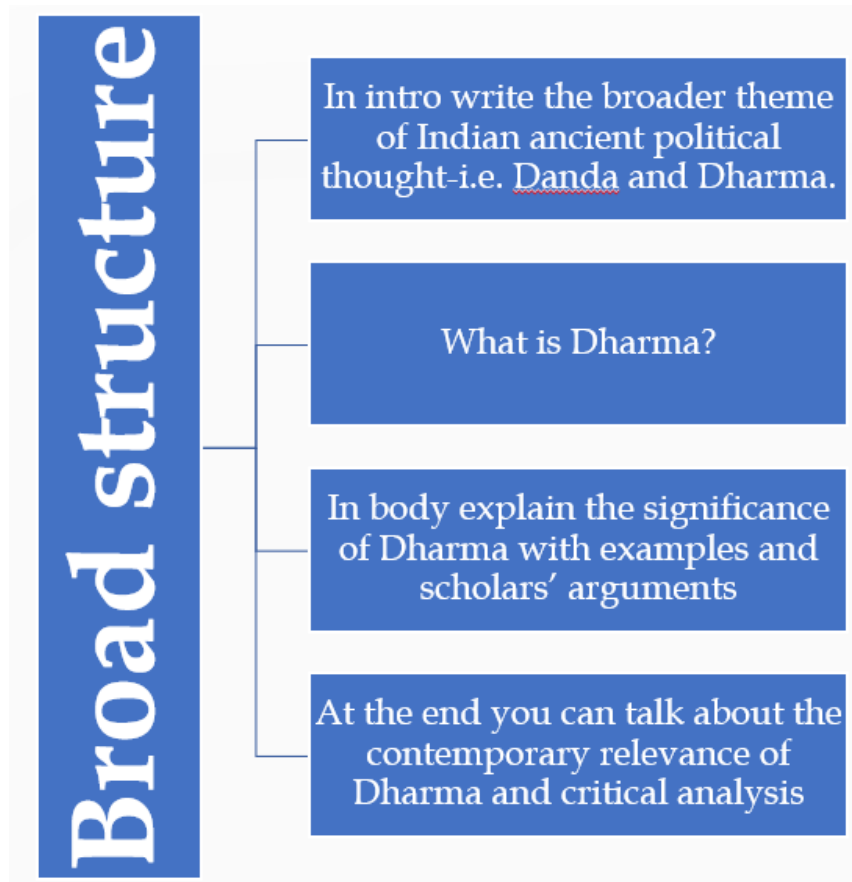Sleepy Classes IAS
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Political Science & International Relations

Crash Course

Lecture - 2

Click here to watch the following videos on the YouTube

Examine the significance of Dharma in India's ancient political thought. (10)

Broad structure

In intro write the broader theme of Indian ancient political thought-i.e. Danda and Dharma.

What is Dharma?

In body explain the significance of Dharma with examples and scholars' arguments

At the end you can talk about the contemporary relevance of Dharma and critical analysis

For **Bhikhu Parekh**, ancient Indian political thinkers conceptualised political life in terms of two central and interdependent concepts namely, **dharma and danda**. While the term danda means discipline, force, Dharma may be seen even in the Confucian Tradition as that which holds society together.

It is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dhr' meaning to hold. One aspect was applied to holding together the society through **varnashrama dharma-** each individual and groups does his or its specific duties as member of a group to which one belongs.
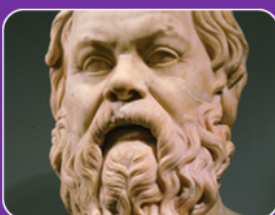
This may be compared to the ethics of justice based on theory of soul that were conceived by **Plato in his work 'Republic'** which led to nationalist scholars like **K.P. Jayswal** to draw parallels between Indian and Greek thought.

At the same time, the maintenance of this order in society was viewed as the duty of the king. Despite being a monarchy, the concept of **'Rajdharma'** sought to provide a guide to King to perform his duties in a manner that ensured **yogakshema/ welfare of his kingdom**.
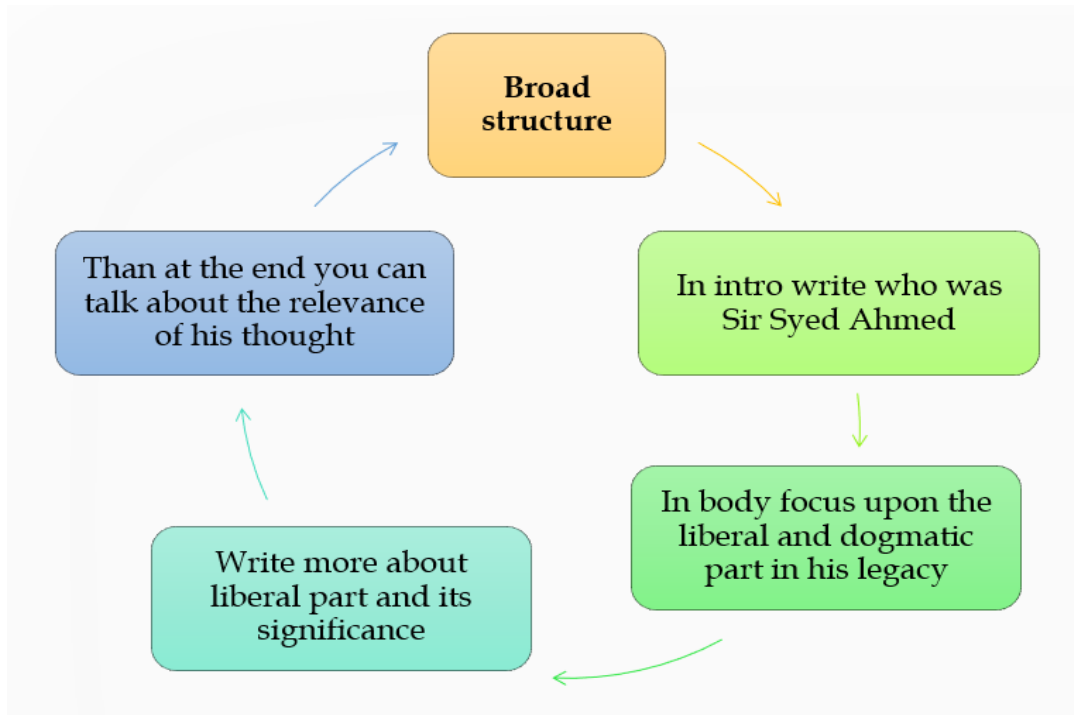
While the Dharmashastras centrally focussed on the idea of dharma with practical politics on the sidelines, *Bidyut Chakrabarty* remarks how even a shrewd statesman like Kautilya in his Arthashastra banks heavily on not just danda, but also dharma.

Explaining dharma as some sort of social duty involving obedience to the customary and sacred laws, *Kautilya seems to visualise two-fold functions of dharma*.

- First, while advocating a strong monarchy, he never allowed the king to become absolute and the *restraining factor was supposed to be dharma*.
- Second, the *social conduct of the citizens* of the state is also supposed to be regulated and restrained by the dynamics of dharma.

- Thus, dharma happens to be some sort of amorphous and supreme law of the land in ancient times within the norms of which everyone in the state, including the king, has to live his life and discharge his stipulated responsibilities.

- The significance of Dharma in polity has not disappeared with time but may be found in different variants. Gandhi ji is regarded as one of the greatest modern political thinkers. His moral philosophy also picks on the idea of Dharma to build a moral base for politics through concepts like Ahimsa, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya.

- Anne Besant had regarded Dharma, as India's greatest contribution of a word to the world. Similarly *Max Muller* acknowledged that **"nowhere in the world, human mind has dealt with the various questions of life in such a depth as in case of India."** The idea of Dharma also found space in Indian Constitution in its values of checks and balances, secularism, DPSPs and importantly the ideals of equality, justice and brotherhood enshrined within the Preamble.

- Despite the relevance of Dharma as an intrinsic part of Indian philosophy, *Prof. R.S. Sharma* points to certain misgivings with its use including its association with Hindu philosophy primarily as well as the dominance of upper castes in drawing the contours of Dharma and its implementation in society.

There is a need to reinvent the legacy of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to ensure his relevant thought is remembered while letting go of the dogmatic parts. Comment. (20)

Broad structure

- Than at the end you can talk about the relevance of his thought
- In intro write who was Sir Syed Ahmed
- In body focus upon the liberal and dogmatic part in his legacy
- Write more about liberal part and its significance

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was termed as a *"collective individual"* by French sociologist *Pierre Bourdieu*. He successfully managed to take up the roles of a free-thinker, an administrator, a reformer, an educationalist, a religious scholar and a devout family man, who is known to be the harbinger of liberalism and modernity in Muslim society.

- *Legacy of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan*: The advent of British rule in India and consequent loss of power of the Muslim rulers led to increased colonial hostility towards Muslims in India which was further compounded by the 1857 revolt.

- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan having witnessed the 1857 revolt and British might understood the need to help Muslims in India take up modern education and ideas so as to progress in colonial India. Eminent scholar *Shafey Kidwai* locates Sir Syed in the pantheon of 19th century polymaths like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Rajendra Lal Mitra who worked for a cultural and social renaissance.

- In 1870, sir Syed began publishing his Urdu journal, *Tahzib-ul- Ikhlaq, which exhorted Muslims to reform their religious idea*s. Sir Syed's basic intellectual move was to argue that Islam was not incompatible with modern ideas and values.

His insistence on reform took recourse to a well established method of ijtihad that calls for the _use of independent reasoning in order to keep up with changing times_, thereby instilling an idea of reform from within the Muslim community.

Theologically, therefore he took it upon himself to distinguish the essence of Islam from the inessential parts such as was the Islamic prohibition on charging interest. The current judicial concept of '_essential religious practices_' may be compared to his idea. _Prof. Kidwai_ regards Sir Syed Ahmad Khan as the first Muslim public intellectual of the nineteenth century who propagated a way of life that drew on cultural pluralism.

Sir Syed is referred to by many as the _"man who knew tomorrow"._ He played a very influential role in bridging the gap between the Oriental and the Western world through his steps in education sector including setting up Mahommedan Anglo-Oriental College in 1875, which in due course, became the Aligarh Muslim University .

- However, _Ayesha Jalal_ also points to certain dogmatic elements of Sir Syed's thought. He is regarded by Pakistan as its ideological progenitor for propounding the politics of separatism that crystallized into the two-nation theory.

- Despite this criticism, scholars like _Tariq Mansoor_ argue that , to draw a generalised conclusion on Sir Syed's convictions merely through the lens of some quotes without understanding their context would not be a fair way to assess his legacy.

- Further, while there were certain issues regarding his views on girls education which he confined to tutoring at home, _Mansoor_ argues that when Sir Syed started his project of educational renaissance, he invited all Indians to come together to join hands in the struggle against illiteracy.

Relevance of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan

- While, his conservative attitude had certain limitations, _Mansoor_ talks how Sir Syed laid the foundation of comparative religious studies and revived the spirit of Dara Shikoh's philosophy – to bring major communities of India together by finding commonalities in their religions and assimilate them as a one mighty stream.

- There is a need to therefore reinvent the progressive parts legacy of this 19th century reformer who helped in the creation of a 21st century India.

How has John Rawls enriched the idea of Justice in liberalism? (20)

Introduction
- Justice as an essentially contested concept.
- Idea of Social Justice

Body
- Points of Rawls' theory that enriched the pre-existing liberal tradition of justice.
- Contemporary examples.

Conclusion
- Critical analysis

- The concept of Justice is an essentially contested one and been a matter of debate since Greek philosophy. Both **Plato and Aristotle** saw Justice as being the ultimate virtue. For Plato, An ideal state would be the **embodiment of justice, where every** individual would be true to his nature while for Aristotle justice is related to the idea of **'proportionate equality'.**

- According to *Heywood*, while legal justice has much older roots, the concept of social justice is attributed to 19th century. It is 'social' in the sense that:

  o   It is concerned with social well-being.

  o   It deals with distribution of benefits or rewards in society.

- Rawls enriches the idea of justice in the tradition of liberalism through a number of ways:

- **Assimilate procedural and substantive justice:** John Rawls in his "Theory of Justice" tries to bring together both procedural and substantive justice in the liberal tradition. Like many philosophers before him, Rawls sees Justice as an overarching virtue that should be the **"first virtue of social institutions".**

- **Promote pluralism and inclusion:** Rawls was a supporter of **political and social liberalism** where he emphasises the need for a welfare state and reasonable pluralism. Rawls in his 'A Theory of Justice' clearly states that utilitarianism is the principle opponent of his work. He criticises utilitarianism for **failing to distinguish between persons** and their different needs and wants.

- **Importance of moral dignity:** Instead of utilitarianism, he develops an alternative based on Kantianism. While utilitarianism is teleological (right as maximising happiness), justice as fairness is a deontological theory emphasising **primacy of individual and moral dignity** .

- **<u>Just conditions for rule formation</u>**: Applying the contractarian tradition, Rawls argues that justice is what free and equal persons would agree to as basic terms of social cooperation in conditions that are fair for this purpose. Via the original position, Rawls hopes to provide a fair method to arrive at the principles of justice. The veil of ignorance prevents the interference of arbitrary and irrelevant facts in determination of principles of justice for distribution of primary goods.

- **<u>Synthesis of liberty and equality</u>**: The idea of Justice as fairness acquires concrete form in the two general principles given in lexical priority to balance goals of liberty and equality:

  - **First Principle: Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme of liberties for all;**

  - **Second Principle: Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions:**

    - They are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of *fair equality of opportunity*;

    - They are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the *difference principle*).

- In the Indian context, Rawls' fierce commitment to equality and the insistence that any departure from this principle can only be in the interest of justice is a familiar idea as embedded in the Preamble and Fundamental Rights, including affirmative action.

- However, despite one of the most elaborate procedural theories of justice, Rawls encounters criticisms from both liberal and communitarian scholars. Libertarian scholars like *<u>Nozick and Hayek</u>* are critical of elements of redistribution by State.

- On the other hand social liberals like *<u>Amartya Sen</u>* believe Rawls' theory to be insufficient, calling for a *<u>capability rather than institutional approach</u>*. Communitarians like *<u>Sandel</u>* are critical of individuals in Rawls' original position as being **disconnected and disembodied**. *<u>Walzer</u>* on the other hand argues that no system of justice can be evaluated as inherently just or unjust; evaluation is possible only based on the **social meanings attached to the goods at stake.**

- **Rawls** tries to address these issues in his work *<u>'Political Liberalism'</u>* addressing that rather than being a universal account, his conception of justice applies to the public political culture of a liberal democratic society where citizens are *free* and *equal*, **and that society has a *fair* system** of cooperation.

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