UPSC MAINS · ANSWER PRACTICE

Essay · Essay

Thought finds a world and creates one also.

विचार एक दुनिया खोजता भी है और

एक बनाता भी है।

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PAPER

Essay

SUBJECT

Essay

MARKS

125

WORD LIMIT

~1200 words

Answer Hint

Thought as a lens through which reality is discovered and interpreted; the role of observation, curiosity and imagination in expanding knowledge; ideas as forces that transform institutions, societies and civilisation; interaction between thought and material conditions; scientific discoveries, social reform, democracy and technology as products of transformative ideas; dangers of destructive ideologies and unexamined thought; argue that thought both reveals the possibilities within the existing world and creates new realities through human action.

Model Answer

Introduction

Human civilisation has never been shaped merely by physical resources; it has been shaped by the ideas through which human beings understand those resources and imagine their possibilities. Thought first discovers the world by observing, questioning and interpreting reality. At the same time, thought possesses a creative power: once translated into action, it can transform institutions, technologies, relationships and even the course of history. Thus, thought is simultaneously a mirror that discovers reality and a mould that reshapes it.

Thought Finds a World

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The first function of thought is to discover what already exists.

Human beings do not simply encounter reality; they observe patterns, ask questions and construct explanations. Scientific thought transformed observations of nature into systematic knowledge. The falling apple may be an ordinary event, but a questioning mind can discover a larger principle of gravitation.

Similarly, geography, history, sociology and psychology attempt to understand the structures underlying human life.

Thus, thought helps us move:

from observation to understanding, from facts to patterns, and from experience to knowledge.

The world therefore becomes intelligible through the activity of thought.

Thought as a Lens

The same reality may be interpreted differently depending upon the conceptual framework through which it is viewed.

A forest may be seen as timber by an exploitative economic perspective, as an ecosystem by an ecologist, as sacred space by a traditional community, or as a carbon sink by a climate scientist.

The physical object remains the same, but thought determines what dimensions of it become visible to us.

This demonstrates that thought does not merely receive reality passively; it **organises experience and gives meaning to it**.

Curiosity and Scientific Discovery

Scientific progress begins with questions that challenge existing assumptions.

Theories that were once considered unquestionable have been revised through new observations and reasoning. The transition from classical physics to relativity and quantum mechanics illustrates how human thought can discover previously invisible dimensions of reality.

Similarly, developments in genetics, space science and artificial intelligence emerged from the human capacity to ask questions beyond immediately observable experience.

Therefore, **every scientific discovery begins as a possibility within the mind before becoming an established understanding of the**

world.

Thought Creates a World

The second dimension of the statement is even more transformative.

Ideas can become institutions, technologies, laws and social movements. Once translated into collective action, thought changes the material and social environment.

The idea of democracy transformed political authority. The idea of universal human rights transformed the relationship between individuals and states. The idea of public education created institutions designed to make knowledge accessible beyond privileged groups.

Thus, many features of the modern world were once merely **imagined possibilities**.

Social Reform Begins as Thought

Social transformation frequently begins when someone questions what society considers normal.

Ideas of equality, liberty, dignity and justice have challenged practices once treated as natural or inevitable.

In India, reformers such as **Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule and B.R. Ambedkar** transformed social discourse by questioning entrenched forms of inequality.

Their ideas did not remain abstract. They influenced movements, institutions, legislation and social consciousness.

This illustrates the creative power of thought: **a new idea can first challenge the existing world and then help create a different one.**

Gandhi and the Power of an Idea

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy demonstrates how thought can become a force for political transformation.

Ideas such as **non-violence, truth and civil resistance** transformed the meaning of political struggle. What began as a moral and philosophical position became a powerful method of mass mobilisation.

The significance lies not merely in the idea itself but in its translation into collective action.

Thus:

Thought → conviction → action → institution/social transformation.

Democracy as a Created Reality

Democracy itself demonstrates how political thought can create a new social reality.

The idea that legitimate political authority ultimately derives from the people transformed systems of governance across the world. Constitutionalism, fundamental rights, separation of powers and representative institutions similarly originated as ideas before becoming institutional realities.

The Constitution of India is a particularly powerful example. Its commitment to justice, liberty, equality and fraternity represents a deliberate attempt to transform India's social and political reality through constitutional thought.

The Constitution therefore does not merely describe society; it also **creates an aspirational framework for the society India seeks to become**.

Technology: Thought Made Material

Technology provides perhaps the clearest evidence of thought creating a world.

The smartphone, internet, satellites and artificial intelligence were once imagined possibilities. Scientific knowledge combined with human imagination converted these possibilities into material realities.

Technology then transforms human behaviour in return.

For example, digital communication has changed:

- how people work,
- how businesses operate,
- how governments deliver services,
- how citizens participate,
- how knowledge is accessed.

Thus, thought creates technology, while technology subsequently reshapes the conditions under which future thought develops.

Economic Thought and Development

Economic institutions are also influenced by ideas.

Concepts such as markets, welfare states, social security, financial inclusion and sustainable development represent different ways of imagining economic organisation.

Economic thought can influence policy, which then changes incentives and social outcomes.

The emergence of the Sustainable Development Goals, for example, reflects an evolving idea that development should integrate economic prosperity with social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Hence, **the economy is not merely a collection of material transactions; it is also shaped by ideas about what constitutes prosperity and justice.**

Thought and the Environment

Human ideas about nature have profoundly influenced the planet.

When nature is conceptualised merely as an unlimited source of resources, exploitation becomes easier to justify. When nature is understood as an interconnected ecological system, conservation becomes an ethical and practical necessity.

The emergence of ecological consciousness has therefore created new institutions, environmental laws and sustainable practices.

Here, changing thought can change behaviour, and changing behaviour can alter the physical world.

Thought Can Also Create Destructive Worlds

The creative power of thought is morally neutral.

Ideas can create freedom and oppression, cooperation and conflict.

Extremist ideologies, racism, authoritarianism and aggressive nationalism demonstrate how ideas can construct distorted realities in which violence becomes morally acceptable.

Propaganda can create imaginary enemies and transform prejudice into political action.

Similarly, misinformation in the digital age can create alternative perceptions of reality, influencing social behaviour even when those perceptions are factually false.

Therefore, **the power to create through thought creates an ethical responsibility to examine the ideas we nurture and disseminate.**

The Interaction Between Thought and Material Reality

The relationship is not one-directional.

Thought is influenced by material conditions, and material conditions are transformed by thought.

For example, poverty may generate new political ideas about redistribution. Those ideas may lead to policies that change economic conditions. The changed conditions then produce new social experiences and new ideas.

Similarly, technological developments influence human thinking about privacy, employment and identity, while those debates influence subsequent technological regulation.

Thus, reality and thought exist in a **continuous feedback loop**.

Individual Life: Thought Creates Personal Reality

The principle also operates at the level of the individual.

A person's beliefs about failure, success and possibility influence behaviour. Someone who sees failure as permanent may withdraw from opportunities, while someone who sees it as feedback may learn and adapt.

This does not mean that positive thinking can overcome every structural constraint. Material circumstances matter. But thought influences how individuals interpret circumstances and what actions they consider possible.

Hence, **thought can expand or contract the range of possibilities within which a person acts.**

Education and the Creation of New Worlds

Education is therefore more than the transfer of information.

A good education teaches individuals both to **understand the existing world and imagine alternatives to it**.

Students who learn only established answers may reproduce existing systems. Students who learn to question assumptions can become researchers, innovators, reformers and entrepreneurs.

The true purpose of education is therefore both:

to understand the world as it is and to imagine the world as it could be.

Ethical Responsibility of Thought

Because thought can create realities, intellectual freedom must be accompanied by responsibility.

Citizens, educators, scientists, political leaders and media institutions influence collective consciousness. They therefore have a responsibility to promote evidence, reason, dignity and dialogue rather than prejudice and manipulation.

The ethical question is not merely:

“Can this idea transform society?”

It is also:

“What kind of society will this idea create?”

This question becomes increasingly important in an age of artificial intelligence, biotechnology and powerful communication technologies.

Conclusion

“Thought finds a world and creates one also” captures the dual power of human consciousness. Thought **discovers** the structures, patterns and possibilities already present in reality; but through imagination, reasoning and collective action, it also **creates new realities**.

The history of science, democracy, social reform, technology and environmental consciousness demonstrates that today's world is partly the material expression of yesterday's ideas. At the same time, today's ideas are seeds of tomorrow's civilisation.

Therefore, the responsibility of humanity is not merely to think more, but to **think critically, imagine constructively and act ethically**. A thought becomes truly transformative when it is grounded in reality yet capable of transcending it.

The world we inherit is partly the product of the thoughts of previous generations; the world future generations inherit will depend upon the thoughts we choose to cultivate today.