

1. Why is empathy a much desirable attribute for a humane society? Explain.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to present in detail the importance of empathy as a much desirable attribute for humane society.

Introduction:

Empathetic humane society involves, first, seeing animals situation from its perspective, and, second, sharing the emotions, including, if any, distress. A humane society is a group that aims to stop animal suffering due to cruelty or other reasons.

Body:

Much desirable attribute for a humane society:

- Empathetic people care about others and show interest in and concern for them. e.g. Many people understand the situation when an animal goes through pain of labour.
- Empathy ensures helping behaviours that come from within, rather than being forced, so that people behave in a more compassionate manner. e.g. the way animals are treated by the family strongly influences whether or not children learn to treat other living beings with kindness and respect.
- Affective empathy for animals involves the ability to understand animals emotions and respond appropriately. For instance, when a person comes back home, the dog or the cat starts to make some familiar sounds to catch the attention of person, and person responds accordingly.
- Somatic empathy involves having a sort of physical reaction in response to what someone else is experiencing. People sometimes physically experience what an animal is feeling. When we see someone else feeling embarrassed, for example, we might start to blush or have an upset stomach.
- Cognitive empathy involves being able to understand animals mental state and what they might be thinking in response to the situation. e.g. when death of a person happens in family, the pet in the house also understands the situation.
- Empathy allows people to build social connections with others. e.g. Many local residents and NGO's who fed street dogs regularly, develop bonds with those animals.
- Empathizing with others helps us learn to regulate our own emotions. Emotional regulation is important in that it allows us to manage what we are feeling, even in times of great stress, without becoming overwhelmed. e.g. Children playing with Animals.

A few reasons why people sometimes lack empathy for animals:

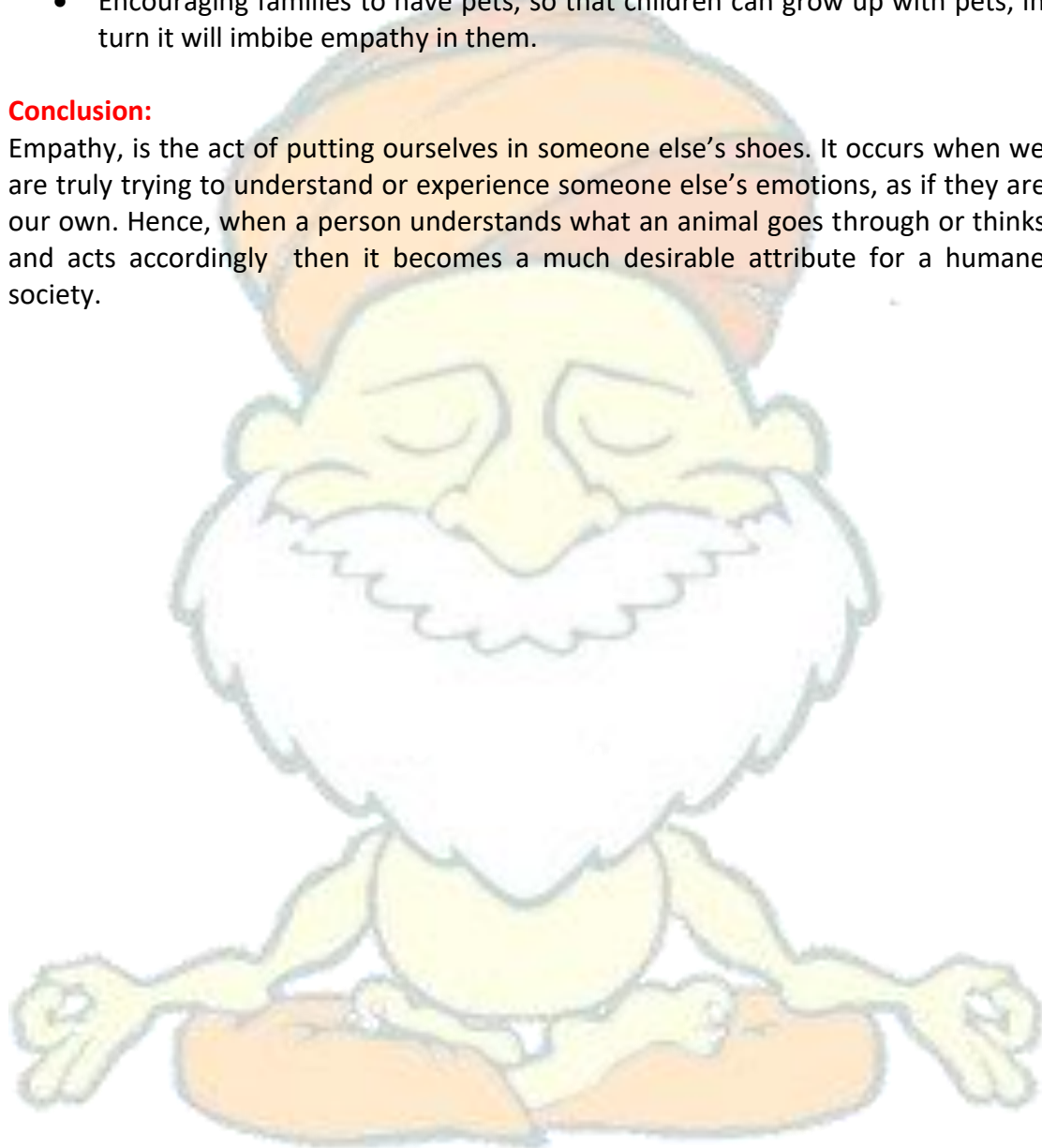
- They fall victim to cognitive biases. e.g. In an stance in Mumbai, a person's mind was imbibed with belief that a cat always creates a mess in the kitchen, that person literally tortured a cat with screwdriver.
- People tend to dehumanize victims. e.g. Sexual assaults on the animals, beaten to death animals.

Steps to imbibe empathy for animals in people:

- Making it a part of curriculum so that students can develop a perspective to empathise with animals
- For example, Pet Empathy Program of Winnipeg Humane Society tries to imbibe pet empathy with the goal of fostering a better understanding of empathy towards animals and people.
- Encouraging families to have pets, so that children can grow up with pets, in turn it will imbibe empathy in them.

Conclusion:

Empathy, is the act of putting ourselves in someone else's shoes. It occurs when we are truly trying to understand or experience someone else's emotions, as if they are our own. Hence, when a person understands what an animal goes through or thinks and acts accordingly then it becomes a much desirable attribute for a humane society.



2. What do you understand by compassion? How is it different from empathy? Do you think compassion makes people too emotional? Critically comment.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to put their thoughts about compassion. It also expects to differentiate between compassion and empathy along with presenting both sides arguments whether compassion makes people emotionally ill or not.

Introduction:

Compassion is a sense of concern that arises when we are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to see that suffering relieved.

Body:

At its core, compassion is a response to the inevitable reality of our human condition—our experience of pain and sorrow. e.g. Mother Theresa has often been referred to as an embodiment of compassion. Her selfless work for the poor and destitute till date is inspiring and spoken of.

- Empathy refers to the ability to imagine oneself in another's place and understand others' feelings, desires, ideas and actions. Whereas, Compassion gives rise to an active desire to alleviate another's suffering. It involves a sense of empathy.
- However, It does not end with pity like empathy. It invokes sensibilities to understand and even feel the pain of others and motivates one to be truly helpful in overcoming this pain. It basically implies to suffer together.

Compassion and emotional state of people:

- Compassion offers the possibility of responding to suffering with understanding, patience, and kindness rather than, say, fear and repulsion.
- A person in need would always be happy to get help. It would not only help him face the situation but will generate a blissful feeling of being noticed and cared by others.
- Compassion allows a person to have a feeling of self-satisfaction of helping others whether an animal or human. Hence, it promotes a positive holistic mental health.
- When such a society evolves having compassion for others and helps others in need, each individual is taken care of by the society and in turn he also helps the society. It in turn ensures great sense of security and blissfulness in people, resulting in healthy emotional state.
- Strongly integrated social capital grows with a co-operative and co-existing ecosystem, resulting in reduced toxic or criminal outbreaks and instances. e.g. Compassionate Kozhikode programme in Kerala has same effect.

However sometimes Compassion has produced some negative effects in society:

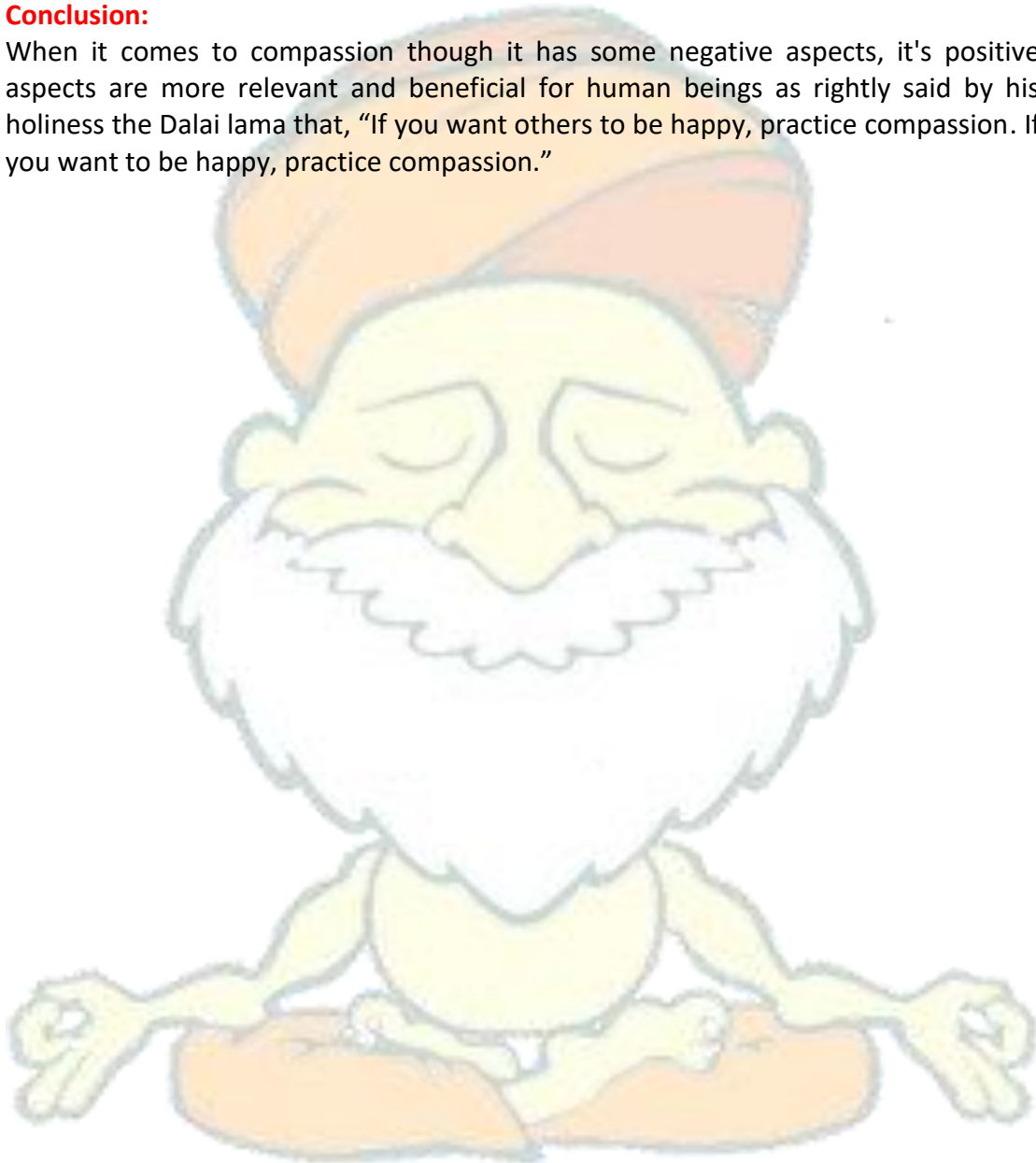
- Compassion sometimes is said to lead a guilt-induced decision making.
- Many a times, people involved in compassionate deeds find themselves feeling negative and less hopeful of their being. e.g. A downtrodden family in

the neighbourhood who helps others in need but doesn't get help when in need. It results in negative emotion.

In spite of these negative sides of compassion, recently scientists have found that compassion as a virtue releases happy hormones in the brain resulting in an efficient and positive outcome.

Conclusion:

When it comes to compassion though it has some negative aspects, its positive aspects are more relevant and beneficial for human beings as rightly said by his holiness the Dalai lama that, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."



3. You must have come across news items reporting instances of great tolerance and empathy towards the weaker sections. Can you recount a few of those? How did they inspire you? Discuss.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to recall instances of great tolerance and empathy towards weaker sections from news items. It also expects students to write about how these instances have inspired them.

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world to test its tolerance and empathy attributes by posing a question of survival in front of humanity. Amidst this crisis many people around the world have come together to help people besides practising attributes of tolerance and empathy.

Body:

Instances of tolerance and empathy:

- Khalid Ahmed a 24 year old mechanical engineer started a trust, which helps bury unclaimed bodies and takes homeless persons with injuries to government hospitals and shelters.
- Daily wagers, footpath vendors, migrant labourers have all had their only source of income snuffed out by the lockdown. To help them stay afloat, the city's army of volunteers has stepped in, doing their bit in multiple ways. e.g. Many of organisations have come together and are helping the people by distributing food packets and other essentials.
- Bollywood actor Sonu Sood arranged bus service for migrants to return to their homes.
- Business tycoon Ratan Tata donated nearly 1500 crore rupees to help the needy people.
- In Australia shop owners reserved early hours spot for elderly people so that they can get essentials before it runs out.
- In Singapore the President and cabinet took one month pay cut to show empathy towards workers.
- In France L'Oréal a perfume company opened its factories to manufacture and distribute free hand sanitizer to people.

Inspiration from these acts:

- Acts of providing food and other essentials during COVID-19 gives us an inspiration to show empathy for weaker sections.
- It also shows us to show compassion for them by helping them.
- It shows us that money, matter or any other physical material happiness is not the sole aim of human life. Whereas respecting each other and helping each other is the real way of life.
- The huge donations like the ones done by Ratan Tata helps us to understand that, even though if we acquire lot of money and get rich, we should give

back to society in times of need through the attribute of empathy, compassion and tolerance.

- Acts of Khalid Ahmed who help the homeless people show that we should not discriminate others based on religion, race, caste , sex etc. Rather we should be tolerant to these kind of unnecessary things and should show solidarity for them.
- Pay cuts taken by the government officials try to inspire us by showing the importance of practising fraternity and brotherhood irrespective of a person's occupation. It also inspires us to not to discriminate person based on his/her profession. Rather respect it.
- The acts of arranging food services and bus services for the destitute inspires us to be down to earth while acting in society despite the so called higher status in society.
- Acts of giving shelter to weaker sections shows the application of compassion in true spirit.

Conclusion:

In the crisis like situation people come together and help each other. The qualities of empathy, compassion and tolerance have made our surroundings a better place and hence strengthening these values and practising them in reality will surely help us to make this world a more better place.

