

Q) What was Kant's idea of enlightenment? How he differentiated between age of enlightenment and enlightened age?

Immanuel Kant was one of the foremost proponents of enlightenment and it was in his essay, "What is enlightenment?" that he propounded his idea on the same.

Kant's idea of enlightenment included

- Enlightenment is nothing but the freedom to use your ^{own} intelligence
- It is the human's emergence from immaturity ~~and~~ imposed on oneself by the individual.
- An enlightened person, then, can use his own intelligence without any outside assistance from another person.
- It is only through lack of understanding or lack of resolve that an individual can prevent himself from becoming enlightened.

Kant differentiated between age of enlightenment and enlightened age by stating that we are yet to see the latter while the former is here. He means that while certain individuals have resorted to themselves as the source of their decisions, many still lag behind with an enlightened age being a goal of the future. Being a relay of skepticism, he states that an enlightened age maybe an idea of the future, which we may never achieve. Thus, through his idea of transcendental idealism, he makes enlightenment

a discovery of self through the innate experience unique to the person.

Q2

"The promptings of the heart are more to be trusted than the logic of the mind" - Rousseau. Evaluate this statement in the light of Rousseau's romanticism?

The various philosophers from the period of Enlightenment, all over the world, focussed on rationality, individualism and relativism as the basis of human progress.

Rousseau, on the other hand, advocated romanticism i.e. the idea of life as seen, felt and experienced by an individual rather than reliance on reason only for guiding human behaviour. It is this idea of romanticism that is highlighted in the above lines.

Rousseau's idea of enlightenment was by returning to the natural order and state of a man which he highlighted through his work titled 'Confessions'. His ideas being simpler, appealed more to people than the rationalist model of other thinkers like Voltaire. His ideas thus advocated the ideas of humanism and attainment of happiness as an end as well, but through a different path of emotions and feelings rather than scientific, rationality led.

Rousseau's ideas emerged from a belief that humans are born good and it is their social interactions which corrupts them. It is for this reason that he relied on his heart and thereby emphasised on

art, poetry, paintings etc as expression of enlightenment

Thus, Rousseau's ideas relied on Individualism, Relativism and not so much on Rationalism, as a means to achieve the highest self.

Q3 Is it correct to say that enlightened despots were really enlightened?

Enlightened Absolutism is seen as one of the foremost legacies of enlightenment age. It refers to a form of absolute monarchy, wherein ideas of enlightenment like freedom of speech, freedom of religion, nationality etc formed the basis of certain decisions taken by the rulers like Frederick the Great etc.

Certain steps, taken by many leaders, in fact did show influence of enlightenment which include:

- 1 Reformation of justice ^{and} education system, support to agriculture, art and a legal code by Frederick the Great.
- 2 Catherine the Great, advocated women's rights, education reforms and tolerance towards other religions.
- 3 Joseph II in Austria promoted individual rights, abolishing serfdom etc.

However, these need to be seen in the context of

- 1 Overall popularity of ideas of enlightenment prompting people to seek political change as a possibility. In such an environment, this idea was the best approach to keep absolutism and allow benevolence albeit state defined.

- ② Frederick's continuance of contradictory policies: Imprisonment of opponents, maintenance of censorship and serfdom by Catherine the Great or reforms of Frederick the Great being financed by increased tax burden on commoners.
- ③ While leaders like Frederick the Great, personally did believe in these ideas, absolutism was a way of life in Europe and these ~~ideas~~ ^{ideas} could not be translated absolutely or even partially for *statu quo* to sustain.
- ④ The ideas did not last long with many like Joseph II going back on them soon.

Thus, enlightened despotism, while bringing forth some positive changes ^{in the despots and the society}, was more a need of the hour rather than a policy believed ~~to~~ in and followed actively by rulers. It was based on selective adoption and sensible interpretation, with ultimate aim being maintenance of absolutism and despotism as the non negotiable goal.