



## BUDDHISM AND CONTEMPORARY WORLD - GS I MAINS

**Q.** Critically analyze the relevance of Gautama Buddha's teachings in addressing contemporary global challenges. (10 marks, 150 words)

**News:** *Buddhism, India's soft power projection tool*

### What's in the news?

- With its strong historical and cultural ties to Buddhism, India can play a lead role in shaping the discourse around Buddhist issues.

### Teachings of Buddha:

#### 1. Four Noble Truths:

- These truths state that suffering exists, suffering arises from craving and attachment, suffering can be overcome and the path to the end of suffering is the Eightfold Path.
- This teaching is relevant today because it offers a practical and compassionate approach to dealing with suffering and difficulties that are a universal part of human experience.

#### 2. Eightfold Path:

- This path consists of right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
- This teaching is relevant today because it provides a guide for ethical and spiritual development that helps individuals to live a more fulfilling meaningful life.

#### 3. Concept of Interdependence:

- Buddha taught that all things are interconnected and dependent upon one another for their existence.
- This teaching is relevant today because it highlights the interconnected nature of our world and the importance of considering the impact of our actions on others and the environment.

#### 4. Practice of Mindfulness:

- Buddha taught the importance of being present in the moment and cultivating awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- This teaching is relevant today because it can help individuals to manage stress, improve mental and physical well-being, and develop greater self-awareness and clarity of mind.

### India and Buddhism:

#### 1. Genesis of Buddhism:

- India stands as the homeland of Bhagwan Buddha, a nation that has contributed 'Buddha' to the world rather than 'Yuddha' (war).

#### 2. Buddhist Structures:

- A number of Buddhist Stupas, Viharas, Chaityas, Pillar and Rock Edicts have been built during the reign of Mauryan kings, Gupta rulers and Satavahana rulers.



### 3. Buddhist Population:

- Buddhism is the 4th largest religion in the world.
- Population - In China (50%), Thailand (13%), Japan (9%), Myanmar (8%), Sri Lanka (3%), Vietnam (3%), Cambodia (3%), South Korea (2%), India (2%) and Malaysia (1%).

### 4. Buddha's Teachings:

- It serves as inspiration for India's service-driven governance, emphasizing citizen welfare and inclusivity, from farmers to the vulnerable and the differently-abled.
- It extends to environmental sustainability also.

## Current Global Issues

### 1. Rising Global Conflicts:

- Such as between Iran and Pakistan, Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine.
- According to the Institute for Economics and Peace's annual Global Peace Index, more than 238,000 people died in global conflict last year.

### 2. Climate Challenges:

- It is a "perfect moral storm". It brings three major ethical challenges:
  - Climate change is a truly global phenomenon with skewed vulnerabilities.
  - Current emissions have profound intergenerational effects.
  - Theoretical tools are underdeveloped in many areas, such as international justice, intergenerational ethics, scientific uncertainty, etc.

### 3. Terrorism Trends:

- As per the 10th annual edition of the Global Terrorism Index-2023, attacks are more deadly with 26% more people dying in each incident – the first rise in lethality in five years.

### 4. Growing Poverty and Inequality:

- Poverty, inequality and human deprivation are persistently rising.
- As per Oxfam's findings, in 2022, nearly 670mn people were living in extreme poverty.

### 5. Challenges of Youth:

- As per EY's 2023 Gen-Z Segmentation Study, there is substantial anxiety and stress about jobs, long-term financial stability and the current economy and job market.

## Relevance of Teachings of Buddha in the Contemporary World:

### 1. Addressing Existential Challenges:

- By applying Buddha's principles, nations can work collaboratively, adopting ethical practices to safeguard the existing challenges.

### 2. Overcoming Individual and Global Conflicts:

- Buddha's four Noble Truths and eightfold Paths provide a transformative roadmap for such challenges.

### 3. Overcoming Terrorism:

- Buddha's teachings serve as an unwavering rejection of violence and hatred, providing a framework to counter terrorism with compassion and peace.



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## 4. Tackling Climate Change:

- Buddha's wisdom urges us to follow the light of tolerance, justice, and a shared commitment to peace, fostering a future where all flourish and virtues shine.

## 5. Tackling Poverty and Inequality:

- Lord Buddha taught us, "Bhavatu Sabba Mangalam". His teachings centered on the alleviation of suffering, inspire efforts to promote an equitable distribution of resources and work towards distributive justice.

## 6. Middle Path as the Compass for the Future:

- In a rapidly changing landscape, his Middle Path for all life presents a sustainable course for both humanity and our planet.

## 7. Coping with Stress:

- Teachings of Buddha provide practical ways such as breathing meditation (Ānāpānasati) for coping with various problems that cause stress with mindfulness and consciousness.

