decent work, relationships, meaning, and a just place in a community.
- A narrow modern picture often reduces it to income, consumption, celebrity and comparative ranking. **Aristotle's** eudaimonia, **Gandhi's** swaraj, and the Buddhist middle path all refuse that reduction.

- When success is only a package, other people become instruments. Lying in a resume, a bribe for a seat, and a troll campaign are then rational, not shameful.
- Family and school that praise only marks and a package teach that the neighbour is a rival. Civic virtue has no marks in that exam.
- Markets are useful. A market that is treated as the whole of the good life crowds out unpaid care, honesty in a file, and rest. Burnout and fraud are cousins.
- **Media and advertising sell a lifestyle that cannot be universal:** if everyone lived the advertised good life, the planet and the poor would break first.
- Religion reduced to display, and politics reduced to a team sport, both fit the same narrowness: belonging without dharma, victory without public reason.
- The crisis of values is therefore not only "the youth". It is an official culture of GDP without dignity, a middle class of anxiety, and a poor majority told to wait.
- **A wider good life restores:** enough material security, equal dignity (Article 14 and 21), useful work, ecological limits, and a public role - vote, panchayat, a clean queue.
- **For an officer, the discussion is practical:** do not measure a posting only by a house and a car. Measure it by whether the weakest person in the district can live a slightly less narrow life.

(b) Wealth without equity: enclaves of modernity

- National wealth can rise as GDP, forex reserves and billionaire lists while nutrition, housing and regular jobs stay flat for a large mass. That is growth without development in Amartya Sen's sense of expanding real freedoms.
- **Enclaves:** IT parks, airport cities, gated housing, private hospitals and English-medium islands sit beside informal work, polluted peripheries and unpaid care.
- **Cost of the majority:** land and water diverted to the enclave; contract labour without security; air and river as dumps; public hospitals crowded because the enclave bought out of them.
- Agriculture's share of workers remains high relative to its share of income in India; that arithmetic is an enclave of urban services living on a hinterland that does not share the boom equally.
- Caste, gender and region structure who enters the enclave. A growth rate that ignores this is not a trickle; it is a wall.
- The liberalisation period raised many averages and cut some extreme shortages. Justification of the stem is not that nothing improved. It is that the pattern of benefits has been concentrated, and that concentration has social and ecological costs.
- Crony access to land, spectrum and credit at some moments made the enclave a political product, not only a skill product.
- Human development and the Sustainable Development Goals ask for distribution, not only a taller national total. A malnutrition map next to a luxury tower is the stem in one photograph.
- **Public ethics:** a State that boasts GDP while delaying wages on a worksite is serving the enclave's story. Tax, quality public services, labour standards and regional policy are how a republic refuses to be only a few postcodes of modernity.

Flow diagram

Narrow good life -> Ethics crisis
Dignity work ecology civic role -> Public ethics
National wealth -> Enclaves
Enclaves -> Majority bears land labour ecology
Public services tax labour rights -> Shared development

Conclusion

A thin idea of the good life - consume, rank, display - starves honesty and solidarity. A thick idea makes room for dignity and a common world. National wealth that pools in enclaves at the majority's cost is growth that has not yet become a just nation.

Facts & figures

Amartya Sen on development

Development as expansion of real freedoms and capabilities, not only as a rise in average income.

Article 21, Constitution of India

Life with dignity; a constitutional hint that the good life is not only a private GDP of the household.

Sustainable Development Goals

A global agenda that treats inequality, work, health and environment as part of progress, not as optional after GDP.

Enclave urbanism

The pattern of high-quality private islands of work and housing beside informal, under-serviced settlements.

Workforce in agriculture

India continues to have a large share of workers in farming relative to farming's share of GDP, a structural sign of uneven benefits.

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