

SECTION – B**Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished**

Background

The aforementioned quote by Nelson Mandela is from his autobiography, 'Long walk to freedom' published in 1994. The anti-apartheid revolutionary who later went on to become the president of South Africa, believed that every human had inherent goodness, which may not be visible to all, or at all times, but it exists and manifests at a certain time.

Humans are considered the wisest creature on Earth with immense cognitive ability. The power to judge, think and reason distinguishes them from beasts. Philosophical discourses often focus on the constant strife between the good and the bad element in a human mind. Great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi and Gautam Buddha believed in the essential goodness of man. No wonder, the dreadful killer Angulimaal metamorphosed into a sage due to Buddha's appeal to the former's essential goodness hidden within. This one anecdotal instance has often been cited to prove, 'Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.' I shall elaborate the aforementioned proclamation about human goodness in the following sections in the essay:

Introduction

1. Anecdotal: One can begin the essay with a story, either a real life event, or a literary piece. Here, I begin with a short story in Hindi by Sudarshan. The story, titled, 'Haar ki Jeet' (Victory of defeat) has three characters, Baba Bharti, Dacoit Kharag Singh and Baba Bharti's treasured horse Sultaan. In a bid to snatch away Baba Bharti's unique horse Sultaan, Dacoit Kharag Singh uses treachery. One evening, while Baba Bharti was riding his horse, Kharag Singh in the guise of a poor, crippled, sick-man requested him to drop him to the Doctor staying in a nearby village. The moment, Baba Bharti gave this man a lift on the horse; he pushed aside Bharti and began to run away with the horse. Baba Bharti pleaded with the dacoit not to mention this incident to anyone, else people will stop trusting and helping the poor and sickly. Baba Bharti's goodness and compassion for the marginalized appealed to the inner goodness of the dacoit and transformed him. Next morning, he returned the horse back to Baba Bharti's stable. The moral of the story can easily be summed up as, 'Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished.'
2. Mythological: Just as the story of Angulimaal's transformation surfaces in Buddhist scriptures, the story of transformation of Ratnakar, a dacoit to Sage Vaalmiki has equally been popular in Hindu religious tradition.
3. Source: Nelson Mandela, the first 'black' to become the head of the state in South Africa had served 27 years in prison, fighting against the inhuman apartheid practice of racial segregation. Yet, he believed that no matter how evil men may appear, there still exists essential goodness in them. This was based on his life-long experiences during the anti-apartheid struggle as the leader of the African National Congress. Eventually, his efforts gained international attention and apartheid was lifted in South Africa. The foundations of an all-inclusive society was laid with the holding of the first all-racial democratic elections in 1994. Goodness was eventually witnessed when people elected Mandela as the President.
4. Historical: Gandhi was also an advocate of the inherent goodness of people. His entire philosophy of truth and non-violence rested on the inherent goodness of people. He believed that violence will only instigate bestial instincts of people, whereas, non-violent Satyagraha appeals to the goodness within. It arouses the conscience of the perpetrator of injustice and makes him/her mend their ways. He had immense faith in humanity, in human goodness.