

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q6

What do each of the following quotations mean to you in the present context? (a) "The true rule, in determining to embrace, or reject anything, is not whether it has any evil in it; but whether it has more evil than good. There are few things wholly evil or wholly good. Almost everything, especially of governmental policy, is an inseparable compound of the two; so that our best judgement of the preponderance between them is continually demanded. "Abraham Lincoln (b) "Anger and intolerance are the enemies of correct understanding." Mahatma Gandhi (c) "Falsehood takes the place of truth when it results in unblemished common good." _ Tirukkural.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS IV · 10 marks · Moral Thinkers and Philosophers

Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and the world.

Core demand of the question

- What do each of the following quotations mean to you in the present context?
- (a) Abraham Lincoln on embracing or rejecting a thing by whether it has more evil than good, because almost everything in government policy is a compound of both
- (b) "Anger and intolerance are the enemies of correct understanding." **Mahatma Gandhi**
- (c) "Falsehood takes the place of truth when it results in unblemished common good."
Tirukkural

Revision summary

Lincoln teaches that policy is mixed; judge by whether evil outweighs good, without waiting for purity and without washing harm as trivial.

Gandhi teaches that anger and intolerance block correct understanding, which a riot, a troll-storm or a frightened office all prove.

The Tirukkural line seems to allow falsehood for unblemished common good.

That bar is almost never met in ordinary files; cooked data stains the good it claims.

Truth is the default; only a narrow, time-bound rescue lie, later accountable, can even be argued.

Introduction

Lincoln, **Gandhi** and the Kural still sit on an officer's table. One asks for a sober balance of mixed policies. One warns that rage blinds. One tests whether a noble lie may ever stand in for truth.

Body

(a) Lincoln: few things wholly evil or wholly good

- Lincoln is describing public judgement, not private cynicism. Almost every statute mixes help and harm.
- **The rule is not "ignore evil". It is:** refuse a thing when evil outweighs good, and do not wait for a perfect purity that government never has.
- **Present context:** a farm law, a dam, a data Bill, or a lockdown is a compound. Ethics is the work of measuring the preponderance, especially for those who did not lobby.
- A civil servant who will act only when a file is wholly good will freeze. One who treats any harm as trivial will crush the poor as "collateral".
- The quote demands evidence, not slogan. If a policy's good is a press release and its evil is a starved migrant, the preponderance is already known.
- **It also demands revision:** when the balance tips, repeal or repair, as Lincoln's own politics had to do with the costs of war.
- For GS-IV, this is consequential weighing inside a **constitutional floor**. You may choose a lesser-evil option; you may not choose an unconstitutional one because it "has some good".

(b) Gandhi: anger and intolerance versus understanding

- **Gandhi is stating a cognitive ethic:** anger and intolerance do not only hurt the other; they destroy the holder's capacity to see.
- Correct understanding needs listening, doubt and time. Rage shortens all three.
- **Present context:** communal forwards, television shouting, and office humiliation of a junior or a minority applicant are factories of error.
- A District Magistrate who walks into a riot already angry at one community will misread the first stone and the first fire.
- Intolerance of dissent inside a department produces files that only flatter. That is not loyalty; it is blindness on stamp paper.
- The quote does not forbid firmness. **Gandhi** could be stern. It forbids the heat that makes a false rumour feel like a fact.
- **Practical rule:** pause, verify, hear the disliked person, then decide. Understanding is a duty of office, not a soft hobby.

(c) Tirukkural: falsehood in the place of truth

- The line, as the paper gives it, seems to licence a lie when the common good is complete and unstained.
- Read strictly, "unblemished common good" is a bar almost no lie can clear. A lie that helps one group usually stains another.
- **Present context:** cooked air-quality numbers, a hidden epidemic count, or a "white lie" to a House committee all claim public good and all stain it.
- Truth-telling is the default of trusteeship. The **Second ARC** and RTI culture treat false records as a species of corruption.
- **Narrow exceptions exist in ethics of rescue:** misleading a riot mob about a hiding place, or operational secrecy in a hostage hour. Those are time-bound, not a governance style.
- **Gandhi** would resist a standing permission to lie. **Kant** would too. A limited utilitarian exception still needs later accountability and a clean archive for the court.

- **My reading:** the Kural is not a daily permit for official falsehood. It is a warning that only an unblemished common good - almost never proved in advance - could even begin to argue with truth. In ordinary administration, falsehood does not take the place of truth; it takes the place of trust.

Flow diagram

Lincoln -> Weigh mixed good and evil
 Gandhi -> Anger off, then understand
 Kural -> Truth default
 Kural -> Narrow rescue exception
 Weigh mixed good and evil -> Public decision
 Anger off, then understand -> Public decision
 Truth default -> Public decision

Conclusion

Lincoln asks for a honest tally of mixed good and harm. **Gandhi** asks for a mind cool enough to see. The Kural, read with care, does not gift the State a noble lie; it sets a test so high that truth remains the working rule.

Facts & figures

Abraham Lincoln on mixed policy

His argument that governmental measures are compounds of good and evil, so judgement of preponderance is continually required.

Gandhi on anger

A repeated teaching that passion, especially anger and intolerance, distorts satya (truth) and ahimsa in public life.

Tirukkural on truth

The Kural's chapters on truthfulness treat honesty as a high virtue; the exam line must be read against that grain, not as a blank licence to lie.

Right to Information Act, 2005

Makes falsehood in records harder to keep as a private craft of claimed public good.

Constitutional floor

Even a lesser-evil policy cannot cross fundamental rights; Lincoln's weighing sits inside that floor in Indian office.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/gs-4/2018/what-do-each-of-the-following-quotations-mean-to-you-in-the-present-context-a-the-true-rule-in-determining-to-embrace-or-reject-anything-is-not-whether-it-has-any-evil-in-it-but-whether-it-has-more-evil-than-good-there/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com