

Chapter 1: Freedom

NCERT · Class 12 · English · Kaleidoscope · Non Fiction

Questions

Question 1

Point out the difference between the slavery of man to Nature and the unnatural slavery of man to Man.

Solution

Answer. Through the chapter, the author explores the concept of freedom. G.B. Shaw highlights the fact that no person can ever be free throughout life. The first type of slavery of man to Nature is essential in every human being. Man's slavery to Nature is always joyous. A person feels happy in fulfilling his natural needs. However, we end up becoming slaves to our instincts of cleanliness, sleep, hunger, dressing up, etc. all these natural duties are a part of every individual's daily life. However, the second type of slavery is man to man, which is unnatural. It becomes worse both physically and spiritually. It is the type of slavery where the upper hand gets favourable results, whereas hard labour yields nothing. The standard of a person is distinguished among humans. Hence, the slavery of a man to Nature gives us comfort and joy and slavery of a man to man is hatred. It creates class wars between the poor and the rich, workers and businesspeople. Ultimately, there can be no peace as long as this type of slavery exists.

Question 2

What are the ways in which people are subjected to greater control in the personal spheres than in the wider political sphere?

Solution

Answer. Nature always has some amount of control over every living being. Being part of Nature itself, human beings cannot escape from the responsibilities Nature bestows on us. In the first type of slavery, the essential habits of every human, like eating, drinking, sleeping etc., are all a part of Nature's control over us. It is physically impossible to escape these duties as we are all slaves to Nature.

However, in the second type of slavery, man-to-man slavery, the work pressure is given from person to person or any external force. It's our call whether to continue or to avoid that person's instructions.

Hence, we can choose whether to follow a leader or not based on our circumstances in the broader political sphere. However, in the personal sphere, we are all slaves to Nature and cannot choose when complying with its orders. Hence, people are subjected to greater control in their personal sphere than in the wider political sphere.

Question 3

List the common misconceptions about 'freedom' that Shaw tries to debunk.

Solution

Answer. The author has brought to light a few major misconceptions about freedom in this chapter. Firstly, the author puts out a general question, "What is a perfectly free person?". According to him, no person is free throughout their life. They are either controlled by Nature or by another man. Thus, the author here debunks the first misconception that an individual can be completely free. Secondly, the author talks about democracy and the freedom it holds. Although freedom is an essential aspect of democracy, leaders tend to change the rules according to their needs. For example, the freedom to select between candidates is not a choice because whoever is already chosen would be from a powerful position controlled by the rich, who would work according to the wishes of the ruling class. Therefore, it would not benefit ordinary people in any way. Thus, the author debunked the concept of freedom in democracy as fake.

Question 4

Why, according to Krishnamurti, are the concepts of freedom and discipline contradictory to one another?

Solution

Answer. J. Krishnamurti believed that discipline and freedom are contradictory to one another. Disciplines are a set of rules to be followed with certain morals. When bound by such laws and regulations, people cannot achieve their required freedom. No individual can question the rules; hence there cannot be any intellectual development or free-thinking, and thus, one can never achieve true freedom. We become self-controlled and cannot be in a stage to help other struggling individuals. Ordinary people do not have any right to question or follow the traditional rules blindly, and there would not be any developmental growth, resulting in a loss of freedom. Thus, the concepts of freedom and discipline contradict each other.

Question 5

How does the process of inquiry lead to true freedom?

Solution

Answer. Questioning or inquiring about the current set of laws and regulations imposed upon us will help develop other aspects and lead to the development of our intellectual society. The process of inquiry leads to absolute freedom, which makes us think deeply and discover what is true and false. Hence, we would grow stronger mentally and gain more knowledge than we could have received when rules bind us. So, the author tries to tell us that instead of blindly following the rules, we must inquire about the traditional significance to have a more comprehensive understanding of their importance. Thus, we can secure several perspectives and develop our minds, leading us to true freedom.

Talking about the Text

Question 1

According to the author, the masses are prevented from realising their slavery; the masses are also continually reminded that they have the right to vote. Do you think this idea holds good for our country too?

Solution

Answer. The author gradually exposes the concept of democracy in this chapter. According to the author, democracy does not explore freedom. Therefore, the masses are prevented from realising their slavery which is changed according to the convenience of the rulers. The change in systems does not necessarily create any benefits for the people ruled. Through their newspapers, schools, and parliaments, the higher class makes extreme efforts to prevent us from realising our slavery. Hence, the entire scenario on democracy painted by the author, G.B Shaw, in this chapter holds true for our country.

Question 2

‘Nature may have tricks up her sleeve to check us if the chemists exploit her too greedily.’ Discuss.

Solution

Answer. In today’s world, the Industrial Revolution, the age of machinery, and new technologies have developed rapidly with the production of goods that have opened doors for humankind. There have

been new-age technologies that have helped speed up the agricultural domain and resulted in increasing output. 'Nature may have tricks up her sleeve to check us if the chemists exploit her too greedily' is related to today's context as overexploitation of resources is very harmful to Nature. When all these technologies override Nature without any control, we humans have to face many problems in the future. The use of chemical fertilisers in agricultural fields creates a varied impact on Nature. Thus, the author, G.B. Shaw, means that there should be a check on the indiscriminate use of natural resources.

Question 3

Respect for elders is not to be confused with blind obedience. Discuss.

Solution

Answer. The famous writer, J. Krishnamurti, gives us an honest insight into the concepts of freedom and discipline. So, according to him, respecting elders is not to be confused with blind obedience. On the contrary, respecting elders is very much essential. Respecting and obeying elders is the usual tradition in our society. We are usually instructed never to question them and sometimes to follow the same, which is said to be very helpful to us. However, obedience and blind obedience both have different meanings. Obedience is when individuals will have their ethics in their thoughts and check whether the elders' advice meets our views on the topic, and blind obedience is slavery, not freedom. Hence, one can never achieve true freedom through blind obedience, and it does more harm than good.

Appreciation

Question 1

Both the texts are on 'freedom'. Comment on the difference in the style of treatment of the topic in them.

Solution

Answer. The author G.B. Shaw explains the concept of freedom sarcastically through the chapter 'Freedom'. He presents his statements about freedom with pure justification using historical facts. The author also gives out a witty observation of the reader's conscience using his sharp brain. He debunks the entire idea of freedom in his sarcastic style of writing. Shaw can make strong statements, be it

democracy or any topic, and support it with all the required proof from history without shying away from expressing his thoughts bravely.

On the other hand, the famous writer, J. Krishnamurti, treats freedom and discipline much more smoothly. His work appears to be more straightforward and explains the concept of freedom and discipline in a precise manner. Thus, both authors are different writers in their styles. Moreover, while Shaw's way of handling the topic is sarcastic, using historical facts into account to justify his statements, Krishnamurti treats it through explanations to justify his interpretation.

Question 2

When Shaw makes a statement, he supports it with several examples. Identify two sections in the text which explain a statement with examples. Write down the main statement and the examples. Notice how this contributes to the effectiveness of the writing.

Solution

There are many statements that Shaw makes in the text, two of which are as follows:

Example 1:

"The object of all honest governments should be to prevent your being imposed on in this way. But the object of most actual governments, I regret to say, is exactly the opposite. They enforce your slavery and call it freedom." Living in a civilised country, and the government controls our freedom by directing us to what not to do. It's complete slavery in the name of freedom.

Example 2.

"The slavery of man to man is the very opposite of this. It is hateful to the body and to the spirit."

For instance, we have been told by our teachers, and parents what is right and what is wrong. "You know what people say, what the priest says, what tradition says, and what you have learned in school". Yet, you say you are free when all these forms a kind of enclosure within which you live, and we living in that space makes us feel free.

Question 3

Notice the use of personal pronouns in the two texts. Did this make you identify yourself more with the topic than if it had been written in an impersonal style? As you read the texts, were you able to relate the writer's thoughts with the way you lead your own life?

Solution

Answer. The use of personal pronouns has enriched both texts. Yes, using personal pronouns helps us identify ourselves in the text with the context of absolute freedom. But, in addition, as both the texts have been written using personal pronouns, it helps us relate the writer's thoughts with our own life.
