



MAINS ANSWER WRITING CONSOLIDATION

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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-1

History

1. Discuss the role of the Swadeshi Movement in promoting economic nationalism and indigenous industries in colonial India. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by mentioning the movement
- In the body part, discuss how it strengthened economic nationalism
- Next, argue how it shaped indigenous industries.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

The **Swadeshi Movement** began in **1905** as a response to the **Partition of Bengal**, aiming to **resist British economic domination** through the promotion of indigenous goods. It marked a shift from political protest to economic self-reliance. The movement laid the foundation for economic nationalism in colonial India.

Role in Promoting Economic Nationalism

- **Boycott of Foreign Goods:** The **Swadeshi Movement** actively encouraged Indians to reject British-manufactured goods, especially textiles, which had flooded Indian markets after the decline of indigenous industries.
 - ◆ **Public bonfires of foreign cloth became symbolic acts of resistance**, reducing dependence on colonial imports and challenging the economic foundations of British rule.
 - Buying Indian goods became a “patriotic duty.”
- **Swadeshi as a National Duty:** The idea of *Swadeshi* went beyond economics and became a moral and patriotic obligation.
 - ◆ Leaders like **Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Rabindranath Tagore** linked the use of indigenous goods with national self-respect, transforming everyday consumption into an act of political participation.
- **Awareness of Colonial Economic Exploitation:** The movement helped popularise the understanding of

colonial exploitation, particularly the ***drain of wealth*** theory highlighted by **Dadabhai Naoroji**.

- ◆ Through **newspapers, pamphlets, and public meetings**, people became aware of how British policies impoverished India by extracting raw materials and suppressing local industries.
- **Mass Mobilisation and Social Participation:** Swadeshi mobilised wide sections of society, **including women, students, and urban middle classes**, in economic resistance.
 - ◆ **Women participated** by spinning khadi, promoting indigenous goods at home, and organising picketing of foreign shops, while students boycotted government institutions, making economic nationalism a mass-based movement rather than an elite idea.

Role in Promoting Indigenous Industries

- **Revival of Handloom, Khadi, and Small-Scale Industries:** The Swadeshi Movement revitalised traditional crafts and village industries that had declined under colonial industrial policies.
 - ◆ **Khadi became both an economic and symbolic tool**, providing rural employment and restoring dignity to indigenous labour.
 - This revival helped sustain **rural livelihoods** and reduced dependence on imported manufactured goods.
 - ◆ **National Handloom Day (August 7)** is celebrated to commemorate the launch of this movement.
- **Growth of Indigenous Enterprises and Institutions:** The movement inspired the establishment of Indian-owned enterprises such as **Bengal Chemicals, Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company**, and several indigenous banks and insurance firms.
 - ◆ Also, Jamshedji Tata founded the **Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) in 1907**. It became a symbol of Indian industrial prowess and technical capability.

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- ◆ These institutions aimed to build **self-reliant industrial capacity** and challenge British economic dominance by retaining capital within the country.
- **Promotion of Technical Education and Entrepreneurship:** Emphasis was laid on **technical and vocational education to nurture skilled manpower** capable of running indigenous industries.
 - ◆ Educational institutions encouraged scientific learning, entrepreneurship, and innovation, laying the groundwork for a modern industrial economy independent of colonial control.
 - ◆ For example, the **National Council of Education (1906)**, established during the Swadeshi Movement, sought to provide national, technical, and industrial education, laying the foundation for a self-reliant and modern industrial economy.
- **Foundation for Future Industrial Policy:** The ideals of Swadeshi deeply influenced later economic thinking during the freedom struggle.
 - ◆ Leaders like **Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru** drew upon its principles to shape post-independence industrial policies focused on self-reliance, state-led development, and balanced industrial growth.

Limitations of The Movement

- **Price Disparity:** Swadeshi goods (like Khadi) were often **more expensive** and coarser than mass-produced British goods, making them difficult for the poorest peasants to afford.
- **Lack of State Support:** Unlike European nations, the colonial government did not provide protective tariffs for Indian industries, leaving them vulnerable to competition.

Conclusion:

The Swadeshi Movement transformed economic resistance into a mass nationalist force by promoting self-reliance and indigenous enterprise. It laid the ideological and institutional foundations for India's future economic nationalism and industrial development.

2. "The challenge is not only to remove colonial residues but to avoid creating new forms of intellectual dependence." In the context of debates on decolonising education, analyse how India can strike a balance between indigenous ethos and scientific-temporal modernity. (250 words)

Approach:

- Briefly define the process of decolonisation.
- In the body part explain what residues still persist and what are the new form of intellectual dependencies
- Give solutions to how indigenous ethos and scientific-temporal modernity can be balanced.
- Conclude accordingly .

Introduction:

Decolonisation is not the mere insertion of classical texts or indigenous themes in the curriculum. It requires reshaping the epistemic foundations of learning by ensuring knowledge is produced for Indian contexts, through Indian lenses, and with scientific rigour.

- Today, **globalisation and digital dominance add new pressures**, showing that decolonisation must create a modern, India-centred knowledge system rather than just correct the past.

Body:

Colonial Residues Still Existing in Today's Education System:

- **Language Hierarchy:** English-medium schools are seen as superior, often determining access to jobs, status, and higher education.
 - ◆ This creates a slave mindset where many parents **feel compelled to switch to English medium** even when children are more comfortable in their mother tongue.
 - ◆ For example, a student scoring high in regional-language boards often feels disadvantaged in **national competitive exams** because most coaching, material, and evaluation favour English.
- **Curriculum that promotes Western Frameworks Over Indigenous Knowledge:** Social sciences frequently rely on Western theorists—**Durkheim, Weber, Adam Smith**,

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John Locke, while Indian thinkers like Kautilya, Basava, or Savitribai Phule are limited to selective chapters.

- ◆ Indian advancements in maths (Aryabhata), astronomy (Varahamihira), polity (Arthashastra), medicine (Ayurveda) are often taught as "heritage," not knowledge systems.
- ◆ Eg, Economics textbooks teach **Keynesian and neoliberal frameworks** extensively but rarely discuss indigenous concepts like *Swadeshi economics*, *Gandhian trusteeship*, or *Arthashastra's* political economy.
- **Assessment Focused on Rote Learning and Clerical Skills:** Examinations emphasise memory over creativity, conformity over inquiry and success is equated with mastering fixed syllabi rather than solving real-world problems.
 - ◆ Though **NEP 2020** is pushing for **continuous assessment**, significant gaps still remain.
- **Overdependence on Western Universities for Academic Validation:** Colonial years taught Indians to see Western institutions as the ultimate arbiters of "good knowledge." Foreign degree still equates to higher social prestige. Moreover many Indian research papers chase Western journals for legitimacy.
 - ◆ For example, policy makers often quote **Harvard or Oxford research** before citing Indian universities, even for India-specific problems.

New Form of Intellectual

Dependencies That Must be Avoided

- **Dependence on Western Pedagogical Models Without Local Adaptation:** Reforms like MOOCs, liberal arts structures, competency-based education, and credit systems are adopted because they are fashionable globally. Copying without adapting leads to shallow imitation, not meaningful reform.
 - ◆ Indian classrooms imitate Western "project-based learning" without providing infrastructure or teacher training.
 - ◆ Liberal arts models may ignore local knowledge traditions (**Nyaya logic, regional literatures, indigenous sciences**).

◆ For example Universities copy the American-style four-year UG system, but without internships, mentoring systems, or academic advisors, reducing effectiveness.

- **Dependence on Global Tech Platforms and Algorithmic Gatekeeping:** Big Tech firms (Google, YouTube, Meta, OpenAI, Coursera, etc.) shape what students see, search, and study thereby influencing their thinking. This creates a **digital dependence** where India's intellectual landscape is shaped by foreign algorithms.
 - ◆ For example, If we ask a global AI model about "Dharma," "Raga," or "Nyaya," then it often gives simplistic or distorted explanations because training data lacks Indian sources.
- **Pitfall of Blindly Chasing Global University Rankings:** Blind Adoption of Global Ranking Systems for Universities pushing universities to chase metrics designed from the western perspective.
 - ◆ The race for rankings can divert funds from critical areas like faculty development, infrastructure for inclusive education, and innovation in local contexts.
 - True academic excellence requires a balance between global visibility and local relevance.

How India Can Balance Cultural Rootedness and Modern Scientific Temper

- Strengthening Cultural Rootedness and strengthening cultural ethos by:
 - ◆ Integrating Indian knowledge systems (IKS) such as Ayurveda, Nyaya, Arthashastra, mathematics, astronomy, and environmental ethics into school curriculum as envisioned by the NEP 2020.
 - ◆ Reviving Indian languages as mediums of knowledge production, not just communication. In this way thoughts can be organically converted into practicable knowledge.
 - ◆ Including local histories, regional intellectual traditions, and community knowledge in curricula. Showcasing the rich civilisational tradition.
 - ◆ Promoting civilisational values such as pluralism, inquiry (anvikshiki), and holistic learning.

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- **Ensuring Scientific-Temporal Modernity** Nurturing habits of questioning, evidence-based reasoning, and honest peer review so that students learn to trust facts over assumptions.
 - ◆ **For instance**, teaching climate science through real data analysis or guiding students to design simple experiments in classrooms makes **scientific thinking a lived experience** rather than abstract theory.
- **Strengthening STEM infrastructure:** Well-equipped school laboratories, accessible research grants for young innovators, or university-level incubation centres—helps create an environment where ideas can grow into innovations.
 - ◆ For example: India's successes in fields like **space technology and vaccine development** show how such ecosystems can deliver global-scale results.
- **India as Knowledge Producer:** To avoid new forms of dependence, India must become a knowledge producer, not just a consumer.
 - ◆ **Create Global South Standards:** Instead of chasing Western rankings, India should lead in creating metrics for the Global South that value developmental impact over abstract citations.
 - ◆ **Trans-disciplinary Hubs:** Establish centers where Sanskrit scholars and Computer Scientists collaborate (e.g., Computational Linguistics at IITs). Panini's grammar is highly relevant to Natural Language Processing (NLP).
 - ◆ **"Glocal" Research Agendas:** Funding research that solves local problems (e.g., stubble burning, malnutrition) using global technologies, rather than researching topics solely to get published in Western journals.

Conclusion

Decolonising education is a transformative, not decorative, endeavour. It requires moving from an imported knowledge framework to one that is Indian in its intellectual grounding and global in its scientific orientation. By blending cultural rootedness with scientific-temporal modernity, India can create an ecosystem that nurtures confident, creative, and critically aware citizens—free from both colonial hangovers and emerging global dependencies.

3. The Indian national movement transcended the demand for political freedom and simultaneously functioned as a powerful instrument of social transformation. Discuss (150 words)

Approach:

- Briefly state that the Indian national movement was not limited to political independence but also aimed at deep social transformation.
- Give arguments to Indian National Movement- The Quest for Political Freedom and Indian National Movement as Powerful Instrument of Social Transformation
- Conclude by highlighting that the movement laid the foundation for an inclusive, democratic, and socially conscious Indian nation.

Introduction:

The **Indian national movement** was not merely a struggle against colonial rule but a broad-based mobilisation that sought to transform Indian society. Alongside the demand for Swaraj, it addressed entrenched social inequalities and aimed at creating a morally and socially regenerated nation.

- For instance, **Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–22)** combined the fight against colonial rule with **social reform through khadi, mass mobilisation, and the campaign against untouchability**, illustrating the movement's transformative social character.

Body:

Indian National Movement- The Quest for Political Freedom

- **Constitutional Reforms & Representation:** In the "Moderate Phase" (1885–1905), the demand was for greater Indian representation in legislative councils and the "Indianization" of civil services to give Indians a voice in their own governance.
- **Swaraj (Self-Rule):** Following the 1905 Partition of Bengal, the "Extremists" shifted the goal to **Swaraj**. This meant administrative autonomy within the British Empire, similar to Canada or Australia.
- **Assertion of Civil Liberties:** The movement was a constant battle against repressive laws (like the **Rowlatt Act and Vernacular Press Act**). It sought the political right to free speech, assembly, and the press—the bedrock of modern democracy.

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- **Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence):** By 1929, the Lahore Session of the Congress officially declared **Purna Swaraj** as the goal, demanding an absolute end to British sovereignty and the establishment of an independent democratic republic.

Indian National Movement as Powerful Instrument of Social Transformation

- **Social Reform as an Integral Component**
 - ◆ **Abolition of social evils:** Reformist efforts against **sati, child marriage, and for widow remarriage** by leaders such as **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** laid the early groundwork for a reformist national consciousness.
 - ◆ **Caste and social equality:** The movement challenged caste hierarchies through the spread of egalitarian ideas. **Gandhian campaigns against untouchability** and the inclusion of Dalits in mass movements widened social participation.
 - ◆ **Women's emancipation:** Women's **active participation in the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and Quit India movements** redefined their public role, promoting gender equality and political awareness.
- **Cultural and Ideological Transformation**
 - ◆ **National identity formation:** The movement **fostered a shared national identity through vernacular press, nationalist literature, and symbols like khadi and the national flag.**
 - ◆ **Democratisation of politics:** Mass mobilisation, satyagraha, and constructive programmes inculcated values of participation, discipline, and non-violence.
- **Economic and Educational Dimensions**
 - ◆ **Swadeshi and self-reliance:** Promotion of **indigenous industries** aimed at economic self-sufficiency and dignity of labour.
 - ◆ **Educational reforms:** National institutions like **Banaras Hindu University and Jamia Millia Islamia** promoted modern, secular education.
- **Secularism and Communal Harmony**
 - ◆ The movement institutionalized the ethos of **"Sarva Dharma Sambhava."** Leaders like Maulana Azad and Gandhi countered the British "Divide and

Rule" policy by fostering a **composite culture (Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb)**, making secularism a foundational pillar of the future Republic.

● Labor and Peasant Rights

- ◆ The movement bridged the gap between the elite and the masses. The formation of the **All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)** in 1920 and the **All India Kisan Sabha** integrated the struggle for fair wages and land rights into the national agenda, challenging feudal exploitation.

● Tribal Integration and Dignity:

- ◆ Tribal uprisings like the **Munda Ulgulan** and the **Rampa Rebellion** were recognized as anti-colonial struggles.
- ◆ This fostered a sense of "**Jal, Jangal, Zameen**" (**Water, Forest, Land**) rights, ensuring that tribal identities were preserved within the national framework.

Conclusion

Thus, the Indian national movement functioned as a comprehensive project of social transformation, **seeking not only political freedom but also social justice, cultural renewal, and ethical regeneration, laying the foundation of a democratic and inclusive India.**

4. Assess the role of Buddhism and Jainism in challenging the socio-religious order of early historic India. To what extent were they reformist rather than revolutionary movements? (150 words).

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by explaining the emergence of Buddhism and Jainism.
- In the body, explain the role of these religions in challenging the existing order.
- Argue why they were reformist.
- Give key arguments that show Synthesis of their Revolutionary Thought and Reformist Action.
- Conclude accordingly .

Introduction

Buddhism and Jainism emerged in early historic India as responses to growing ritualism, social stratification, and

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priestly dominance within the Vedic order. Rather than overthrowing the existing social system, they sought to reform it by emphasising **ethical conduct, renunciation, and spiritual equality**.

Body:

Role of Buddhism And Jainism

In Challenging The Socio-Religious Order:

- **Challenge to ritualism and Brahmanical authority:** Both religions rejected the supremacy of Vedic sacrifices and the mediatory role of Brahman priests.
 - ◆ Emphasis on personal effort (**karma**), ethical living, and **meditation** reduced dependence on ritual.
 - ◆ **Example:** The Buddha's criticism of animal sacrifice and empty rituals in the **Brahmajala Sutta**.
- **Ethical and moral reinterpretation of religion:** Buddhism promoted the **Eightfold Path**, while Jainism stressed **ahimsa, aparigraha, and anekantavada**.
 - ◆ Religion was made accessible through simple moral codes rather than complex rituals.
 - ◆ **Example:** Jain insistence on non-violence influenced later Indian ethical traditions.
- **Questioning social hierarchy and caste rigidity:** Both traditions opposed birth-based spiritual hierarchy and opened monastic orders to all varnas.
 - ◆ They offered dignity and spiritual agency to women, traders, and lower social groups.
 - ◆ **Example:** Buddhist Sangha admitted people like **Upali**, a barber by birth; Jainism allowed women monks in the Shvetambara tradition.
- **Use of vernacular languages and mass appeal:** Teachings were propagated in **Pali, Prakrit, and Ardhamagadhi**, making them accessible to the masses.
 - ◆ This **weakened the monopoly of Sanskrit** and elite-controlled religious knowledge.

Extent to Which They were

Reformist Rather Than Revolutionary Movements:

- **Focus on moral–ethical reform, not structural overthrow:** Both Buddhism and Jainism sought to transform individual conduct through ethical living rather than dismantling existing social or political institutions.

- ◆ They did not call for the abolition of monarchy, private property, or family life for lay followers.
- ◆ This indicates a **reformist orientation**, aimed at inner transformation rather than social revolution.

- **Limited challenge to the varna system:** While they rejected the idea of **spiritual superiority by birth**, they did not actively mobilise against the caste system as a social institution.
 - ◆ Varna continued to operate in society even where these religions flourished.
 - **Example:** Buddhist texts recognise social distinctions in the lay world, focusing equality mainly within the Sangha.
- **Institutional accommodation with existing power structures:** Both religions received patronage from rulers and elites, integrating them into the prevailing socio-political order.
 - ◆ **Example:** Ashoka's support to Buddhism and merchant patronage of Jainism indicate adaptation rather than confrontation with authority.
 - ◆ Revolutionary movements typically oppose dominant power structures, which was not the case here.
- **Gradual and non-confrontational method of change:** The spread of both religions relied on persuasion, dialogue, and exemplary conduct rather than mass agitation or coercion.
 - ◆ The **Buddha's Middle Path** and Jain emphasis on **ascetic discipline** reflect evolutionary change.
 - ◆ Such methods are characteristic of reform movements rather than revolutions.
- **Selective social inclusiveness:** Entry into monastic orders was open across social backgrounds, but the renunciatory life was not presented as a universal social model.
 - ◆ For householders, duties of family, occupation, and kingship remained valid.
 - ◆ This preserved social continuity while reforming spiritual ideals.
- **Absence of a programme for socio-economic restructuring:** Neither Buddhism nor Jainism proposed

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redistribution of wealth, restructuring of agrarian relations, or transformation of political authority.

- ◆ Their critique remained largely within the moral and spiritual domain.

Synthesis of Revolutionary Thought and Reformist Action:

- **Ideological Revolution vs. Social Reform:** Philosophically, they were **revolutionary** because they struck at the root of Vedic infallibility. By denying a **Creator God and the soul's birth-based purity**, they introduced a "**Cognitive Revolution**."
 - ◆ However, socially, they remained **reformist** because they didn't seek to "level" society, but rather to provide an "**exit ramp**" via the **Sangha for those seeking liberation**.
- **The "Safety Valve" Effect:** By allowing lower castes and women into monastic orders, they provided a spiritual vent for social frustration.
 - ◆ This actually helped **stabilize the existing social order** rather than overthrow it, as the "**revolution**" **was contained within the monastery walls**.
- **Re-defining, Not Replacing, the Brahmin:**
 - ◆ Interestingly, the Buddha often used the term "Brahmin" to describe a man of high moral character (e.g., in the *Dhammapada*).
 - ◆ This shows an attempt to **appropriate and reform** the highest social ideal rather than destroy the category entirely.
- **Gender Ambivalence:** While **revolutionary in admitting women (the Bhikkhuni Sangha)**, they remained reformist/conservative by imposing stricter rules on nuns compared to monks, reflecting the patriarchal constraints of the era.

Conclusion

Buddhism and Jainism significantly challenged the socio-religious order by **questioning ritualism, caste rigidity, and priestly dominance**, but they **did so through ethical reform rather than radical transformation**. Their enduring influence lay in reshaping religious thought and moral values while operating within the broader social framework of early historic India.

Indian Heritage and Culture

5. "Contrast the bronze sculptural traditions of the Pala and Chola periods. How do these artistic divergences reflect the differing socio-religious environments of the two empires?" (150 words)

Approach:

- Start with mentioning period and a brief idea about their sculpture tradition
- In the body part compare both in terms of Aesthetic style, technique and socio religious context.
- Conclude by highlighting their unique nature.

Introduction:

The **Pala (8th–12th century CE)** and **Chola (9th–13th century CE)** empires nurtured two of **India's most refined bronze sculptural traditions**. While both drew from earlier classical idioms, their stylistic choices, themes, and techniques diverged significantly. These differences were rooted in their contrasting religious milieus, patronage networks, and cultural geographies.

Body

Form and Aesthetic Style

- **Pala Bronzes:** Characterised by an elongated, slender form with serene expressions. Figures carry a calm, meditative stillness, reflecting the monastic environment of **Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Odantapuri**.
 - ◆ The treatment of drapery is delicate and linear, with ornate jewellery inspired by Eastern Indian artistic vocabulary.
 - ◆ For example, the bronze figures of Avalokiteshvara, Tara, and Manjusri.
- **Chola Bronzes:** Chola bronzes exhibit fuller, sensuous bodies with dynamic postures (**tribhangha, nataraja pose**). Focus lies on movement, vitality, and rhythmic grace.
 - ◆ Sculptures of **Shiva Nataraja** demonstrate fluidity, anatomical precision, and idealised human form.

Technique and Craftsmanship

- **Pala:** Known for the **lost-wax technique**, but emphasised intricate iconography and symbolic attributes essential to Vajrayana Buddhism.

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- ◆ The Pala artists used high-tin bronze, producing a characteristic **dark lustre**.
- ◆ For example, the **Seated Buddha in Bhumisparsh Mudra** is a typical example of Pala's dark finish.
- **Chola:** Perfected the **cire perdue (lost-wax)** method with unmatched refinement. The Cholas produced hollow-cast, portable bronzes used in temple processions, reflecting the integration of art with public rituals.

Socio-Religious Context

- **Pala:** As patrons of **Mahayana–Vajrayana Buddhism**, Pala rulers fostered scholastic monastic culture. Sculptures catered primarily to monasteries, scholars, and ritual practitioners, hence the contemplative, esoteric iconography.
 - ◆ For instance, Bronze images such as **Manjushri** and **Maitreya** were primarily made for monastery shrines and tantric ritual use (meditation, mandala offerings, and protective rites)
- **Chola:** A deeply temple-centric, **Bhakti-driven society**. **Royal patronage celebrated Saiva and Vaishnava devotion**. Thus, bronzes were meant for **utsava (processions)**, enabling intimate interaction between deity and devotee.
 - ◆ For instance, the **Chola polity was temple-centred and Bhakti-driven**.
 - ◆ **Processional images of Viṣṇu and Pārvatī** were crafted for temple worship and public festivals (e.g., processions and Arudra/Pradosha observances)

Conclusion

The Pala and Chola bronze traditions, though rooted in shared Indian artistic heritage, evolved along distinct religious and cultural trajectories. The Pala style embodied Buddhist scholasticism and ritualism, while the Chola aesthetic reflected public devotion, ritual dynamism, and temple-centred religiosity. Together, they offer a rich spectrum of medieval Indian spirituality and craftsmanship.

6. Discuss the significance of the Gupta period in shaping the foundations of classical Indian culture. How far can it be considered a "Golden Age"? (150 words)

Approach :

- Introduce the answer by briefing about the Gupta Period
- Delve into the significance of the period in shaping Classical Indian Culture
- Give Arguments Supporting the "Golden Age" Label and Against the "Golden Age" Label
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

The **Gupta period** represents a watershed moment in Indian history. It is often termed the *Classical Age* because it witnessed the **crystallization of norms in art, literature, religion, and administration** that shaped Indian civilization for centuries.

Body:

Significance in Shaping Classical Indian Culture:

- **Crystallization of Art and Architecture**
 - ◆ **Temple Architecture:** The period marked the transition from rock-cut shrines to structural stone temples.
 - The **Dashavatara Temple at Deogarh** is a key example of the early **Nagara style**, introducing features such as the shikhara and the garbhagriha that later became standard across northern India.
 - ◆ **Sculpture:** The **Gupta style of sculpture**, seen in the **Sarnath and Mathura schools**, introduced an aesthetic of spiritual calmness and idealized grace, replacing the muscular realism of the earlier Gandhara tradition.
 - ◆ **Painting:** The **murals at Ajanta and Bagh** reflect mastery over expression, color, and depth.
 - The use of pigments and refined shading techniques influenced artistic traditions as far as Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.
- **Literary and Linguistic Zenith**
 - ◆ **Sanskrit Ascendancy:** Sanskrit emerged as the language of administration, literature, and elite culture, replacing earlier linguistic trends.

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- ◆ **Classical Literature:** This was the age of **Kalidasa**, whose works such as ***Abhijananashakuntalam*** and ***Meghaduta*** set the gold standard for Sanskrit literature.
- **Scientific and Intellectual Progress**
 - ◆ **Advances in Mathematics and Astronomy:** Aryabhata's work discussed the rotation of the Earth and offered accurate calculations of π .
 - **Varahamihira's Brihat Samhita** served as an encyclopedic guide on astronomy, weather, architecture, and natural sciences.
 - ◆ **Metallurgy:** The **Iron Pillar of Delhi**, remarkable for its resistance to corrosion over more than a millennium, stands as a testament to the sophistication of Gupta-era metallurgy.
- **Religious Synthesis**
 - ◆ The period saw the steady decline of royal patronage to Buddhism and the rise of **Puranic Hinduism, particularly Vaishnavism and Shaivism**.
 - ◆ The popularization of the concept of avatars allowed for the integration of local cults into a broader Brahmanical framework, giving rise to a more unified Hindu religious identity.

Arguments Supporting the "Golden Age" Label

- **Economic Prosperity:** The large number of **gold coins issued under the Guptas** indicates significant wealth and long-distance trade, especially among the elite classes.
- **Political Stability:**
 - ◆ Rulers such as **Samudragupta and Chandragupta II** created an era of political consolidation, sometimes described as the **Pax Gupta**, which fostered cultural and economic activity.
- **Cultural Eminence:**
 - ◆ India's global intellectual reputation grew. Institutions like **Nalanda University attracted students and monks from China and Southeast Asia**, enhancing India's stature as a center of learning.

Arguments Against the "Golden Age" Label (The Social Reality)

- **Growth of Feudalism:** Land grants to Brahmins and officials transferred revenue, administrative, and judicial rights to the grantees.
 - ◆ This decentralized authority laid the groundwork for feudal structures that weakened central control.
- **Social Inequalities:**
 - ◆ **Caste System:** The caste hierarchy became more rigid.
 - ◆ **Status of Women:** Early marriages became common, and the earliest inscriptions of **sati** appear in this period.
 - ◆ **Peasantry:** Peasants bore **heavy tax burdens**.

Conclusion

The Gupta period was undoubtedly a **Cultural Golden Age**, providing the artistic vocabulary, religious frameworks, literary brilliance, and scientific foundations that shaped the trajectory of Indian civilization for centuries. Yet, this **efflorescence was not uniformly experienced across society**. Beneath the glitter of cultural achievement lay widening social hierarchies, growing feudal tendencies, and declining gender and caste equity.

Indian Society

7. "Indian urbanisation is not merely a demographic shift but a civilizational transformation." Analyse how this transformation is reshaping identities, social relations, and spatial inequalities. (250 words)

Approach :

- Introduce the answer by briefing about India's Urban transformation.
- Delve into how this Transformation is reshaping identities, social relations, and spatial inequalities with key arguments in each.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

India is urbanizing at an extraordinary pace, with cities expected to host 600 million people about 40% of the

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population by 2036. This is not just demographic change but a civilizational shift from a **traditional, agrarian, kinship-based society to a more fluid, industrial, and individualistic one.**

- As Louis Wirth noted, “urbanism” becomes a distinct **way of life**, where the city actively reshapes social norms, relationships, and behaviors.

Body:

Reshaping Identities: The Flux of Tradition and Modernity

● Caste: From Ritual to Political

- ◆ **Dilution of Ritual:** The anonymity of the city (e.g., crowded buses, office canteens) erodes the practice of untouchability and commensality restrictions.
- ◆ **Resilience as Identity:** Caste does not disappear; it transforms. It evolves into a **tool for political mobilization and social networking** (e.g., caste-based matrimonial sites, housing cooperatives).

● Gender: Negotiating New Spaces

- ◆ **Empowerment:** Cities offer women access to education and employment, weakening patriarchal control.
 - The “**working woman**” identity challenges the traditional domestic role.
- ◆ **New Vulnerabilities:** This transition creates a “**double burden** of work and home. Furthermore, the safety of women in public spaces remains a critical issue, restricting their “**right to the city**.”

● Class vs. Caste:

- ◆ A new class-based identity is emerging, often superseding caste in professional circles.
- ◆ However, in many cases, **class and caste overlap** (e.g., the correlation between upper castes and the urban middle class), creating a “**caste-class**” nexus.

Reshaping Social Relations: From Collective to Individual

● Atomization of Family:

- ◆ The joint family structure is giving way to **nuclear** and **neo-local families**.
- ◆ Relations are becoming **more contractual and less emotional**. The care for the elderly, once a family

duty, is **increasingly being outsourced to institutions (old age homes)**, signalling a shift in filial values.

● Decline of Neighborhood (Mohalla) Culture:

- ◆ Traditional “**Mohalla**” life, characterized by high social cohesion and informal control, is being replaced by the impersonality of apartment living (“**elevator acquaintances**”).
- ◆ Social capital is now derived from professional networks rather than kinship or neighborhood ties.

● Voluntary Associations:

- ◆ Social relations are increasingly based on **shared interests (clubs, NGOs, unions) rather than shared birth (kinship)**, marking a shift towards a meritocratic social order.

Spatial Inequalities: The “Dual City” Phenomenon

● Segregation by Design (Gated Communities vs. Slums):

- ◆ **Gated Communities:** Represents the “**secession of the successful**.” These are islands of globalized living with private security, water, and power, disconnected from the civic grid.
- ◆ **Slums/Informal Settlements:** Over 17% of urban India lives in slums (Census 2011). Places like **Dharavi** represent the “**service class**” that powers the city but is denied formal housing.

● Ghettoization:

- ◆ Disturbingly, **Indian cities are witnessing residential segregation based on religion and caste**.
 - Studies show that **Dalits and Muslims are often pushed into specific enclaves**, limiting their access to mainstream civic amenities and schools.

● The Periphery Dilemma:

- ◆ Urban expansion creates a “**peri-urban**” interface where **rural migrants are absorbed into the city’s economy** but excluded from its society, living in precarious conditions without municipal rights.

Conclusion

To ensure this transformation is progressive, India must move from “**unplanned urbanization**” to “**inclusive**

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“urbanization” (SDG 11). This requires urban planning that prioritizes **social integration (mixed-income housing)** over spatial segregation, ensuring that every resident, from migrant worker to middle class professional, claims an equal stake in the city they help build.

8. Discuss how social media has transformed patterns of communication, mobilisation, and identity formation in contemporary Indian society.

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by highlighting the impact of social media.
- In the body part discuss these transformations.
- Conclude accordingly

Introduction:

Social media has emerged as one of the **most powerful forces shaping contemporary Indian society**. With widespread smartphone penetration and affordable internet, digital platforms have transformed how people communicate, mobilise, and construct social identities. **From political participation to cultural expression, social media has redefined public discourse and social interaction in India.**

Transformation in Patterns of Communication:

- **Democratisation of Expression:** Social media platforms like **X (Twitter)**, **Instagram**, and **YouTube** have enabled ordinary citizens to voice opinions without traditional gatekeepers such as media houses or political elites.
 - ◆ This has **expanded the public sphere and amplified marginalised voices**.
- **Instant and Interactive Communication:** Information now travels in real time, enabling instant reactions to events such as elections, protests, or disasters.
 - ◆ **Two-way communication** between leaders and citizens has replaced one-way information flow.
 - ◆ **Politicians like Shashi Tharoor** use “**Instagram Live**” and “**X Spaces**” to answer questions directly from youth, making the political process feel personal rather than institutional.
- **Rise of Alternative Media Spaces:** Independent journalists, influencers, and citizen reporters have emerged, **challenging mainstream narratives and**

diversifying sources of information, though sometimes at the cost of credibility and verification.

- ◆ Creators like **Nitish Rajput** use creative expression to simplify complex policy issues, creating a new **“edutainment” category** for the digital-first generation.

Transformation in Mobilisation and Collective Action:

- **Digital Mobilisation and Activism:** Social media has become a key tool for organising protests, campaigns, and social movements such as anti-corruption movements, farmers’ protests, and women’s rights campaigns.
 - ◆ **Hashtags and online campaigns** help mobilise support rapidly across regions.
 - ◆ **#JusticeForNirbhaya & #JusticeForSSR movements** showed how digital grief can quickly turn into street protests.
- **Lowered Barriers to Participation:** Individuals who were previously excluded from formal political processes—youth, women, and marginalised communities—can now engage in activism with minimal resources.
- **Rapid Spread of Ideas and Counter-Movements:** While enabling mobilisation, social media also accelerates counter-narratives, misinformation, and polarisation, sometimes intensifying social tensions.
 - ◆ The “**WhatsApp University**” phenomenon, where unverified health or political claims spread, has forced the government to establish fact-checking units to prevent social unrest.

Transformation in Identity Formation:

- **Construction of Digital Identities:** Social media allows individuals to curate identities based on language, ideology, profession, caste, gender, or regional affiliation, reshaping how people perceive themselves and others.
- **Strengthening of Collective Identities:** Online platforms reinforce group identities—political, religious, or cultural—often creating echo chambers that strengthen in-group solidarity but weaken social cohesion.
 - ◆ This trend is deepened by the rise of the **“splinternet”**, where fragmented digital spaces

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emerge due to state-driven controls and censorship—such as **China's Great Firewall**—further limiting cross-cultural dialogue and reinforcing insulated worldviews.

- **Negotiation of Tradition and Modernity:** Digital spaces have become arenas where traditional norms are questioned and reinterpreted, particularly by youth and women, leading to evolving social values and aspirations.

Conclusion:

Social media has **fundamentally reshaped communication, mobilisation, and identity** in contemporary India by expanding participation and reshaping public discourse. However, its transformative power must be **balanced with responsible governance, digital literacy, and ethical engagement** to ensure it strengthens democracy rather than fragments society.

Geography

9. Explain how changes in the cryosphere, particularly the retreat of Himalayan glaciers, affect river systems, disaster risks, and long-term water security in India. (250 words).

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by defining the key words.
- In the body, explain how changes in the cryosphere impact the river system, disaster risk and long term water security .
- Suggest Measures to Minimize the Impact
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction :

The **cryosphere** consists of Earth's frozen elements such as glaciers, snow cover, and ice caps. The **Himalayan glaciers**, known as the "**Third Pole**", store the largest ice reserves outside the poles and feed major rivers like the **Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra**. Rapid glacier retreat due to climate change is disrupting river flows, increasing disaster risks, and threatening India's long-term water security.

Body:

Impact on River Systems

- **Altered river flow patterns:** In the short term, glacier melt increases river discharge, causing **higher summer flows**.

- ◆ Over the long term, continued retreat reduces glacier mass, leading to **declining base flows**, especially during dry seasons.

- ◆ Studies by **ICIMOD** indicate that **many Himalayan basins may see peak water availability by mid-century**, followed by decline.

- **Seasonal imbalance in water availability:** Glacier-fed rivers traditionally ensured perennial flow. Reduced snow and ice storage weakens this buffering capacity, making rivers more **rainfall-dependent** and erratic.

- **Increased Sediment Load and Channel Instability:** As glaciers retreat, they leave behind vast amounts of **loose debris (moraines)**.

- ◆ Accelerated melting flushes this sediment into river systems, leading to siltation of riverbeds.

- ◆ This reduces the water-carrying capacity of rivers, **causing frequent shifting of river courses (braiding)** and increasing the risk of breach in downstream embankments.

Increased Disaster Risks

- **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs):** Retreating glaciers form unstable glacial lakes dammed by loose moraines. Sudden breach causes catastrophic floods downstream.
 - ◆ **Example:** The **2021 Chamoli disaster** in Uttarakhand and **GLOF in Sikkim in 2023** highlighted the role of glacier collapse and meltwater in triggering flash floods.

- **Higher frequency of flash floods and landslides:** Enhanced meltwater combined with intense rainfall increases slope instability.
 - ◆ Himalayan states like **Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Sikkim** have seen rising incidences of cloudbursts and landslides.

- **Permafrost Thawing and Structural Instability:** The thawing of **permafrost (frozen ground)** at **higher altitudes acts as a "glue" for mountain slopes**. Its degradation leads to rockfalls and massive landslides, even in areas without high rainfall, endangering high-altitude infrastructure and trekking routes.
 - ◆ Frequent rockfalls in the high-altitude reaches of **Lahaul-Spiti regions** are often linked to warming-induced slope destabilization.

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- **Threat to infrastructure:** Roads, hydropower projects, and settlements in fragile mountain terrain face rising risk due to cryospheric instability.

Implications for Long-Term Water Security

- **Stress on drinking water and irrigation:** Around **600 million people** depend directly or indirectly on Himalayan river systems.
 - ◆ Reduced long-term glacier contribution threatens urban water supply and irrigation in northern India.
- **Impact on food security:** Agriculture in the Indo-Gangetic plains relies on sustained river flows. Variability in water availability may reduce crop productivity and increase dependence on groundwater.
- **Hydropower uncertainty:** Short-term surge in flows may boost generation, but long-term decline and sediment load reduce project viability and safety.
- **Transboundary water concerns:** Himalayan rivers are transnational. Altered flows may intensify **India's water diplomacy challenges** with neighbouring countries.

Measures to Minimize the Impact:

- **Strengthen glacier monitoring & research** through satellite mapping, mass-balance studies, and institutions like **ISRO** and **ICIMOD** to generate **real-time cryosphere data**.

- **Develop early warning systems** for glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), avalanches, and flash floods, especially in vulnerable Himalayan states.
- **Promote climate-resilient infrastructure** by regulating hydropower and road projects using carrying-capacity and hazard-zone assessments.
- **Adopt integrated river basin management** to balance upstream-downstream water needs and reduce seasonal water stress.
- **Enhance water-use efficiency** through micro-irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and demand-side management in glacier-fed basins.
- **Strengthen regional cooperation** on transboundary rivers for data sharing, disaster preparedness, and long-term water security.

Conclusion :

The retreat of Himalayan glaciers is **transforming river systems from stable to highly variable ones**, thereby intensifying disaster risks and weakening long-term water security. Addressing this challenge requires **integrated mountain governance, robust glacier monitoring, early-warning systems for GLOFs, climate-resilient infrastructure, and sustainable water management**. Strengthening adaptation strategies today is essential to safeguard India's ecological balance, livelihoods, and future water security.



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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-2

Polity and Governance

10. While digital governance initiatives aim to create more accountable and transparent governance, they often risk exacerbating existing socio-economic inequalities. Analyze this paradox in the light of India's push of 'Digital Public Infrastructure' (DPI). (250 word)

Approach:

- Briefly introduce rapid expansion of DPI and its paradox rooted in socio-economic inequalities.
- In the body, write paradoxes and reasons along with positive sides of digital initiative.
- Suggest measures to overcome the paradoxes.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

India's fast-growing Digital Public Infrastructure, pillarized on Aadhaar, UPI, CoWIN, DigiLocker, has been hailed for boosting transparency and service delivery. Through open and interoperable digital platforms, the state aims to democratise access to welfare.

- Recently the IMF officially designated UPI as a world leader in real time transaction by volume.

Body:

Paradox of DPI in India

- DPI is designed to enhance transparency, reduce leakages, and improve service delivery through digital-by-default governance.
- However, India's deep socio-economic inequalities—of income, caste, gender, education, and region—create uneven access to digital tools and opportunities.
- As a result, digital platforms that are meant to empower and include can unintentionally exclude or disadvantage those without devices, connectivity, or digital literacy.

How DPI Enhances Governance (Positive Side)

- Reduces Leaks and Corruption: Aadhaar-enabled Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) ensures subsidies like LPG (PAHAL) and pensions reach beneficiaries directly, eliminating middlemen and ghost accounts.

- Improves Efficiency and Speed of Service Delivery:** Platforms like CoWIN enabled real-time vaccine registration, slot allocation, and certification during COVID-19, showcasing the capacity for large-scale digital coordination.
- Promotes Financial Inclusion and Formalisation:** UPI, combined with Jan Dhan Yojana and e-KYC, has brought millions into the digital payments ecosystem, helping small vendors and workers access affordable, instant transactions.
- Strengthens Administrative Transparency and Record-Keeping:** DigiLocker digitises school certificates, licences, and government documents, reducing paperwork and the scope for manipulation.
- Enhances mobility and citizen convenience:** Systems like FASTag automate toll payments and reduce wait times, demonstrating DPI's role in improving everyday governance interactions.

How DPI Can Exacerbate Inequalities (Negative Side)

- Digital Divide Deepens Exclusion:** Unequal access to smartphones, internet, and electricity, especially in rural, tribal, and low-income households, limits the ability to use DPI platforms.
- Authentication and Access Failures:** Aadhaar biometric mismatches, network outages, or fingerprint issues often lead to denial of rations or pensions for elderly, manual labourers, and persons with disabilities.
- Low Digital Literacy & Gender Gaps:** Women, elderly, and informal workers often lack the skills to navigate digital systems, reinforcing existing socio-economic disadvantages.
- Language and Interface Barriers:** Many DPI platforms are not fully accessible in local languages or for users with low literacy, excluding large sections of the population.
- Platform Dependence Creates New Exclusions:** Reliance on private apps, e-wallets, and OTP-based services can exclude those without smartphones, stable network access, or digital IDs.

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- **Privacy and Data Vulnerabilities:** Poor awareness and weak safeguards can disproportionately harm vulnerable citizens who lack the means to protect their data or contest misuse.

Measures to Make DPI Inclusive and Reduce Inequalities

- **Invest in Universal Digital Infrastructure:** Expand last-mile broadband, 4G/5G, and reliable electricity in rural, hilly, and tribal regions through **BharatNet** and **state-level fibre missions**.
- **Promote Assisted Digital Access Models:** Strengthen **Common Service Centres (CSCs)**, panchayat digital kiosks, and community volunteers to help citizens who lack devices or literacy navigate digital services.
- **Improve Digital Literacy with Targeted Outreach:** Launch focused programmes for women, elderly, **Dalit/ Adivasi communities**, and migrant workers, using schools, SHGs, and Anganwadi networks.
- **Build Multilingual, Accessible User Interfaces:** Design apps and portals in regional languages, with voice-based navigation, larger icons, and disability-friendly features.
- **Strengthen Data Protection and Grievance Redress Mechanisms:** Implement robust privacy safeguards, transparent algorithms, and fast grievance systems so vulnerable groups can contest wrongful denial of benefits.
- **Encourage Affordable Device and Data Access:** Subsidised smartphones, public Wi-Fi zones, and low-cost data packs for low-income users can bridge economic barriers.
- **Enhance Local Institutional Capacity:** Train frontline workers, panchayat staff, and welfare officials in digital tools to ensure seamless delivery at the last mile.

Conclusion:

India's DPI-driven governance model aligns with **SDG 9 (industry, innovation, infrastructure)** and **SDG 16 (strong institutions)** by promoting transparency and efficient service delivery. However, without bridging gaps in connectivity, literacy, affordability, and institutional capacity, it may undermine **SDG 10 (reduced inequalities)**. A truly inclusive DPI must therefore pair strong digital systems with assisted access, safeguards, and human-centric design.

- “The Indian model of secularism is not about the separation of religion and State, but the principled engagement of the State with all religions.” Discuss this statement in light of recent policy debates. (250 words)

Introduction:

The statement highlights the unique nature of Indian secularism, often described by political theorist **Rajeev Bhargava** as “**Principled Distance**.” Unlike the **Western model** (e.g., USA), which envisions a strict “**wall of separation**” between Church and State, the Indian Constitution mandates a **proactive engagement**.

- The State does not keep a passive distance but intervenes to promote positive social values, such as **equality, justice, and dignity- while respecting religious plurality**.

Body:

Indian Secularism- Engagement vs. Separation

In the Western model, the State and religion operate in mutually exclusive spheres. In India, the State **engages** with religion to:

- **Reform Social Evils:** To eradicate practices like **untouchability (Article 17)** or gender discrimination within religious personal laws.
- **Administer Institutions:** To manage secular aspects (financial/political) of religious institutions (**Article 25(2) (a)**).
- **Ensure Equality:** To provide aid to minority educational institutions without discrimination (**Article 30**).

Key Recent Policy Debates

- **Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Debate**
 - ◆ **Context:** Article 44 directs the State to secure a UCC. Recently, states like **Uttarakhand** have moved towards implementing UCC.
 - ◆ **Principled Engagement:** Proponents argue that the State must intervene to separate “**religious faith**” from “**social practices**” (marriage, inheritance) to ensure gender justice and equality (Article 14).
 - ◆ **Critique:** Opponents argue this engagement violates the “**freedom of conscience**” (Article 25) and that the State is homogenizing diverse cultural practices rather than just reforming them.

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- **State Management of Temples (HR&CE Acts)**
 - ◆ **Context:** Various state governments (e.g., Tamil Nadu, Karnataka) control the financial and administrative affairs of Hindu temples through **Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Acts**.
 - ◆ **Principled Engagement:** The justification is to prevent mismanagement of public funds and ensure access to all castes (social reform).
 - ◆ **Critique:** Critics argue this engagement is **selective**, as similar control is rarely exercised over mosques or churches, leading to accusations of the State failing the test of **“equidistance”**.
- **Essential Religious Practices (Hijab & Triple Talaq)**
 - ◆ **Triple Talaq (Shayara Bano Case):** The Supreme Court invalidated instantaneous **Triple Talaq**
 - This was a clear instance of the State (via Judiciary) engaging to prioritize **individual dignity** over religious dogma.
 - ◆ **Hijab Controversy:** The Karnataka High Court ruled that wearing the hijab is not an “Essential Religious Practice” (ERP) in Islam.
 - **Implication:** This upholds the **State’s power to regulate religious attire in secular spaces (schools) to maintain “public order, morality, and health,”** reinforcing that religious freedom is not absolute.
- **Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)**
 - ◆ **Context:** The CAA provides a path to citizenship for persecuted minorities from neighboring nations, excluding Muslims.
 - ◆ **Debate:**
 - **Govt Stand:** It is a “**positive engagement**” to protect persecuted minorities (affirmative action).
 - **Criticism:** Critics argue this violates the “**basic structure** of secularism by introducing **religion as a criterion for citizenship**, shifting the State from “principled engagement” to “religious exclusion.”

- **The Waqf (Amendment) Debate**
 - ◆ **Context:** The introduction of the **Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025** has ignited a debate on the extent of State control over religious endowments.
 - ◆ **Principled Engagement:** The government argues that the inclusion of **non-Muslims in Waqf Boards** is necessary to ensure **transparency**, prevent land mismanagement, and include women (gender justice).
 - ◆ **Critique:** Critics argue this constitutes excessive **interference** rather than engagement.
 - They contend that mandating non-Muslims in the governance of Islamic institutions violates **Article 26** (Freedom to manage religious affairs) and breaches the “**principled distance**” by **imposing State will on internal religious administration**.

Conclusion

The Indian model of secularism is not a passive “live and let live” strategy but a **dynamic, interventionist project** aimed at transforming a traditional society into a modern, egalitarian one. However, for this model to succeed, the **engagement must remain strictly “principled”, guided by constitutional morality rather than political expediency**.

12. Judicial activism is both a safeguard and a challenge to democratic governance. Critically examine. (250 words).

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by highlighting its importance.
- In the body, discuss how it acts as a safeguards.
- Next, mention how it poses a challenge to democratic governance.
- Suggest measures to maintain a balance.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

Judicial activism has emerged as a powerful instrument to uphold constitutional values, fundamental rights, and the rule of law in India. However, while it often acts as a safeguard against executive and legislative failures, it also raises concerns about judicial overreach and democratic balance, undermining the mandate of Art 50 (Separation of Power).

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Body:**Judicial Activism as a Safeguard to Democratic Governance:**

- **Protection of Fundamental Rights and civil liberties:** Courts have intervened when other organs failed to protect citizens' rights.
 - ◆ *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)* expanded Article 21 by linking "procedure established by law" with fairness, reasonableness, and due process.
- **Judicial response to legislative and executive vacuum:** Activism has filled governance gaps where laws were absent or ineffective.
 - ◆ *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997)* laid down guidelines on sexual harassment at the workplace in the absence of legislation.
- **Strengthening accountability and rule of law:** Courts have acted against arbitrary executive action and abuse of power.
 - ◆ *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)* evolved the **Basic Structure Doctrine**, ensuring parliamentary supremacy does not undermine constitutional democracy.
- **Expansion of access to justice through PILs:** Public Interest Litigation democratized judicial access for marginalized groups.
 - ◆ *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar (1979)* addressed undertrial prisoners' rights and led to prison reforms.
- **Environmental and social governance interventions:** Judicial activism has promoted sustainable development and environmental protection.
 - ◆ *The MC Mehta case* resulted in pollution control norms, vehicular emission standards, and protection of the Taj Trapezium Zone.

Judicial Activism as a Challenge to Democratic Governance:

- **Judicial overreach into executive and legislative domains:** Courts at times issue detailed policy directions, blurring separation of powers.
 - ◆ *Common Cause v. Union of India 2018 (legalizing passive euthanasia and Living Wills)* and frequent monitoring of executive schemes raised concerns of "judicial governance."

- **Erosion of democratic accountability:** Judges are unelected and not directly accountable to the public, unlike legislators and executives.

- ◆ Excessive judicial intervention may dilute the mandate of elected representatives.
- ◆ For example, in 2024, the **Supreme Court of India unanimously struck down the Electoral Bond Scheme**, which allowed anonymous donations to political parties.
 - This serves as a nuanced example of the "accountability vs. intervention" debate.

- **Institutional competence and expertise limitations:** Courts may lack technical expertise to design or supervise complex policies.

- ◆ **Example:** In *Divisional Manager, (Aravali Golf Course v. Chander Hass 2008)*, the Supreme Court itself warned against this trend, noting that judges must not take over the functions of the legislature or executive because they lack the technical "know-how" of governance.

- **Inconsistency and uncertainty in policymaking:** Frequent judicial directions can create uncertainty for long-term governance planning.

- ◆ **NJAC judgment (2015)**, while protecting judicial independence, was criticised for blocking legislative reform without offering a viable alternative.

- **Risk of judicial populism:** Expanding PIL jurisdiction has occasionally led to frivolous petitions and media-driven interventions, diverting courts from core adjudicatory functions.

Measures to Maintain Balance between Judicial Activism and Democratic Governance:

- **Judicial Restraint Guided By Clear Standards:** Courts should intervene only in cases of rights violations or governance vacuum, applying necessity and proportionality.
 - ◆ The **Law Commission of India** has emphasised consistency and restraint to prevent ad-hoc judicial policymaking.
- **Reforming The PIL Mechanism:** Stricter screening of PILs can curb misuse and judicial populism.

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- ◆ Supreme Court guidelines and Law Commission observations highlight the **need to balance access to justice with institutional limits.**
- **Strengthening Executive Accountability:** Effective grievance redressal and regulatory enforcement can reduce judicial intervention.
 - ◆ The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** recommended stronger **accountability frameworks** to prevent governance failures.
- **Enhancing Transparency In Judicial Appointments:** India needs a reformed **NJAC** while safeguarding judicial independence, that acknowledges the need for **greater transparency within the collegium system.**
- **Improving Institutional Dialogue And Legislative Response:** Stronger **Parliamentary Standing Committees**, as suggested by the **NCRWC**, can address policy gaps early and reduce judicial law-making.

Conclusion

Judicial activism is both a democratic safeguard and a structural challenge. Its legitimacy depends on necessity, proportionality, and constitutional intent. A balanced approach, where courts intervene to protect rights and constitutional values while respecting the domain of elected institutions, is essential for sustaining democratic governance in India.

13. While civil society organisations act as watchdogs of democracy, concerns regarding their transparency and accountability have also emerged. Critically analyse this paradox in the Indian context.

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by defining CSOs.
- In the body briefly mention the role of CSOs.
- Next, discuss concerns related to CSOs governance
- Suggest how balance can be achieved.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction :

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) refer to non-state, non-profit voluntary groups such as NGOs, charities, advocacy groups, and community-based organisations that operate between the state and citizens. In India, CSOs have

historically played a crucial role in promoting democracy, social justice, and accountability.

- However, alongside their role as watchdogs, concerns regarding their transparency, funding, and accountability have increasingly come to the forefront, creating a complex paradox.

Body:

Role of Civil Society as Watchdogs of Democracy

- **Strengthening Accountability and Rights Protection:** CSOs have been instrumental in exposing corruption, human rights violations, and governance failures.
 - ◆ Movements such as the **Right to Information (RTI) campaign** led by civil society pressure resulted in the **enactment of the RTI Act, 2005**, one of India's strongest transparency laws.
- **Enhancing Citizen Participation and Inclusion:** India has over 3 million registered NGOs, many working at the grassroots to represent marginalized groups such as women, Dalits, tribal communities, and informal workers.
 - ◆ They act as intermediaries between citizens and the state, ensuring participatory governance.
- **Strengthening Democratic Discourse:** Through **public interest litigation (PILs)**, **social audits** (e.g., in **MGNREGA**), and policy advocacy, CSOs contribute to informed public debate and policy correction, often filling governance gaps at local levels.
 - ◆ For example, PILs filed by CSOs led to judicial interventions in cases related to **environmental protection (Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum case)** and **food security**, strengthening rights-based governance.

Concerns Regarding Transparency and Accountability of CSO:

- **“Accounting Alchemy” and Opaque Financial Disclosures:** Many CSOs struggle with standardized financial reporting, leading to a “transparency deficit” where funds are difficult to track across complex project cycles.
 - ◆ Despite the **FCRA 2023 Amendment** mandating detailed asset disclosure, a 2025 analysis suggests

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that many smaller CSOs lack the digital infrastructure to comply, potentially masking mismanagement.

- **Fragile Internal Governance and Oversight:** Many CSOs struggle with inadequate internal audit mechanisms and a lack of structured leadership accountability, which can inadvertently diminish their operational credibility.

- ◆ For instance, the suspension of **Amnesty International's** India operations followed complex legal disputes over **FCRA compliance** and financial disclosure routes.
- ◆ This highlights a systemic need for better governance, as recent data shows nearly **20,000 NGOs** have lost licenses since 2011 due to administrative and reporting lapses.

- **Perceptions of Ideological Bias and Selective Advocacy:** The perceived lack of neutrality in CSO interventions often leads to allegations of selective activism, which can polarize public opinion and weaken institutional trust.

- ◆ This erosion of credibility has, in several instances, translated into the **filing of frivolous and motivated Public Interest Litigations (PILs)**
 - The Judiciary has coined various terms to describe this misuse, such as "**Personal Interest Litigation**," "**Publicity Interest Litigation**," and even "**Paisa Interest Litigation**."

- While regulation is necessary, **excessive restrictions and frequent suspensions of licenses risk shrinking democratic space**, affecting advocacy, dissent, and grassroots mobilisation.
- While the government justified the action on compliance grounds, many civil society members viewed it as indicative of a **shrinking civic space**.

Balancing Accountability with Democratic Freedom

- **Strengthening Self-Regulation and Ethical Governance:** Civil society organisations (CSOs) must institutionalise **transparent financial reporting, periodic independent audits, and clear disclosure of funding sources**.
 - ◆ Adoption of **internal codes of conduct**, conflict-of-interest policies, and grievance redressal

mechanisms can enhance credibility and public trust without external coercion.

- **Ensuring Proportionate and Non-Arbitrary Regulation:** FCRA should be implemented in a **transparent, rule-based manner**, ensuring that compliance requirements do not become tools for selective targeting or suppression of dissent.

- ◆ Regulation must focus on accountability rather than control, in line with constitutional guarantees under **Articles 19(1)(a) and 19(1)(c)**.

- **Promoting Collaborative Governance Models:** Constructive engagement between government institutions and CSOs can improve policy design and implementation.

- ◆ Partnerships in areas such as **health, education, environment, and social welfare** allow the state to leverage grassroots expertise while ensuring oversight and accountability.

- **Institutionalising Dialogue and Consultation:** Regular consultative mechanisms—such as **policy consultations, stakeholder forums, and social audits**—can reduce mistrust and enable civil society inputs in governance without undermining state authority.

- **Capacity Building and Professionalisation of CSOs:** Enhancing managerial, financial, and legal capacities of CSOs through training and accreditation can improve their effectiveness, reduce governance lapses, and strengthen public confidence.

- **Protecting Civic Space and Freedom of Expression:** A healthy democracy requires space for dissent, debate, and advocacy. Ensuring that peaceful criticism and advocacy are not criminalised is essential for democratic resilience and social innovation.

- **Strengthening Judicial Oversight:** An independent judiciary plays a crucial role in balancing state regulation with civil liberties by reviewing executive actions and safeguarding constitutional freedoms.

Conclusion:

Civil society remains a cornerstone of India's democratic framework, acting as both conscience and catalyst for reform. **Ensuring transparency without undermining autonomy** is essential to preserve its legitimacy and strengthen democratic governance.

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14. "Executive dominance often undermines institutional checks and balances in governance." Discuss (150 Words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by stating separation of power.
- In the body part explain how this dominance undermines institutional checks.
- Suggest measures to overcome this issue.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

In a constitutional democracy, **separation of powers and institutional checks and balances are essential to prevent concentration of authority**. However, in practice, **executive dominance**, driven by political majorities, control over bureaucracy, and ordinance-making powers, often weakens the autonomy and effectiveness of other institutions, raising concerns for democratic governance.

Body:

How Executive Dominance Undermines Checks and Balances:

- **Weakening of Parliamentary Oversight:** Frequent use of **ordinances under Article 123** (e.g., repeated repromulgation struck down in *D.C. Wadhwa v. State of Bihar, 1987*) bypasses legislative scrutiny.
 - ◆ Important Bills are sometimes passed as Money Bills, limiting scrutiny by the Rajya Sabha (e.g., **Aadhaar Act controversy**).
- **Influence over Independent Institutions:** Executive control over **appointments and transfers** affects the autonomy of bodies like investigative agencies.
 - ◆ Allegations of selective use of agencies such as **CBI and ED** raise concerns of politicization. Many states have withdrawn their general consent for CBI.
- **Erosion of Federal Checks:** Centralisation through fiscal instruments like **cesses and surcharges** reduces states' share of divisible taxes.
 - ◆ Cesses and surcharges in India have risen significantly, becoming a large, non-shareable chunk of Central revenue, increasing from ~10% pre-pandemic to over 20% by 2021-22.

- **Pressure on Judicial Independence:** Delays and disagreements over judicial appointments under the collegium system have strained executive-judiciary relations.

- ◆ As of **December 2025**, there are more than **297 vacancies across India's High Courts**.

Strengthening Checks and Balances in Governance:

- **Reinforcing Parliamentary Oversight:** Mandate greater referral of Bills to **Department-related Standing Committees**, ensuring expert scrutiny and bipartisan deliberation.
- **Ensuring Autonomy of Independent Institutions:** Provide **security of tenure and functional independence** to investigative agencies, as emphasised in *Vineet Narain Case*.
- **Preserving Judicial Independence:** Ensure **time-bound judicial appointments** through constructive executive-judiciary cooperation.
 - ◆ Respect judicial decisions and avoid selective compliance.
 - ◆ Rationalise tribunal reforms to align with principles laid down in *Madras Bar Association judgments*.
- **Deepening Federalism:** Reduce excessive reliance on **cesses and surcharges**, ensuring predictable fiscal transfers to states.
 - ◆ Promote **cooperative and competitive federalism** through institutional platforms like the Inter-State Council.

Conclusion:

While a strong executive may enhance administrative efficiency, excessive dominance risks hollowing out institutional checks and balances. **Upholding constitutional morality requires empowering legislatures, ensuring autonomy of oversight bodies, and respecting judicial independence to sustain democratic governance.**

International Relations

15. "India's rise will depend not only on power projection but on norm-setting in the global order." Analyse India's ability to shape global rules on technology, trade, and climate. (150 words)

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Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefing about India's foreign policy doctrine
- Delve into India's ability to shape global rules on technology, trade and climate with the examples
- Highlight the Limits to Norm-Setting
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The statement signifies a strategic shift in India's foreign policy doctrine, moving from being a “**Rule Taker**” to a “**Rule Maker**.” While “**power projection**” (hard power: military, economy) determines a nation's weight, “**norm-setting**” (soft/ smart power) determines its influence.

- As India claims the mantle of “**Vishwa Bandhu**” (Friend of the World), its ability to institutionalize rules in **Technology, Trade, and Climate** is critical for a multipolar global order.

Body:**Technology: Exporting the ‘India Stack’ Model**

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) as a Global Norm:**
 - ◆ **The Norm:** Promoting open-source, interoperable, and scalable public goods (**Aadhaar, UPI, COWIN**) rather than closed proprietary systems.
 - ◆ **Success:** The **G20 New Delhi Declaration** formally recognized DPI as a tool for financial inclusion.
 - Nations like **Singapore, UAE, and France** have adopted or integrated with India's UPI, setting a benchmark for global digital payments.
 - ◆ **Data Governance:** Through its **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023** India is advocating for “**Data Sovereignty**”, the idea that data should empower the citizens who generate it, rather than just foreign corporations.
 - ◆ **AI Regulation:** As the lead chair of the **Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)**, India advocates for “**Responsible AI**” that balances innovation with safety, representing the Global South's concerns against Western AI monopolies.

Trade: The Voice of the Global South

- **Reforming the WTO:** India aggressively pushes for the “**Permanent Peace Clause**” on public stockholding for food security, challenging Western agricultural subsidies.
 - ◆ It has successfully normalized the idea that food security for the poor overrides rigid trade dogmas.
- **Countering Non-Tariff Barriers:** India is leading the opposition against “**Green Protectionism**” (e.g., EU's **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism or CBAM**).
 - ◆ By labeling these as discriminatory, India is shaping the discourse that climate goals should not become trade barriers for developing nations.
- **Inclusion of African Union:** By championing the **African Union's entry into the G20**, India has structurally altered global economic governance to be more inclusive, shifting the norm from a “**G7-led**” agenda to a “**Global South-led**” agenda.

Climate: From Victim to Solution Provider

- **Institutional Leadership:**
 - ◆ **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** India created the first treaty-based international organization headquartered in India (**Gurugram**).
 - It set a global norm that solar energy is a “**common good**” for the tropical world.
 - ◆ **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI):** Setting standards for infrastructure that survives climate disasters, critical for small island nations.
- **Lifestyle as a Climate Strategy:** Through **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)**, India introduced a behavioral norm to the UN, shifting focus from solely government policy to individual “**Pro-Planet People**” behavior.
- **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR):** India consistently successfully reinforces the norm that developed nations must pay for their historical emissions, preventing the dilution of this principle in COP summits.

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Critical Analysis: Limits to Norm-Setting

Constraint	Analysis
Hard Power Gap	Norm-setting often follows manufacturing prowess. India's dependence on China for solar components and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) weakens its bargaining power in trade and climate negotiations.
Domestic Contradictions	While advocating for open digital borders globally, India practices frequent internet shutdowns domestically, which critics argue undermines its claim to democratic digital leadership.
Protectionist Image	India's decision to opt out of RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) and frequent tariff hikes label it as " protectionist ," reducing its credibility in shaping free trade rules compared to nations like Vietnam.
Resource Crunch	Initiatives like the ISA require deep pockets to fund projects in Africa/Asia. India's financial capacity is limited compared to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) , limiting the scale of its norms.

Conclusion

India has successfully moved beyond being a "**balancer**" to becoming a "**bridge-builder**" in the global order. Its success in **DPI and Solar Alliance** proves it can generate global public goods. The path to becoming a global rule-maker lies in proving that Indian norms deliver **prosperity** and **equity** faster than the Western or Chinese alternatives.

16. "India's approach to evolving multipolar world order is characterised by the Multi alignment and strategic autonomy." Analyze the effectiveness of this approach in securing India's core national interests, particularly in dealing with challenges posed by the rise of China. (250 words)

Approach:

- Briefly introduce the evolving multipolar order world.
- In the body part evaluate effectiveness of this approach
- Mention some limitations of this approach
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

The **multipolar world order** refers to a global system where power is dispersed among several major actors rather than dominated by one or two states. Its key characteristics include **diffusion of economic and technological power**, **issue-based coalitions**, and a **decline of rigid blocs**, allowing states greater flexibility in partnerships.

- Eg, The rise of middle powers like **India, Japan, the EU, and ASEAN** balancing China and the US through platforms such as the **Quad and mini-laterals** illustrates this fluid, multi-node power structure.

Body:**Effectiveness of This Approach in Securing India's Core National Interests:**

- **Defence Partnerships to Offset China's Military Asymmetry:** India's military modernisation and deterrence posture have benefited significantly from diversified strategic partnerships
 - ◆ For example, after the **2020 Galwan clash**, the **US expedited the supply of cold-weather gear and intelligence inputs to India**, reflecting the practical utility of multi-alignment in crisis response.
 - ◆ India's acquisition of **Rafale jets from France**, **MH-60R helicopters from the US**, and **UAVs from Israel** contributes to balancing China's military modernisation.
- **Maritime Partnerships to Secure The Indian Ocean:** China's expanding naval reach, evident in the **presence of PLAN submarines in the Indian Ocean** and dual-use facilities at Djibouti has made maritime balancing essential.
 - ◆ India's logistics agreements with Japan, Australia, France, the US, and Singapore allow reciprocal access to naval bases, expanding operational reach.
 - ◆ Eg, **India has conducted coordinated patrols with Indonesia and Thailand in the Andaman Sea** to

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limit illegal activities and enhance situational awareness amid concerns over increased Chinese research vessel activity.

- Participation in China-Associated Institutions For Selective Gains:** India continues engagement with platforms such as **BRICS**, **SCO**, and the **AIIB**, where China wields influence, but India draws developmental benefits.
 - Through **AIIB**, India has secured funding for infrastructure and energy projects, becoming one of the largest recipients.
 - Within **BRICS**, India successfully pushed for financial architecture reforms and digital public infrastructure cooperation, counter-balancing China's dominance from within.
 - For example, **India hosting multiple BRICS ministerial meetings even after the LAC crisis** signals calibrated engagement rather than disengagement.
- Diplomacy As a Tool for Strategic Room:** Maintaining ties with Russia to avoid China-Russia encirclement ensures access to spares, energy, and technology at a time when Russia is tilting towards China.
 - The **S-400 air defence system**, delivered despite global sanctions, reflects India's autonomy-driven procurement.
 - New Delhi's consistent **neutrality in UN votes on the Ukraine crisis** preserved ties with Russia without damaging relations with Western partners shows an example of successful diplomatic balancing
- Climate, Technology, and Health Diplomacy:** India's role in the **International Solar Alliance**, **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**, and **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) diplomacy** promotes global leadership independent of China.
 - For Example, the **G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration** (2023), adopted by consensus despite geopolitical polarisation, showcased India's diplomatic ability to manoeuvre complex power rivalries, including those involving China.

Limitations and Structural Constraints

- Persistent Military Asymmetry:** China's defence budget is more than three times that of India.
 - Even with renewed partnerships, the LAC remains volatile, evident in **recurrent PLA transgressions** post-2020.
- Trade Imbalance and Supply Chain Vulnerability:** Over 70% of pharmaceutical APIs and large portions of electronics and solar components are still imported from China. This constrains India's bargaining power.
 - China alone accounted for nearly 35% of India's total trade deficit of \$283 billion in 2024-25.
- Influence in The Neighbourhood Despite India's Efforts:** China holds strong positions in Pakistan through China Pakistan Economic Corridor, defence deals like **J-35 fighter jets**.
 - In Sri Lanka China acquired **Hambantota port**. Also, Kyaukphyu Deep-Sea Port in **Myanmar's Rakhine State** is a crucial China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) project under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
 - This "**String of Pearls**" strategy aims to encircle India, providing economic aid with fewer political conditions, making Beijing an attractive partner for regional nation
- Russia–China Convergence Limits India's Options:** A deeper Russia–China axis reduces India's ability to leverage Russia as an independent pole.

Measures to Overcome Limitations and Structural Constraints

- Addressing Military Asymmetry**
 - Focused Defence Modernisation:** Prioritise high-impact domains: **ISR capability, drones, air defence, cyber-warfare**, and precision long-range strike systems.
 - Fast-track stalled procurement** through a **3–5 year "Critical Capability Acceleration Plan."**
 - Enhance Domestic Defence Production :** Expand the **iDEX and Make-in-India** ecosystem to produce artillery, UAVs, robotics, and space-based surveillance tools.

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- ◆ Encourage private sector and start-up integration into defence R&D with assured procurement contracts.
- Countering China's Influence in the Neighbourhood
 - ◆ Deliver High-Visibility, Quick-Impact Projects within time.
 - ◆ Focus on energy grids, digital payments, cross-border rail, and health infrastructure in **Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh**.
 - ◆ Use Gati-Shakti and PM-DevINE frameworks to ensure timely delivery.
- Strengthen Cultural and People-to-People Diplomacy
 - ◆ Expand scholarships, Buddhist circuit outreach, and medical tourism packages.
 - ◆ Promote Indian tech (**UPI, CoWIN, Aadhaar-like solutions**) as soft-power alternatives to Chinese digital ecosystems.
- Managing Russia–China Convergence
 - ◆ Diversify Engagement with Russia Beyond Defence: Expand cooperation in **Arctic energy, nuclear power, coking coal, and pharmaceuticals** where India has strengths.
 - ◆ Increase Domestic Defence Spares Production: Reduce reliance on Russia by co-producing spares under "Make-in" and licensing agreements.

Conclusion:

India's strategy of multi-alignment and strategic autonomy remains viable, but **its effectiveness is contingent on correcting structural gaps**. Strengthening domestic capabilities, building credible regional partnerships, accelerating military modernisation, and reducing economic dependence on China are the **key pillars for sustaining long-term strategic competition**.

17. India's relations with Russia continue to evolve amid shifting global geopolitics. Examine the strategic, economic, and geopolitical dimensions of contemporary India–Russia engagement. (250 Words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by highlighting the recent calibrated stand taken post Ukraine conflict.
- In the body explain the dimensions of relations and examine their importance.
- Mention frictions that still persist.
- Give measures that can further strengthen ties.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

India–Russia relations are rooted in long-standing strategic trust, but they are being recalibrated in response to shifting global geopolitics after the Ukraine conflict. While the international environment has changed, India and Russia continue to engage pragmatically across strategic, economic, and geopolitical domains. This relationship reflects India's pursuit of strategic autonomy rather than alignment.

Body:

Strategic Dimension:

- Defence partnership: Around **60–70%** of India's legacy military platforms are of Russian origin, ensuring continued cooperation in spares, maintenance, and upgrades.
- Advanced defence systems: India's acquisition of the **S-400 Triumph air defence system** underscores mutual strategic trust despite external pressures.
- Joint production: Projects like **BrahMos missile** reflect co-development rather than a buyer–seller relationship opposed to US deals.
- Nuclear energy cooperation: Russia is a key partner in the Kudankulam **Nuclear Power Project**, contributing to India's energy security.

Economic Dimension:

- Bilateral Trade: Bilateral trade has grown rapidly and reached a record \$68.7 billion in FY 2024-25.
- Energy trade surge: Russia emerged as **one of India's top crude oil suppliers**. From a mere **1.7% share in total oil imports in 2019-20 (FY20)**, Russia's share increased to **40% in 2023-24**, and it is now the biggest oil supplier to India.

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- **Connectivity Initiatives:** The International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC) aims to reduce freight time between India and Eurasia.
 - ◆ The recent launch of the **Eastern Maritime Corridor** between **Chennai** and **Vladivostok** (Russia) has enhanced India–Russia trade by reducing shipping time and costs.
- **Currency settlement efforts:** Exploration of **rupee–rouble trade mechanisms** to bypass sanctions-related constraints.

Geopolitical Dimensions

- **Multipolar convergence:** Both countries support a **multipolar world order** and reform of global institutions.
- **Multilateral platforms:** Cooperation in **BRICS**, **SCO**, and **RIC** enhances India’s diplomatic space.

Key Areas of Friction Amid Shifting Global Geopolitics:

- **Economic Disparity:** India’s imports from **Russia** reached approx. \$64 billion in 2024–25, while its exports remained under \$5 billion, creating a massive, unsustainable trade deficit.
- **Transaction Barriers:** Western sanctions on the **SWIFT system** have made the rupee–ruble payment mechanism inconsistent, leading to billions in “trapped” rupees and settlement delays.
- **Russia–China Strategic Convergence:** Russia’s deepening “no-limits” military and technological alliance with **China** creates anxiety for India, given its own ongoing border tensions with Beijing.
- **Influence at Sea:** Russia’s interest in the Northern Sea Route and Arctic cooperation with China contrasts with India’s focus on the Indo-Pacific and the QUAD.

Key Measures to Enhance India–Russia Ties

- **Deepening Strategic and Defence Cooperation:** India and Russia should continue strengthening defence ties through **joint production, technology transfer, and long-term maintenance partnerships**.
 - ◆ Expanding **Make in India**–aligned joint ventures, such as BrahMos Aerospace, can reduce India’s dependence on imports while preserving strategic trust.
- **Expanding Energy Partnership Beyond Oil:** Energy cooperation must move beyond crude oil trade to include **natural gas, nuclear energy, and renewables**.

◆ Long-term LNG contracts, cooperation in **Arctic energy projects**, and expansion of **nuclear reactors at Kudankulam** can ensure stable, diversified energy supplies.

- **Strengthening Trade and Economic Engagement:** India should push for greater market access for **pharmaceuticals, IT services, tea, textiles, and agricultural products**. Early conclusion of the **India–Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Free Trade Agreement** can help institutionalise trade growth and correct imbalances.
- **Improving Connectivity and Payment Mechanisms:** Strengthening alternative payment mechanisms such as **rupee–ruble trade, Vostro accounts, and digital settlements** can mitigate sanctions-related disruptions and ensure financial stability in bilateral trade.

Conclusion:

India–Russia relations today are **shaped by pragmatism, continuity, and strategic autonomy**. While global geopolitics pose new challenges, **sustained engagement across defence, energy, and multilateral platforms** ensures that the partnership remains relevant and resilient.

18. “India’s engagement with Africa is moving from solidarity to strategic partnership.” Critically analyse. (250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by highlighting long historical ties between the two countries.
- First explain the evolving partnership then examine constraints hindering the ties
- Give Measures to strengthen the ties.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

India–Africa relations were historically rooted in anti-colonial solidarity, South–South cooperation, and moral diplomacy. In recent decades, however, **this engagement has increasingly acquired strategic, economic, and geopolitical dimensions, signalling a shift from symbolism to substance**.

Body:

Evolving Strategic Partnership

- **Shift from ideological solidarity to interest-based cooperation:** While rooted in anti-colonial solidarity, India’s Africa policy today is driven by **energy security**,

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- market access, maritime stability, and Global South leadership, marking a clear strategic recalibration.
- Rapid expansion of trade and investment ties:** Bilateral trade of India with Africa grew by 9.26% in FY 2022-23 reaching almost \$100 Billion, making India Africa's third-largest trading partner, with growing investments in energy, telecom, banking, and manufacturing.
- Strategic use of development finance and capacity building:** India's Lines of Credit support infrastructure, agriculture, and ICT in Africa, creating long-term economic and political linkages rather than one-way aid.
 - For instance, India offered a US\$170 Million Line of Credit (LoC) for the Conakry Water Supply Project to the Republic of Guinea.
- Deepening defence and maritime cooperation:** Joint naval exercises, training, hydrographic surveys, and anti-piracy operations in the western Indian Ocean reflect convergence of security interests beyond moral diplomacy.
 - Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME)** involving several African navies, enhancing interoperability and regional security in the Indian Ocean.
- Geopolitical convergence and multilateral coordination:** India's support for the African Union's G20 membership (2023) and advocacy for African voices in global governance underscore coalition-building and strategic alignment.

Constraints Limiting the Partnership's Full Potential

- Commodity-heavy trade structure:** Nearly 60% of India's imports from Africa comprise crude petroleum, gold, and coal, with Nigeria, Angola, and South Africa as the top suppliers (EXIM Bank of India, 2023).
 - India's exports to Africa are led by pharmaceuticals (12.6%), automobiles and components (10.4%), and refined petroleum products (9.2%), according to ITC Trade Map 2024.
 - However, high-value service exports such as healthcare, education, and digital governance remain underutilised despite strong potential.
- Strategic intent outpacing delivery capacity:** Delays in Line of Credit projects, slow execution, and procedural bottlenecks weaken India's credibility as a reliable long-term partner (eg, Conakry Water Supply in Guinea).

- Asymmetric competition from China's BRI:** China's scale, speed, and integrated financing under the Belt and Road Initiative often overshadow India's consultative but resource-constrained model.
 - For example, China has invested heavily in railways, ports, highways, power plants, and industrial parks, such as the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway,
- Limited private sector and MSME participation:** India's Africa engagement remains largely state-driven, with low private investment due to high logistics costs, weak trade finance, and regulatory risks.
 - Despite strong demand for affordable generic medicines in countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia, most Indian pharma engagement remains limited to exports rather than local manufacturing or long-term investment.
- Selective and uneven engagement across Africa:** Concentration on resource-rich or geopolitically significant countries like Nigeria (oil and gas), Mozambique (energy and mining), risks diluting the pan-African character of India's outreach and long-term goodwill.

Measures To Further Enhance Ties

- Diversifying Trade Beyond Commodities:** India must move beyond a commodity-heavy trade structure by promoting value-added exports such as pharmaceuticals, medical devices, digital services, agri-processing, and renewable technologies.
- Strengthening Implementation Capacity and Project Delivery:** To overcome delays in Lines of Credit (LoCs) and project execution, India should establish dedicated project management units, streamline approval processes, and enhance coordination between EXIM Bank, implementing agencies, and African governments.
- Competing with China through Quality and Sustainability:** Instead of matching China's scale, India should focus on quality-driven, transparent, and locally inclusive projects.
 - Leveraging platforms like the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) can promote sustainable and people-centric development.
- Enhancing Private Sector and MSME Participation:** India must encourage greater private sector and MSME

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involvement by improving access to export credit, risk insurance, and market intelligence for African markets.

- ◆ Strengthening mechanisms such as ECGC support, blended finance, and PPP models can help Indian firms establish manufacturing and service operations across Africa.

- **Expanding Engagement Beyond Select Regions:** To avoid concentration in resource-rich countries, India should broaden its engagement to lesser-connected African economies, especially in West and Central Africa.

- ◆ Sector-specific cooperation in healthcare, education, digital governance, and renewable energy can help build long-term goodwill and strengthen India's pan-African presence.

- **Leveraging Soft Power and Development Partnerships:** India can further leverage its strengths in capacity building, digital public infrastructure (UPI, Aadhaar-like platforms), healthcare, and education to deepen people-to-people ties.

- ◆ Expanding scholarships, training programs, and digital public goods will reinforce India's image as a development partner rather than just a commercial actor.

Conclusion:

India's engagement with Africa has clearly **evolved from solidarity-based diplomacy to a multidimensional strategic partnership**. However, the shift remains uneven, **strong in intent but constrained by limited diversification, execution challenges, and competitive pressures**. Realising its full potential requires deeper economic integration, faster project delivery, stronger private sector participation, and sustained capacity creation on the African continent.

19. The ongoing conflicts in Eastern Europe and West Asia have exposed the limitations of existing international security architectures. Critically analyse how these developments affect global stability and India's strategic interests. (250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by highlighting recent conflicts.
- In the body discuss limitations of existing International Security Architecture and its impacts
- Mention Effects on India's strategic interest Suggest measures to secure India's interest.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

The prolonged conflicts in **Eastern Europe (Russia–Ukraine war)** and **West Asia (e.g., Israel–Hamas and broader regional tensions)** have highlighted significant weaknesses in global security architectures like the **UN and collective security mechanisms**.

- These conflicts have persisted despite diplomatic efforts, revealing the limitations of existing international systems to prevent or resolve major wars. Their global ripple effects extend to economic, strategic, and security domains.

Body:

Limitations of Existing International Security Architecture-Impact on Global Stability

- **Erosion of Traditional Security Frameworks:** The **inability of the UN Security Council** and other multilateral institutions to effectively deter or end large-scale conflicts demonstrates their limited enforcement power.

- ◆ Stress between major powers has weakened confidence in these frameworks.
- ◆ Concepts such as "**Territorial Integrity**" and "**Sovereignty**" (Article 2 of the UN Charter) are being selectively applied.

- The inability to enforce the **International Court of Justice (ICJ) rulings** further underscores the lack of a global "enforcement" mechanism.

- **Strategic Polarisation and Great-Power Rivalry:** The Ukraine crisis has deepened divisions between **NATO** and **Russia**, while **Middle Eastern tensions often involve external powers (US, Russia, EU, Iran, and Gulf states)**, creating overlapping conflict zones and a fragmented security environment.

- **Economic Disruptions and Global Risk:** Conflicts have disrupted energy and food supply chains, contributing to **inflationary pressures and slowing economic growth globally**. Geopolitical risks remain a key driver of uncertainty in markets and supply chains.

- ◆ For instance, the **WTO** has been unable to prevent export bans or enforce trade rules due to its weakened dispute settlement mechanism, while the **IMF's financial assistance**, though stabilising, cannot address supply-side shocks like energy and

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food disruptions, limiting its ability to contain inflation and global economic uncertainty.

- **Regional Spillovers and Instability:** Armed confrontations in one region have contagion effects—affecting neighbouring states and alliances, triggering arms buildups, and complicating diplomatic engagements across continents.
 - ◆ The Russia–Ukraine conflict has generated significant spillover effects beyond Eastern Europe.
 - ◆ It has led to **NATO's expansion** with Finland (and Sweden) seeking membership, triggering an **arms buildup across Europe**.
- **Nuclear Brinkmanship:** The normalization of nuclear rhetoric (especially in Eastern Europe) has weakened the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** regime, potentially encouraging other regional powers to seek nuclear deterrents.

Effect on India's Strategic Interests:

- **Balancing Strategic Autonomy:** India's traditional non-aligned and strategic autonomy approach is tested as it seeks to maintain relations with both Western and non-Western powers.
 - ◆ For instance, its measured response to Russia–Ukraine developments has at times drawn criticism from other actors, complicating diplomatic balancing.
- **Energy and Economic Security:** India's energy security depends heavily on stable supplies from West Asia.
 - ◆ Disruptions in the region can increase import costs, affect inflation, and strain diplomatic balancing between rival actors.
- **Diaspora and Security Considerations:** Large Indian expatriate populations in West Asian countries make regional stability critical for India's socio-economic interests, including remittances.
 - ◆ Conflict increases their vulnerability and necessitates evacuation and welfare measures.
 - ◆ For instance, during the Israel–Hamas conflict (2023), India launched **Operation Ajay** to evacuate Indian nationals, highlighting how regional conflicts

immediately increase the vulnerability of the Indian diaspora.

- **Trade and Connectivity Initiatives:** India's efforts to build connectivity and economic corridors such as the **India–Middle East–Europe Corridor (IMEC)** can be constrained by regional instability, affecting trade flows and investment confidence.
- **Counter-terrorism and Security Cooperation:** Persistent instability strengthens the need for enhanced cooperation on counter-terrorism with West Asian states, an area where India has sought greater intelligence sharing and joint efforts.

How India Can Secure Its Interests Amid Global Conflicts:

- **Pursue Strategic Autonomy and Issue-Based Alignments:** India must continue balancing relations with multiple power centres while avoiding rigid alliances, enabling flexibility in a multipolar world.
- **Strengthen Energy and Supply Chain Resilience:** Diversifying energy sources, expanding strategic petroleum reserves, and promoting renewable energy reduce vulnerability to external shocks.
- **Enhance Diplomatic and Multilateral Engagement:** Active participation in platforms like **G20, QUAD, SCO, and BRICS** can help India shape global norms and promote dialogue over confrontation.
- **Protect Diaspora and Maritime Interests:** Strengthening maritime security, evacuation capabilities, and diplomatic outreach ensures protection of Indian citizens and trade routes abroad.
- **Promote Reform of Global Governance Institutions:** India should continue advocating for UN reforms to make global institutions more representative, credible, and capable of conflict resolution.

Conclusion :

The conflicts in Eastern Europe and West Asia underline the fragility of the current global security order. For India, **safeguarding national interests requires strategic autonomy, diversified partnerships, and proactive diplomacy** to navigate an increasingly unstable international environment.



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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-3

Economy

20. "India's fertilizer policy needs a paradigm shift from product-based subsidy to result-based nutrient management." Discuss this in the context of the emerging role of nano fertilizers and precision agriculture. (250 words)

Approach:

- Briefly introduce current fertilizer policy and its shortcomings.
- In the body, mention why the policy is ineffective, need of reform and roles of nano fertilizers and precision agriculture.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

India's fertilizer policy has historically relied on **product-based subsidies**, which reduced prices but also distorted nutrient application patterns, resulting in **excessive urea use**, **soil nutrient imbalance**, and declining agricultural productivity.

- In this context, **nano-fertilizers and precision agriculture technologies** offer transformative potential by enhancing **nutrient-use efficiency** and supporting a **result-based nutrient management framework**.

Body:

Why Product-Based Subsidy Is No Longer Effective

- **Uniform Application, Ignoring India's Agro-Climatic Diversity :**
 - ◆ India's 15 agro-climatic zones require **site-specific nutrient management**, but the present system pushes quantity-based use instead of **need-based application**. Current policy incentivizes consumption, not nutrient outcomes.
 - ◆ **Encourages Excessive Nitrogen Use :** Subsidies tied to fertilizer quantity (mainly urea) have led to imbalanced **NPK use (N:P:K ≈ 6.9:2.4:1 instead of 4:2:1)**. Current policy incentivizes consumption, not nutrient outcomes.

Leads to Soil Nutrient Mining & Decline in Soil Health :

- Leads to nutrient mining, soil increasingly deficient in zinc, sulfur, boron, and micronutrients.

- ◆ Soil organic matter decline, micronutrient deficiency, and stagnating yields show diminishing returns from blanket fertilizer use.
- ◆ Leakage, diversion, and inefficiency persist despite reforms (DBT for fertilizers).

● High Fiscal Burden & Market Distortion:

- ◆ Subsidies rise automatically when global fertilizer prices increase, placing enormous pressure on national finances
- ◆ For example, Indian government has allocated ₹1.84 trillion for fertilizer subsidies in FY 2025-26
- ◆ The policy discourages private-sector innovation in **biofertilizers, customized fertilizers, coated fertilizers, and micronutrient mixtures**.

Need for Result-Based Nutrient Management

● Shifts Focus from Quantity to Efficiency :

- ◆ Result-based nutrient management (RBNM) promotes **nutrient-use efficiency (NUE)** by ensuring fertilizers are applied in the right quantity, at the right time, and through the right method.
- ◆ This transition aligns with the global **4R Nutrient Stewardship framework (Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time, and Right Place for fertilizers)**.

● Directly Addresses Soil Health Degradation :

- ◆ Encourages **site-specific nutrient management (SSNM)**, crop-specific recommendations, and soil-health-card-based application.
- ◆ RBNM integrates **soil testing, crop-specific requirements, and real-time diagnosis**, encouraging farmers to follow scientific nutrient application rather than blanket doses

● Reduces Environmental Externalities :

- ◆ Reduces environmental costs such as nitrate leaching, eutrophication, ammonia emissions, and groundwater contamination.
- ◆ It helps India progress towards its **Paris Agreement commitments** and lowers the carbon footprint of agriculture.

● Improves Farmer Income through Better Productivity:

- ◆ Balanced nutrition reduces input wastage and improves crop response ratios, leading to higher yields and better input-output efficiency.

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- ◆ RBNM can significantly raise **margins and profitability**, especially for small farmers.
- **Creates Space for Innovation in the Fertilizer Industry:**
 - ◆ Since subsidies would be linked to **performance rather than product**, RBNM encourages companies to innovate in **biofertilizers, coated fertilizers, nano-formulations** etc.
 - ◆ This shifts India's fertilizer ecosystem from volume-driven manufacturing to **science-driven nutrient solutions**.
- Role of Nano-Fertilizers in Enabling the Paradigm Shift**
 - **Higher Nutrient-Use Efficiency Through Nano-Scale Delivery**
 - ◆ Nano-fertilizers such as **nano urea and nano DAP** have extremely high **surface-area-to-volume ratios**, allowing nutrients to be absorbed more efficiently by plant leaves.
 - ◆ This raises **Nutrient Use Efficiency (NUE)**, supporting a shift from bulk chemical use to **outcome-oriented nutrient application**.
 - **Reduction in Fertilizer Quantity Without Compromising Yield:**
 - ◆ A 500 ml bottle of nano urea can replace a 45 kg urea bag, reducing transportation, storage, and application costs.
 - ◆ This aligns with result-based nutrient management by ensuring that subsidies are linked to **crop performance and nutrient efficiency**, not the quantity purchased.
 - **Minimizes Losses Through Leaching, Runoff & Volatilization:**
 - ◆ Conventional fertilizers often suffer losses due to volatilization of nitrogen, leaching into groundwater, and surface runoff.
 - ◆ Nano-fertilizers significantly reduce these losses because the nutrients are delivered directly to plant metabolic pathways, ensuring efficient utilization and minimal environmental damage.
 - **Supports Climate-Resilient Agriculture:**
 - ◆ Nano-fertilizers reduce nitrous oxide (N_2O) emissions—one of the most potent greenhouse gases—by reducing excess nitrogen application.

- ◆ This aligns with India's climate commitments and supports a greener agricultural system.
- **Enhances Soil Health and Reduces Chemical Load:**
 - ◆ By reducing reliance on bulky chemical fertilizers, nano-formulations help keep soils healthier.
 - ◆ Lower chemical load improves microbial activity, soil organic carbon levels.

Role of Precision Agriculture in Enabling the Paradigm Shift

- **Use of Digital & Smart Tools:**
 - ◆ Remote sensing, GIS, and satellite-based monitoring help track nutrient deficiencies and crop growth across large fields.
 - ◆ IoT-enabled soil sensors provide real-time data on nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, pH, and organic carbon.
- **Precision Delivery Mechanisms:**
 - ◆ Tools like drone-based spraying, GPS-guided fertilizer applicators, and variable rate technology (VRT) allow precise placement of fertilizers.
 - ◆ Nano-fertilizers integrate perfectly with PA since they require micro-dosing and targeted spraying, reducing losses through leaching and volatilization.
- **Site-Specific Nutrient Management (SSNM):**
 - ◆ PA uses data from soil testing, geospatial mapping, IoT sensors, and drones to assess soil variability, moisture, nutrient levels, and crop health.
 - ◆ This allows farmers to apply fertilizers **only where needed and only in required quantities**, reducing wastage.
- **Enabling a Result-Based Policy Framework:**
 - ◆ PA generates **quantifiable data**, enabling the government to shift subsidies toward measurable outcomes like lower fertilizer consumption per hectare, improved soil health parameters etc.
 - ◆ Enables monitoring and verification required for a **performance-linked incentive (PLI)-style nutrient management approach**.

Conclusion:

A shift toward **result-based nutrient management** is **vital for restoring soil health, ensuring environmental sustainability, and boosting long-term farm productivity**. Nano-fertilizers and precision agriculture tools can greatly

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improve nutrient-use efficiency through targeted, measurable application. Integrating these innovations into policy can help India build a scientific, efficient, and sustainable fertilizer system aligned with Atmanirbhar Bharat and climate-resilient agriculture.

21. In an increasingly volatile global economic environment, India's macroeconomic stability depends on prudent management of inflation, external sector vulnerabilities, and capital flows. Discuss the policy trade-offs involved. (250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by mentioning global economic volatility.
- In the body part discuss this trade off .
- Give measures to minimise this volatility.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

In recent years, global shocks such as the **Russia-Ukraine conflict, supply-chain disruptions after COVID-19, and aggressive monetary tightening by the US Federal Reserve** have heightened economic volatility.

- In this context, India's macroeconomic stability is tested by the need to simultaneously manage inflation, external sector vulnerabilities, and volatile capital flows, involving difficult trade-offs between growth, stability, and policy credibility.

Body:

Policy Trade-offs Impacting Macroeconomic Stability

- **Inflation Control vs Growth Support:** The **RBI's inflation-targeting framework (4% ± 2%)** requires monetary tightening when prices rise, as seen during 2022–24 rate hikes in response to food and fuel inflation (RBI, Monetary Policy Reports).
 - ◆ However, **higher interest rates** increase borrowing costs, potentially slowing **investment and consumption, especially MSMEs**.
 - Thus, controlling inflation to protect purchasing power often comes at the cost of short-term growth.
- **External Sector Stability vs Exchange Rate Flexibility:** Global shocks, such as US Fed tightening, lead to capital outflows and rupee depreciation.

- ◆ RBI's intervention using forex reserves (over USD 640 billion in 2024) helps manage volatility (RBI data) but **excessive intervention can erode reserves**.

- ◆ **Allowing the rupee to depreciate**, supports exports but raises imported inflation, especially for oil.

- **Capital Flow Management vs Financial Openness:** India benefits from capital inflows to finance its **current account deficit (CAD)**, which stood around 1–2% of GDP in recent years.

- ◆ However, volatile portfolio flows can destabilise markets, as seen during **taper tantrum-like episodes**.

- ◆ Policy trade-off lies between maintaining **investor confidence** and using macroprudential measures to reduce sudden outflows.

- ◆ Along with this **fiscal consolidation** is essential to maintain macro stability and investor confidence. Yet, during **global slowdowns**, expansionary fiscal policy is needed to sustain demand, as seen in the post-pandemic capital expenditure push.

- This creates a trade-off between **debt sustainability** and growth support.

Measures to Minimise Global Spillovers on India's Macroeconomic Stability

- **Strengthening Inflation Management:** Use **fiscal tools (buffer stocking, calibrated import duties on food/fuel)** alongside monetary policy to reduce burden on interest rates alone.
 - ◆ Improve agricultural supply chains and storage to reduce **food inflation volatility**.
- **Export Basket Diversification:** Promote **export diversification** (goods and services) to reduce dependence on a few markets and commodities.
 - ◆ Reduce oil vulnerability through **energy diversification**, renewables, and strategic petroleum reserves.
- **Managing Capital Flow Volatility:** Encourage **stable long-term capital inflows (FDI, sovereign funds)** over volatile portfolio flows.
 - ◆ Use **macroprudential measures** such as counter-cyclical capital buffers and limits on excessive short-term borrowing.

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- ◆ Gradual and calibrated capital account liberalisation to avoid sudden reversals.
- **Exchange Rate Risk Mitigation:** Allow **market-determined exchange rate with RBI intervention only to curb excessive volatility**, not to defend fixed levels.
 - ◆ Deepen domestic **currency derivatives and hedging markets** to protect firms from external shocks
- **Fiscal and Institutional Coordination:** Maintain a credible **medium-term fiscal consolidation path** while protecting growth-enhancing capital expenditure.
 - ◆ Strengthen **data transparency** and communication to anchor investor expectations.
- **Promote Rupee Internationalisation:** Expand the use of the Indian rupee in **cross-border trade settlement, bilateral swap arrangements, and invoicing of energy and commodity imports**.
 - ◆ This would reduce dependence on hard currencies like the US dollar, lower exchange rate pass-through to inflation, and enhance India's resilience to global financial spillovers.

Conclusion:

In a globally uncertain economic environment, India **cannot avoid external spillovers but can manage them through resilience and policy prudence**. A calibrated mix of **inflation control, external sector buffers, and capital flow management**, supported by **strong institutions and clear policy communication** will be crucial to sustaining macroeconomic stability while preserving growth momentum.

22. Fiscal consolidation and growth stimulation often pose a policy dilemma for developing economies like India. Discuss how India can balance fiscal discipline with the need for public investment in infrastructure and social sectors.

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by recent trends in fiscal management.
- In the body, briefly mention the Policy dilemma and argue why Fiscal Discipline is necessary.
- Next, argue the need for public investment.
- Give measure to balance.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

India faces the challenge of balancing fiscal consolidation with growth-oriented spending. The **Union Budget 2025–26** targets a reduced fiscal deficit of **4.4% of GDP**, with declining revenue and primary deficits, reflecting improved fiscal discipline.

- At the same time, sustained public investment and a planned reduction of public debt to **around 50% of GDP by 2030–31** aim to support long-term growth and stability.

Body:

The Policy Dilemma

- **The Growth Imperative:** India needs sustained 7-8% growth to absorb its demographic dividend.
 - ◆ This requires massive public spending on infrastructure (logistics) and social sectors (health/ education).
- **The Fiscal Constraint:** Excessive spending leads to high **Fiscal Deficits**, which can cause:
 - ◆ **Crowding Out:** High government borrowing raises interest rates for the private sector.
 - ◆ **Inflation:** Increased money supply without commensurate supply-side growth.
 - ◆ **Debt Sustainability:** Risk of a "Debt Trap" where revenue is consumed by interest payments.

Why Fiscal Discipline is Necessary:

- **Macroeconomic Stability:** High fiscal deficits increase inflationary pressure, raise interest rates, and crowd out private investment.
- **Investor Confidence and Credit Ratings:** Fiscal discipline improves India's credibility among global investors and rating agencies, helping attract stable capital inflows and reduce borrowing costs.
 - ◆ For instance, in 2024, **S&P Global Ratings** raised **India's sovereign rating outlook to 'positive' from 'stable'**.
 - ◆ A predictable fiscal path strengthens confidence in India's economic management.
- **Intergenerational Equity:** Excessive borrowing transfers today's financial burden to future generations. Reducing public debt ensures fairness and sustainable growth over time.

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Why Public Investment Remains Crucial

- **Infrastructure-Led Growth:** Public capital expenditure on roads, railways, ports, and digital infrastructure has a high multiplier effect.
 - ◆ Every ₹1 spent on capital expenditure can generate ₹2.5- 3.5 in economic output, crowding in private investment.
- **Social Sector Spending for Inclusive Growth:** Investment in health, education, nutrition, and social protection improves human capital, reduces inequality, and supports long-term productivity.
 - ◆ Such spending aligns with SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Health), 4 (Education), and 10 (Reduced Inequality).
- **Counter-Cyclical Role of the State:** During economic slowdowns, government spending stabilises demand and employment.
 - ◆ Post-COVID fiscal support helped revive growth, demonstrating the importance of public expenditure as a shock absorber in times of crisis.

Balancing Fiscal Discipline with Growth Imperatives

- **Prioritising Quality of Expenditure:** Shifting from revenue-heavy subsidies to productive capital expenditure ensures better growth outcomes.
- **Enhancing Revenue Mobilisation:** Broadening the tax base through GST rationalisation, improved compliance, and formalisation of the economy can raise revenues without increasing tax rates.
- **Asset Monetisation and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Monetising underutilised public assets and leveraging private capital through PPPs help finance infrastructure without excessive fiscal burden.
- **Targeted and Efficient Subsidies: Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT)** and technology-enabled targeting reduce leakages and improve efficiency, allowing fiscal space for productive investment.
- **Medium-Term Fiscal Frameworks:** Adhering to a transparent and credible medium-term fiscal roadmap, as recommended by the FRBM Review Committee, helps balance consolidation with growth needs.

Conclusion:

India's challenge is not choosing between fiscal discipline and development but **harmonising both through**

smart public spending and efficient resource mobilisation. A growth-oriented yet fiscally responsible strategy—anchored in institutional reforms and long-term planning—is key to achieving sustainable and inclusive economic development.

23. How can food processing and agro-based industries facilitate India's transition from a farm-dependent to a manufacturing-led economy? (250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by highlighting the current status of agriculture in the economy.
- In the body, argue why this sector is critical for growth.
- Enlist some challenges hindering the potential.
- Suggest measures to overcome this.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

Agriculture employs nearly **45% of India's workforce** but contributes only about **18% to GDP**, reflecting low productivity and disguised unemployment. In contrast, manufacturing, particularly **food processing and agro-based industries**, offers a critical pathway to absorb surplus labour, enhance value addition, and accelerate structural transformation.

- Strengthening this sector can bridge the gap between farm and factory, enabling India's transition to a manufacturing-led economy.

Body:

Role of Food Processing and Agro-Based Industries in Driving Structural Economic Transformation

- **Value Addition And Income Enhancement For Farmers:** Food processing reduces post-harvest losses (estimated at **₹92,000 crore annually** as per ICAR) by converting perishable produce into higher-value products.
 - ◆ **Example:** Tomato processing units in **Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra** have stabilised farmer incomes through contract farming and assured procurement.
- **Employment Generation Beyond Agriculture:** Agro-processing is labour-intensive and can absorb surplus rural labour across storage, packaging, logistics, and marketing.

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- ◆ The food processing sector contributes 12.41% of **employment in the organized manufacturing sector**, with strong potential for women and youth employment in rural areas.
- **Boost To Manufacturing Output And Exports:** Processed food exports (**ready-to-eat, marine products, dairy**) are growing faster than raw agricultural exports.
 - ◆ Schemes like **PLI for Food Processing Industries** and **PM-FME** are encouraging MSMEs to scale up value-added production.
- **Strengthening Rural Industrialisation And Supply Chains:** Development of food parks, cold chains, and agro-logistics integrates farmers with markets and reduces intermediation.
 - ◆ **Mega Food Parks** create cluster-based agro-industrial ecosystems, linking farm gates to global markets.
- **Catalyst For Allied Sectors And Innovation:** Growth of food processing stimulates demand for **packaging, cold storage, transport, and agri-tech solutions**.
 - ◆ Start-ups in food processing, traceability, and farm mechanisation support technological upgrading of agriculture.

Persisting Challenges Limiting the Transformative Potential

- **Inadequate infrastructure and cold-chain gaps:** Insufficient storage, logistics, and transport facilities continue to cause high post-harvest losses and limit scale efficiency.
 - ◆ For example, **only 10% of perishables are stored in cold chains in India**.
- **Fragmented supply chains and small farm sizes:** Small landholdings and weak farmer–industry linkages hinder consistent quality and large-scale processing.
 - ◆ **Over 86% of the farmers are small and marginal**, unable to scale on their own.
- **Limited access to finance and technology:** MSMEs face credit constraints, outdated machinery, and low adoption of modern processing technologies.
 - ◆ Farm mechanisations remain around **40-45% below compared to China and Brazil**.
- **Regulatory and policy bottlenecks:** Complex regulations, varying state policies, and compliance burdens discourage private investment.

- **Skill and capacity constraints:** Shortage of skilled manpower in food processing, quality control, and packaging reduces productivity and competitiveness.

Measures to Unlock the Full Potential of Food Processing and Agro-Based Industries

- **Strengthening Physical Infrastructure and Cold Chains:** Expand integrated **cold-chain networks, warehouses, and logistics parks** to reduce post-harvest losses and ensure seamless farm-to-market connectivity, especially in perishables.
- **Enhancing Access to Credit and Financial Support:** Improve access to affordable credit for **MSMEs and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)** through targeted schemes, credit guarantees, and interest subvention to encourage investment in processing units.
- **Promoting Technology Adoption and Innovation:** Encourage use of **modern processing technologies, automation, and food-grade packaging** through subsidies, technology transfer, and public–private partnerships to improve efficiency and quality standards.
- **Strengthening Farm–Industry Linkages:** Promote **contract farming, cluster-based food parks, and aggregation models** to integrate farmers directly with processors and reduce supply chain fragmentation.
- **Simplifying Regulatory Frameworks and Ensuring Policy Stability:** Rationalise licensing requirements, harmonise food safety standards, and ensure predictable policies to attract long-term private investment.
- **Skill Development and Workforce Training:** Expand specialised skill programs in **food processing, quality control, cold-chain management, and logistics** under initiatives like PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana.
- **Promoting Export Orientation and Global Standards:** Support compliance with **international quality and safety standards (HACCP, Codex)** and strengthen export infrastructure to enhance India's competitiveness in global food markets.

Conclusion:

Strengthening food processing and agro-based industries is essential for achieving **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)** while accelerating India's structural transformation. By enhancing value addition, exports, and rural employment, the sector can support India's target of **USD 100 billion in agricultural**

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exports by 2030. A robust, inclusive, and technology-driven agro-industrial ecosystem will be central to sustainable and resilient economic growth.

Biodiversity and Environment

24. “Ecosystem services are undervalued in economic policymaking, undermining both development and sustainability.” Assess India’s efforts to integrate ecosystem valuation into decision-making. (250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefing about Ecosystem services
- Delve into the Assessment of India’s Efforts to Integrate Ecosystem Valuation
- Highlight Critical Gaps and Challenges
- Suggest measures how India must move from “Accounting” to “Accountability”
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

Ecosystem services (the benefits nature provides such as carbon sequestration, water purification, and pollination), are often treated as “free public goods.”

- Their undervaluation in economic policymaking leads to a “**tragedy of commons**,” where short-term developmental gains (e.g., a **highway**) are prioritized over long-term sustainability, ultimately undermining the very resource base required for future development.

Body:

Assessment of India’s Efforts to Integrate Ecosystem Valuation:

- **Institutionalizing Natural Capital Accounting**
 - ◆ **EnviStats India:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) now releases annual “EnviStats” reports.
 - These follow the **SEEA (System of Environmental-Economic Accounting)** framework to track natural assets like soil, water, and biodiversity alongside GDP.
 - ◆ **NCAVES Project:** India is one of the five nations implementing the **Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (NCAVES)** project with the EU and UN, aiming to create a “**Green GDP**” equivalent.

- It shifts the narrative from “**growth at all costs**” to “**growth adjusted for depletion**.”

- **Ecological Fiscal Transfers (EFT):** India operates one of the world’s largest systems of paying states for conservation.

- ◆ **Finance Commission (FC) Awards:** The 15th Finance Commission assigned a **10% weightage to “Forest and Ecology”** in its tax devolution formula.

- This incentivizes states to maintain forest cover by compensating them for the “**fiscal disability**” (**loss of revenue**) incurred by not exploiting these forests.

Regulatory Valuation:

- ◆ **Forest Diversion Costs:** Under the **Forest (Conservation) Act**, any user agency (industry/government) diverting forest land must pay the **Net Present Value (NPV)** of the forest lost.

Sub-national & Local Successes (Payment for Ecosystem Services - PES)

- ◆ **Palampur Model (Himachal Pradesh):** A pioneering example where the **Palampur Municipal Council** pays the upstream **Village Forest Development Society** to protect the catchment area.

Critical Gaps and Challenges

- **Valuation vs. Real Pricing:** The **NPV** is often treated as a mere “**cost of doing business**” by large industries rather than a deterrent.
 - ◆ The valuation is arguably still too low to stop the diversion of pristine forests (e.g., **Hasdeo Arand coal mining**).
- **“Green vs. Green” Conflict:** India’s push for renewable energy (solar parks, hydro) often bypasses ecosystem valuation.
 - ◆ For instance, large solar parks in Rajasthan threatening the **Great Indian Bustard** habitat highlights how one green goal (climate) can undermine another (biodiversity).
- **Implementation Deficit in EFTs:** Studies suggest that while **states receive Ecological Fiscal Transfers**, this money is often merged into the general budget rather than being specifically reinvested in forestry or environmental restoration.

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- Methodological Complexity: There is no standardized national metric for “shadow pricing” services like pollination or flood control, leading to ad-hoc assessments during Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA).

To truly align development with sustainability, India must move from “Accounting” to “Accountability”:

- Standardize Green Accounting: Move EnviStats from a statistical exercise to a policy tool. Budget speeches should explicitly mention “Natural Capital Depletion” alongside GDP growth.
- National PES Framework: Formalize a national policy for Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) to encourage more models like Palampur, especially for river basins (e.g., downstream cities paying upstream farmers).
- Reform EIAs: Environmental Impact Assessments must include a mandatory Cost-Benefit Analysis that monetizes ecosystem loss, ensuring that projects are only approved if public benefits genuinely outweigh ecological costs.

Conclusion:

India has built the **scaffolding** for ecosystem valuation through the 15th FC and EnviStats. However, for true sustainability, these values must effectively veto unsustainable projects. We must transition from valuing nature to allowing nature’s value to guide our economic choices.

Science & Technology

25. “Without a strong deep-tech industrial base, India risks remaining a user- rather than a shaper- of frontier technologies.” Evaluate India’s ability to commercialise deep-tech research in space tech, med-tech, and clean tech. (250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefing about Deep-tech
- Delve into India’s Commercialisation Ability in Space tech, Med-tech, and Clean tech
- Highlight Why India Risks Remaining a “User” (Structural Challenges)
- Suggest Measures to Strengthen Commercialisation of Deep-tech Research
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

Deep-tech refers to technologies based on substantial scientific advances and high-tech engineering (e.g., AI, genomics, robotics). Without a domestic industrial base to create (shape) these technologies, India may remain perpetually dependent on importing (using) them, compromising strategic autonomy and economic value capture.

Body:

India’s Commercialisation Ability

- Space Tech: A “Shaper” in the Making (High Ability)
- This sector demonstrates India’s strongest commercialisation ability, driven by the decoupling of ISRO and the private sector via IN-SPACE.
 - Shaper vs. User Dynamic:
 - User: Reliance on US-controlled GPS.
 - Shaper: Development of **NavIC**, offering superior regional accuracy and strategic independence.
 - Commercial Successes:
 - Skyroot Aerospace**: Became the **first private Indian company to launch a rocket (Vikram-S)**, proving that private industry can commercialise launch services previously held by the state.
 - Pixxel**: A prime example of a “shaper.” It recently became the **first Indian startup to win a NASA contract for hyperspectral imaging data**, validating that Indian IP can serve global high-tech needs.
 - Agnikul Cosmos**: Successfully **tested 3D-printed semi-cryogenic engines**, moving towards on-demand launch services.
- Med-Tech: Struggling to Cross the “Valley of Death” (Mixed Ability)
 - While India is the “**Pharmacy of the World (generics)**, it remains a “User” in high-end medical devices (70-80% import dependency).
 - The “User” Trap: India imports nearly **all high-end imaging equipment (MRIs, CT scanners)** from global giants like GE and Siemens.

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- ◆ Emerging “Shaper” Capabilities:
 - **SSI Mantra:** India’s first indigenous surgical robotic system. It commercialised a cheaper alternative to the **global monopoly (Da Vinci systems)**, demonstrating ability to engineer complex mechatronics locally.
 - **National Biopharma Mission:** The **National Biopharma Mission** has successfully supported startups, but many fail to scale due to a lack of late-stage capital (Series B/C funding) and regulatory friction.
- **Clean Tech: Transitioning from Deployment to Creation (Growing Ability)**
- Historically, India has been a “User” of clean tech (e.g., **importing solar panels from China to meet renewable targets**). The focus is now shifting to “Shaping” the value chain.
 - ◆ **Green Hydrogen:** Startups like **Newtrace** and **GreenH** are developing indigenous electrolyser technologies to reduce production costs, rather than just importing European technology.
 - ◆ **Battery Storage:** While the PLI scheme encourages manufacturing, India still lacks a strong base in **Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) R&D**, leaving it dependent on imported lithium-ion IP and raw materials.

Why India Risks Remaining a “User” (Structural Challenges)

- **Funding Gaps:** Indian VC money is risk-averse, preferring quick-return sectors (Fintech/E-commerce) over Deep Tech which requires “Patient Capital” (**5-10 years gestation**).
 - ◆ Due to this, many innovations die at the prototype stage or move to the **US/Singapore for funding (flipping)**.
- **Procurement Culture:** Many government tenders often favor **L1 (Lowest Cost)** over **L1-T (Lowest Cost with Indigenously Developed Technology)**.
 - ◆ Deep tech products initially cost more due to lack of scale, making them lose out to mass-produced imports.
- **R&D Spending:** India spends only **0.7% of GDP** on R&D (vs. **2%+ in US/China**). A “shaper” economy requires massive investment in basic science.

Measures to Strengthen Commercialisation of Deep-tech Research:

- **Fast-Tracking National Deep Tech Startup Policy (Draft):** Needs urgent implementation to provide dedicated “Fund of Funds” for deep tech and simplify IP regimes.
- **Strategic Procurement:** Introduce “Buy Indian-IDDM” (**Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured**) categories in civilian ministries, similar to Defence.
- **Industry-Academia Linkage:** Move beyond paper publications to patent commercialisation.
 - ◆ **IIT Madras Research Park** is a successful model (incubating Agnikul, etc.) that must be replicated.

Conclusion:

India has proven its “Shaper” ability in Space Tech, but Med-Tech and Clean Tech are still fighting the inertia of import dependence. To avoid remaining a perpetual user, India must treat Deep Tech not just as a business sector, but as strategic infrastructure, supporting it with patient capital and preferential market access.

26. CRISPR-based gene therapy has moved from laboratory research to clinical application within a decade. Discuss the scientific mechanism behind this therapy and evaluate its effectiveness based on recent global clinical outcomes. (250 words)

Approach:

- Briefly introduce CRISPR-Cas9 technology and its significance in treatments.
- In the body, write its scientific mechanism and evaluate its effectiveness.
- Highlight limitations and concerns and suggest future pathway
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

Within a decade of its discovery, **CRISPR-Cas9 technology** has progressed from a laboratory genome-editing tool to a clinically approved therapy for genetic disorders such as sickle cell disease.

- The approval of treatments like **Casgevy** marks a transformative moment in modern medicine, demonstrating how **precise gene editing can correct or bypass disease-causing mutations at their biological root**.

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Body:**Scientific Mechanism of CRISPR-Based Therapy**

- CRISPR-Cas9 acts as a precise pair of “molecular scissors” that allows scientists to locate and edit specific strands of DNA within a living cell.
 - Target Identification (The Guide):** Scientists design a synthetic Guide RNA (gRNA) that specifically matches the DNA sequence of the defective gene they want to fix.
 - Precision Cutting (The Scissors):** The gRNA directs the Cas9 enzyme (molecular scissors) to the exact spot on the DNA strand, where Cas9 acts to cut both strands of the DNA.
 - Cellular Repair Activation:** The cell detects this break and immediately activates its natural DNA repair mechanisms (such as Non-Homologous End Joining or Homology-Directed Repair) to fix the cut.
 - Gene Correction:** During this repair process, the cell either disables the bad gene (knock-out) or incorporates a healthy DNA template provided by scientists (knock-in), permanently correcting the genetic error.

Evaluation of Effectiveness Based on Global Clinical Outcomes

- Hematology- “Functional Cure” Achieved :** CRISPR-based therapy, particularly **Casgevy (exa-cel)**, has shown remarkable therapeutic success in both Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and transfusion-dependent β-thalassemia (TDT).
 - In SCD trials, over 90% of treated patients achieved complete elimination of vaso-occlusive crises (VOCs).
- Cardiovascular Disease: Promising but Safety-Watch:**
 - Cholesterol (VERVE-101):** Demonstrated the ability to lower LDL-C (bad cholesterol).
 - Outcomes:** While effective at lowering cholesterol, trials have faced scrutiny regarding safety signals (adverse events in high-risk heart patients).

Limitations and Concerns

- Off-target effects:** Unintended edits remain a concern for long-term safety.

- Delivery barriers:** Efficient delivery to organs like the brain and heart is still limited.
- Immune reactions:** Cas proteins can trigger immune responses.
- Ethical concerns:** Fear of germline editing and “designer babies.”

Future Pathway for CRISPR-Cas9 technology

- Strengthen safety frameworks** through long-term monitoring, global ethical guidelines, and stricter assessment of off-target effects.
- Improve delivery technologies** such as advanced viral vectors and lipid nanoparticles for efficient, organ-specific gene editing.
- Enhance affordability and accessibility** by promoting public-private partnerships, tiered pricing, and domestic manufacturing capacity.
- Invest in research for complex diseases to expand CRISPR applications** beyond monogenic disorders to cancers, neurodegenerative and metabolic diseases.

Conclusion:

While CRISPR therapies have opened a new frontier of “single-shot cures,” realizing their full public-health impact will require parallel advances in safer conditioning methods, cost reduction, and equitable global delivery systems.

27. Quantum technologies are expected to transform computing, communication, and cybersecurity. Discuss India’s preparedness in this domain and the challenges that need to be addressed. (250 words)

Approach :

- Introduce your answer by highlighting the potential of these technologies.
- In the body, mention the preparedness of India in this field.
- Give challenges that need to be addressed .
- Suggest measures .
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction :

Quantum technologies can disrupt computing, communication and cybersecurity by enabling breakthroughs like quantum speed-ups, quantum-secure links and ultra-precise sensing. India has recognised this as a strategic

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domain and is building mission-mode capacity, but the ecosystem is still early-stage and uneven across hardware, talent and deployment.

Body:

India's Preparedness for Quantum Tech:

- **Mission-Mode Push Through National Quantum Mission (NQM):** India launched the **National Quantum Mission (2023–24 to 2030–31)** with a total outlay of **₹6,003.65 crore** to seed R&D and scale a quantum ecosystem.
- **Research Hubs And Multi-Institution Collaboration:** Under NQM, **four T-Hubs** bring together **152 researchers from 43 institutions**, signalling a coordinated national research pipeline across themes like technology development and HRD.
- **Early Progress In Quantum Communication And Defence Security:** DRDO and IIT Delhi demonstrated **entanglement-based free-space quantum secure communication over >1 km**, relevant for quantum cyber security and future quantum networks.
- **Growing Academia–Industry Linkages:** Indian institutions are joining global platforms and building centres—e.g., **IIT Madras joining the IBM Quantum Network** and expanding quantum research capability.
- **Skills And State-Level Ecosystem Building:** Skill initiatives and state-led hubs are emerging—e.g., **Andhra Pradesh's push for quantum skilling and a quantum computing centre/park** vision to create talent pipelines.

Challenges That Need To Be Addressed

- **Hardware Gap And Dependence On Foreign Supply Chains:** Building **fault-tolerant quantum computers** needs **cryogenics, control electronics, fabrication and high-purity materials**, areas where India's domestic capacity is still limited, creating strategic dependency risks.
- **Talent Bottlenecks Across The Stack:** India has strengths in theory/software, but shortages persist in **quantum hardware engineering, cryogenics, photonics, error correction, and systems integration**, slowing lab-to-market translation.
- **Fragmented Translation From Research To Products:** Start-ups and labs need sustained patient capital,

testbeds, procurement pathways and standards—otherwise prototypes remain stuck at low technology readiness levels.

- **Cybersecurity Transition And 'Harvest-Now-Decrypt-Later' Risk:** Quantum computers could break widely used public-key cryptography; migration to **post-quantum cryptography (PQC)** plus selective **QKD** adoption needs coordination across government, BFSI and critical infrastructure.
- **Standards, Interoperability, And Global Tech-Regime Constraints:** Global export controls, standards battles, and IP concentration can restrict access to components and collaborations; India must build standards capacity and trusted supply chains without isolating itself.

What Need to be Done?

- **Accelerate Indigenous Hardware And Testbeds:** Fund mission-linked national testbeds for superconducting/trapped-ion/photonics pathways, with assured procurement for strategic users and shared facilities for start-ups.
- **Build A Full-Stack Talent Pipeline:** Expand M.Tech/PhD fellowships, joint industry doctorates, and hands-on lab programs (hardware + control + algorithms), with focused talent tracks for defence, telecom and BFSI.
- **Adopt A National Quantum-Safe Roadmap:** Time-bound migration to **PQC** for critical systems, crypto-agility mandates, and sectoral pilots for QKD where it is cost-effective and threat-appropriate.
- **Strengthen Industry Participation And Commercialisation:** Use challenge grants, regulatory sandboxes, and PPP models to scale use-cases in logistics optimisation, drug discovery, power grids, and secure networks.
- **Lead In Standards And Trusted International Collaboration:** Create a standards cell aligned to global bodies, push interoperable protocols, and pursue partnerships that protect IP while enabling access to cutting-edge components and knowledge.

Conclusion:

India has made a **clear strategic start through NQM, expanding hubs, and visible progress in quantum-secure communication**, but the ecosystem is **not yet deployment-ready**.

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ready at scale. Bridging hardware gaps, building talent, and executing a quantum-safe cybersecurity transition will determine whether India becomes a technology leader or remains a downstream adopter.

Disaster Management

28. Climate change is acting as a risk multiplier for disasters. Analyse this statement in the context of disaster management in India.(250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce by highlighting causes and how they are risk multipliers.
- In the body, explain climate change as a risk multiplier.
- Write about the implications posed by it.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

Climate change no longer acts as a standalone environmental issue but increasingly **multiplies the frequency, intensity, and impact of disasters**. In India, rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events have amplified existing vulnerabilities, complicating disaster management and development outcomes.

Body:

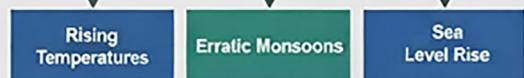
Climate Change as a Risk Multiplier for Disasters:

- Intensification of Extreme Weather Events:** IMD data shows a sharp rise in **extreme rainfall events**, contributing to frequent floods (e.g., **Himachal Pradesh floods, 2023**).
 - Heatwaves have become more severe and prolonged, **2024 recorded one of the longest heatwave spells**, affecting health, productivity, and water security.
- Increased Flood and Landslide Risks:** Changing monsoon patterns have led to **short-duration, high-intensity rainfall**, overwhelming urban drainage systems.
 - NDMA** highlights climate change as a key driver behind rising **urban floods** (Chennai 2015, Bengaluru recurring floods).

- Himalayan states face higher landslide risks due to glacial melt and unstable slopes.**
- Amplification of Cyclones and Coastal Disasters:** MoES reports an increase in **severe cyclonic storms in the Arabian Sea**, such as **Cyclone Tauktae and Biparjoy**.
 - Sea-level rise and warmer oceans intensify storm surges, threatening coastal livelihoods and infrastructure.
- Droughts, Food and Water Insecurity:** Climate variability has increased the **frequency of drought-like conditions**, affecting rainfed agriculture.
 - NITI Aayog (Composite Water Management Index)** warns of worsening water stress due to climate-induced variability.
- Compounding Socio-economic Vulnerabilities:** Climate disasters disproportionately affect the poor, migrants, and informal workers, turning hazards into **humanitarian crises**.
 - IPCC AR6 identifies South Asia as a hotspot where climate risks intersect with poverty and high population density.

CLIMATE CHANGE AS A RISK MULTIPLIER IN INDIA

1. Primary Climate Drivers



2. Immediate Physical Impacts



3. Socio-Economic 'Multiplied' Risks



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Implications for Disaster Management in India

- **Shift from reactive relief to anticipatory and risk-informed planning:** Traditional disaster management focused on post-disaster relief and compensation. Climate change necessitates a **predictive and preventive approach**.
 - ◆ For example, **IMD's impact-based forecasting** and **NDMA's heatwave action plans** (first implemented in Ahmedabad) enable early warnings, pre-positioning of resources, and public advisories, significantly reducing mortality during heatwaves.
 - ◆ Similarly, **forecast-based financing** allows states to act before disasters strike, lowering human and economic losses.
- **Climate-resilient infrastructure, early warning systems, and ecosystem-based solutions:** The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs promotes **climate-resilient urban planning** under AMRUT and Smart Cities to address flooding and heat stress.
 - ◆ India's **cyclone early warning system** (IMD + NDMA) has reduced cyclone fatalities drastically, as seen during **Cyclone Fani (2019)**.
 - ◆ **Ecosystem-based approaches:** Mangrove restoration in **Odisha and the Sundarbans** has acted as a natural buffer against storm surges, recognised by NDMA as a cost-effective resilience strategy.
- **Integration of climate adaptation with DRR frameworks:** India's **National Disaster Management Plan (2019)** aligns with the **Sendai Framework**, explicitly recognising climate change as a disaster risk multiplier.
 - ◆ Ministries are encouraged to integrate **climate adaptation into sectoral planning**, such as climate-resilient agriculture, water management, and coastal zone regulation, ensuring that disaster risk reduction and sustainable development reinforce each other.

Conclusion:

Climate change acts as a potent risk multiplier for disasters in India by intensifying hazards and amplifying underlying vulnerabilities. Therefore, disaster management **must be firmly integrated with climate science, resilience-building, and inclusive governance** to protect lives and livelihoods, while advancing **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**, **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**, through sustainable and risk-informed development.

building, and inclusive governance to protect lives and livelihoods, while advancing **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**, **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**, through sustainable and risk-informed development.

29. Disasters are not merely natural events but outcomes of governance failures. Critically examine this statement with reference to recent disasters in India. **(250 words)**

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by highlighting recent incidents.
- In the body, argue how governance failure amplify them
- Give measures to address the issue.
- Conclude Accordingly.

Introduction:

Disasters are often seen as natural events, **but in reality, their scale and impact are largely shaped by human decisions and governance failures**. In India, recent disasters such as **urban floods, cyclones, heatwaves, and landslides** show a clear **nexus between natural hazards and weak governance**. Poor planning, weak implementation, and lack of preparedness often turn natural events into human disasters.

Body:

How Disasters Reflect Governance Failures:

- **Poor Urban Planning and Infrastructure Failures:** Rapid and unplanned urbanisation has increased disaster vulnerability. Cities like **Chennai (2015 floods)** and **Bengaluru (2022–23 floods)** witnessed severe flooding not merely due to heavy rainfall, but because of encroachment on lakes, wetlands, and drainage channels.
 - ◆ This shows the nexus between poor urban governance and disaster impact.
- **Weak Implementation of Early Warning and Preparedness Systems:** India has improved forecasting, but governance gaps remain in last-mile delivery.
 - ◆ For instance, during **Cyclone Biparjoy (2023)** and **Cyclone Amphan (2020)**, early warnings existed, yet uneven evacuation, shelter shortages, and weak local coordination increased vulnerability in some regions.

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- **Environmental Degradation and Policy Neglect:** Unregulated mining, deforestation, and construction in ecologically sensitive zones have intensified disasters.
 - ◆ For example, the **Joshimath land subsidence (2023)** exposed how **ignoring environmental impact assessments** and carrying capacity norms can convert slow ecological stress into a full-scale disaster.
- **Climate Change and Inadequate Adaptation Measures:** **Heatwaves in North India and floods in Himachal Pradesh (2023)** show how climate change interacts with governance failures.
 - ◆ Despite heat action plans and disaster guidelines, weak enforcement and lack of local preparedness increase mortality and economic loss.
- **Weak Institutional Coordination and Response Mechanisms:** Disasters often reveal gaps between central, state, and local authorities. Fragmented responsibility and delayed response during landslides and flash floods highlight the absence of integrated disaster management systems.

Addressing Governance Failures: What Needs to Change

- **Shift from Relief to Risk Reduction:** Disaster management should not focus only on relief after a disaster occurs. Instead, governments must plan in advance by integrating disaster risk reduction into development activities.
 - ◆ This includes **proper land-use planning, avoiding construction in floodplains or fragile zones**, and building disaster-resilient infrastructure.
 - ◆ **Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025** is a significant step in the right direction.

- **Strengthening Local Governments and Community Participation:** Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies are the first responders during disasters.
 - ◆ Providing them with **adequate funds, training, and authority** can improve preparedness and quick response. Involving local communities also helps in better awareness and quicker evacuation during emergencies.
- **Improving Early Warning and Communication Systems:** Timely and accurate warnings can save lives.
 - ◆ Information should reach people through multiple channels such as mobile alerts, local radio, social media, and community volunteers, especially in local languages, to ensure last-mile connectivity.
- **Using Data and Technology for Better Decision-Making:** Real-time data on weather, rainfall, and risk zones can help authorities act early.
 - ◆ **Transparent data sharing, regular audits of disaster response**, and use of technology like GIS and satellite mapping can improve accountability and effectiveness of disaster management efforts.

Conclusion:

Disasters are not merely natural events but outcomes shaped by governance choices and development pathways. In line with the **Sendai Framework, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**'s vision of a "safe and disaster-resilient India" and the **Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG 11 and SDG 13)**, strengthening institutions, promoting risk-informed planning is essential to shift disaster management from reactive relief to proactive resilience and sustainable development.



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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-4

Theoretical Question

30. "Emotions are not obstacles to ethical reasoning; they are its raw material." Examine the statement in the context of public service decision-making. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefing about reason and emotion in public service
- Delve into Emotions as the "Raw Material" of Ethical Reasoning
- Highlight Application in Public Service Decision-Making and in brief delve into the The Caveat: Raw Material vs. Finished Product
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

Traditionally, public administration has championed **Weberian rationality**, viewing emotions as biases that cloud judgment. However, the statement suggests a paradigm shift: emotions are not the enemy of reason but the **foundation of morality**.

- In public service, while **reason** dictates "how" to execute a task, **emotion** (specifically Emotional Intelligence) often dictates "why" that task matters.

Body:

Emotions as the "Raw Material" of Ethical Reasoning

- Signal for Moral Issues (The Radar):** Emotions like **empathy** and **compassion** alert a civil servant to the suffering of others.
 - Example:** A District Collector (DC) might strictly follow land acquisition laws, but it is the emotion of **empathy** that helps them perceive the trauma of displacement, prompting them to ensure better rehabilitation than the bare minimum legal requirement.
- Moral Outrage as a Catalyst for Justice:** Feelings of **indignation** or **anger** against injustice act as a fuel for rectitude.
 - Example:** It was the emotional response to the practice of Sati or Untouchability that drove

reformers and later administrators to draft and enforce strict laws against them.

- The Conscience Keeper (Guilt and Pride):** Anticipatory guilt prevents corruption. The fear of shame or the desire for self-respect (internal emotional states) often acts as a stronger deterrent against bribery than external vigilance.

Application in Public Service Decision-Making

When integrated with logic, emotions transform bureaucratic processes into "Good Governance."

- Humanizing the "Iron Cage" of Bureaucracy:** Rules are often rigid. Emotions allow an officer to use **discretionary powers** for the public good (Spirit of the Law vs. Letter of the Law).
 - Example:** An elderly woman lacks one document for a pension scheme. A purely rational robot would reject her. An officer using emotions as "raw material" would recognize her desperation and find a procedural alternative to help her.
- Crisis Management:** In disaster management, while logistical planning is rational, the **urgency** and **care** required to save lives stem from the emotional value placed on human life.
 - Example:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, officers who went beyond the call of duty were driven by solidarity and compassion, not just job descriptions.
- Gandhiji's Talisman:** Mahatma Gandhi's advice to "recall the face of the poorest man" is essentially an appeal to use **emotion** (empathy) as a baseline for **ethical reasoning** (policy decision).

The Caveat: Raw Material vs. Finished Product

While emotions are the raw material, they cannot be the **only** factor. Raw material needs processing.

- Unchecked Emotion:** Can lead to favoritism, nepotism, or **knee-jerk reactions** (e.g., awarding contracts based on friendship rather than merit).
- The Balance:** As Aristotle pointed out, anyone can get angry, but to do so "**at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way**" is a virtue.

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Conclusion

In conclusion, a civil servant without emotion is a robot, and one without reason is chaotic. Emotions provide the values (Justice, Compassion, Integrity), while reason provides the method. For a public servant, Emotional Intelligence is the refinery that processes the “raw material” of human emotion into the “finished product” of ethical public service.

31. “Integrity is less about resisting temptation and more about eliminating situations that generate temptation.” Discuss. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefing about Integrity
- Delve into the arguments about Limitations of “Resisting Temptation”
- Highlight key arguments to Eliminating Situations of Temptation
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

Classically, integrity is viewed as a personal virtue, a test of character where an individual fights internal battles against greed. However, this statement argues for “**Systemic Integrity**” over “**Moral Heroism**.”

- It suggests that relying solely on an individual’s willpower to resist corruption is a fragile strategy. Instead, true integrity in governance is achieved by designing systems that minimize the **opportunity (temptation)** for corruption, making ethical behavior the path of least resistance.

Body:

The Limitations of “Resisting Temptation” (Individual Integrity)

While personal morality is essential, relying only on “resisting” has flaws:

- **Finite Willpower:** Constant exposure to lucrative opportunities (e.g., huge tenders, discretionary transfers) can eventually wear down even honest officers (“**Moral Exhaustion**”).
- **Subjectivity:** Without clear rules, what one officer sees as a “gift,” another might see as a “bribe.”

- **Dependency on Personality:** Good governance cannot depend on the chance of having a “good officer” at the helm; it needs to be officer-proof.

“Eliminating Situations of Temptation”:

The Structural Approach: This approach focuses on Preventive Vigilance. It aligns with the Fraud Triangle Theory, which states that corruption happens when three elements meet: Pressure, Rationalization, and Opportunity. By eliminating the “Situation” (Opportunity), we secure integrity without testing the officer’s willpower.

● Reducing Discretionary Powers:

- ◆ **The Situation:** A tax officer has the discretion to choose which file to scrutinize, creating a situation for extortion.
- ◆ **The Elimination: Faceless Assessment** in Income Tax. The computer randomly assigns cases; the officer doesn’t know the taxpayer, and the taxpayer doesn’t know the officer. **The “situation for bribery is structurally removed.**

● Minimizing Human Interface (Digitization):

- ◆ **The Situation:** A beneficiary needs to physically meet a Clerk to release funds, creating a checkpoint for bribery.
- ◆ **The Elimination: Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).** Money flows directly from the Treasury to the bank account. The “middleman situation” is deleted.

● Transparency and Information Asymmetry:

- ◆ **The Situation:** Only the department knows the status of a file, forcing the citizen to pay for information.
- ◆ **The Elimination: Right to Information (RTI) and e-Office** systems. When file movement is visible online, the opportunity to hide files for money disappears.

● Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):

- ◆ Ambiguity breeds temptation. Clear, codified SOPs (e.g., in land allocation or tenders) leave no room for “creative interpretation” of rules for personal gain.

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Conclusion:

The statement essentially advocates for moving from “Rule of Men” to “Rule of Law.” While we must continue to train civil servants in ethics to build their **moral muscle (to resist)**, the State’s primary focus must be on **institutional design (to eliminate)**. Ultimately, the most ethical system is not one populated by saints, but one where even an average person finds it difficult to be corrupt.

32. “Probity ensures the moral compass of a civil servant, while aptitude ensures functional excellence”. Elucidate with suitable examples. (150 words)

Approach:

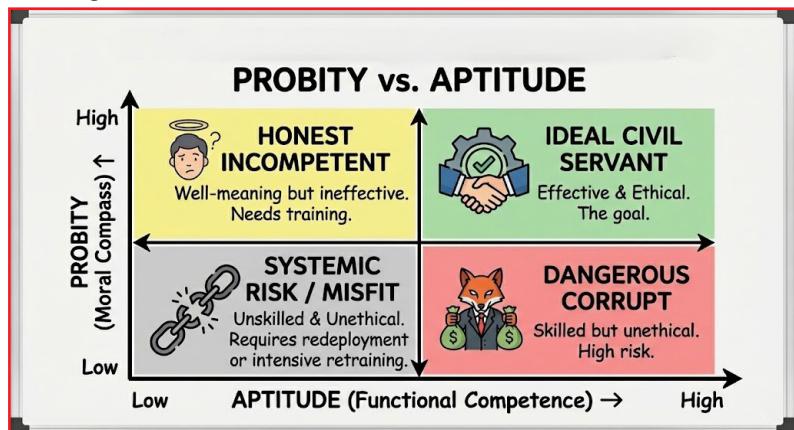
- Introduce your answer by defining the terms briefly.
- In the body part explain how probity acts as moral compass and aptitude as functional necessity
- Further show how synergy between them enhances governance.
- Next explain why both are indispensable for the bureaucracy.
- Conclude highlighting their importance to achieve constitutional vision.

Introduction

Probity refers to steadfast adherence to ethical values such as integrity, honesty, transparency, and accountability in public life. Aptitude denotes the set of abilities, skills, attitudes, and behavioural competencies that enable an officer to perform duties effectively. Together, probity provides the moral compass, while aptitude ensures functional excellence.

- For example, an honest district magistrate who resists political

pressure in awarding a contract while using data-based evaluation to choose the best bidder demonstrates the synergy of probity and aptitude in governance.



Body:

Probity as the Moral Compass of a Civil Servant

- Guides Ethical Decision-Making in dilemmas involving conflict of interest, favoritism, or pressure from vested groups.
- Ensures Adherence to Constitutional Values such as equity, justice, and neutrality, irrespective of political change.
- Promotes Transparency and Accountability, reducing scope for corruption or misuse of public funds.
- Builds Public Trust in administration, strengthening legitimacy in democratic governance.
- Example: Officers implementing Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) resisted local pressure from intermediaries benefiting from leakages; probity helped them maintain fairness and transparency.

Aptitude as the Driver of Functional Excellence

- Analytical Aptitude enables evidence-based decision-making, policy evaluation, and crisis handling.
- Emotional Intelligence helps officers manage public grievances, maintain team morale, and negotiate conflict.
- Leadership and Administrative Skills ensure coordination across departments and effective service delivery.
- Communication Aptitude promotes public awareness and behavioural change, vital for mass programmes.
- Example: District magistrates during the COVID-19 pandemic used data analytics, empathetic communication, and logistical planning to manage containment zones effectively.

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Synergy of Probity and Aptitude in Enhancing Governance

- **Ethical Intent and Technical Competence** results in sustainable and citizen-centric administration.
- **Probity Ensures That Decisions Are Unbiased**, while aptitude ensures that decisions are timely and implementable.
- **Enables Officers to Resist External Pressures**—political, economic, or social—while providing fact-based justifications.
- **Example:** A civil servant detecting **irregularities in MGNREGA payments** requires probity to report them and aptitude to redesign audit mechanisms and improve transparency.

Why Both Are Indispensable for The Bureaucracy

- **Probity Without Aptitude** leads to ethical but inefficient administration.
- **Aptitude Without Probity** results in skilled officers misusing systems—fueling corruption or bias.
- **Balanced Attributes Prevent Policy Capture**, promote rule of law, and uphold long-term institutional credibility.
- **Example: Public procurement scandals** often occur when technically skilled officers lack integrity, highlighting the danger of aptitude without probity.

Conclusion:

As the **Bhagavad Gita** reminds us, “*Yogasthah kuru karmāṇī*” (perform your duties with righteousness and skill). This ideal captures the essence of modern public service: **probity as the moral foundation and aptitude as the instrument of effective action**, together ensuring governance that is principled, efficient, and aligned with India’s constitutional vision.

33. “Despite unprecedented advances in genome engineering, synthetic human genome projects remain constrained by ethical and biosecurity concerns.” Discuss. (150 words)

Approach:

- Briefly introduce the advances in biotechnologies and ethical concerns around it.
- In the body, write major ethical concerns around these technologies .
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

Advances in large-scale DNA synthesis and CRISPR-based gene editing now enable rewriting human genomic segments, with initiatives like Human Genome Project—Write demonstrating the technical feasibility of synthetic human genomes. This has **triggered intense ethical and biosecurity debates worldwide**. These debates now shape and constrain the pace, direction, and legitimacy of such research.

Body:

- **Ethical Constraints**
 - ◆ **Moral and Philosophical Issues:** Creating or rewriting a human genome raises fundamental questions about human identity and dignity. Many argue it amounts to “playing God” .
 - ◆ **Consent Across Generations:** If applied to the germline (embryos/gametes), such interventions would involve heritable changes. Future generations, who will permanently bear these modifications, cannot consent, violating core principles of bioethics.
 - ◆ **Risk of Designer Babies and Inequality:** Genome synthesis could be used for enhancement such as selecting for physical, cognitive, or behavioral traits. This risks deepening social inequality, creating a class of genetically privileged individuals, and enabling new forms of discrimination.
 - ◆ **Loss of Human Genetic Diversity:** Standardizing certain traits through synthetic design may shrink natural genetic variation, reducing resilience to diseases and altering evolutionary trajectories.
 - ◆ **Cultural, Religious, and Social Sensitivities:** Different societies hold varied moral views about modifying human life. Synthetic genome projects therefore lack universal ethical legitimacy and may provoke geopolitical and social tensions.
 - ◆ **Slippery Slope to Human Enhancement:** Even if initial goals are therapeutic, synthetic genome capabilities may gradually shift toward enhancement like intelligence, appearance, behavior etc, blurring the line between treatment and human redesign.

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● Biosecurity Concerns

- ◆ **Dual-Use Research Risks** : Technologies used to synthesize human genomes can also be repurposed to create harmful biological agents.
- ◆ **Unregulated or Private Experiments**: As DNA synthesis becomes cheaper and more accessible, private labs, DIY biology groups, or commercial entities may engage in experiments without proper oversight.
- ◆ **Gaps in Global Governance**: Current global norms such as the Biological Weapons Convention, WHO guidelines, or national biosafety rules were designed for genetically modified organisms or gene editing, **not for full genome synthesis**.
- ◆ **Potential for Unintended Biological Consequences**: A synthetically constructed human genome **may behave unpredictably**. Any accidental release or clinical misuse **could create unknown health or ecological risks**.
- ◆ **Geopolitical and Security Tensions**: Rapid advancements in some countries may trigger **competitive technological races**.
 - States may interpret synthetic genome breakthroughs as strategic advantages, creating mistrust and pressure to develop similar capabilities **intensifying global biosecurity anxiety**.

Conclusion:

Ethical dilemmas over human identity, consent, and inequality, alongside serious biosecurity risks and governance gaps, underline the need for globally harmonized norms. Going forward, responsible innovation guided by transparency, international cooperation, and strong regulatory frameworks will be essential to ensure that these transformative technologies evolve in a manner aligned with public trust and collective security.

34. Attitude plays a critical role in shaping ethical behaviour in individuals and institutions. Examine how attitudes influence ethical decision-making in public administration. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce by defining the attitude.
- Explain how its role in shaping behaviour of people and institutions.
- Delve into how Attitudes Influence Ethical Decision-Making
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

Attitude refers to a learned and relatively enduring tendency to **respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner toward people, situations, or institutions**.

- In public administration, attitudes of civil servants and political executives significantly shape ethical behaviour, as they influence perception of duty, interpretation of rules, and responses to moral dilemmas.
- Ethical governance depends not only on laws and codes but also on the underlying attitudes of those who implement them.

Body:

Role of Attitude in Shaping Ethical Behaviour

- **For Individuals**
 - ◆ **Moral Sensitivity and Ethical Awareness**: A positive ethical attitude makes individuals more sensitive to right-wrong distinctions and consequences of actions.
 - **For example**, a civil servant with a pro-integrity attitude refuses a bribe despite personal financial stress, recognizing its long-term harm to public trust.
- ◆ **Consistency between Values and Action**: Attitude acts as an internal compass that aligns beliefs with conduct, especially under pressure.
- **Example**: Mahatma Gandhi's attitude of truthfulness ensured ethical behaviour even during imprisonment and political adversity.
- ◆ **Resilience against Ethical Dilemmas and Temptations**: An ethical attitude builds moral courage to resist social pressure and personal gain.

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- **Example:** An employee acting as a whistleblower exposes corporate fraud despite fear of retaliation.
- **For Institutions**
 - ◆ **Ethical Culture and Organisational Climate:** Institutional attitude shapes norms, incentives, and “acceptable behaviour” within organisations.
 - **Example:** The Indian Supreme Court’s attitude of judicial independence reinforces fairness, transparency, and constitutional morality.
 - ◆ **Decision-Making and Policy Orientation:** An institution’s ethical attitude determines whether efficiency is pursued with fairness and accountability.
 - **Example:** The Election Commission of India’s strict attitude towards Model Code of Conduct violations strengthens electoral integrity.
 - ◆ **Public Trust and Legitimacy:** Ethical institutional attitude enhances credibility and citizen confidence.
 - **Example:** The CAG’s audit-oriented attitude promotes probity in public finance, strengthening trust in democratic oversight.
- **Attitude towards Ethics vs. Convenience:** Ethical decision-making often requires moral courage. A convenience-driven attitude results in silence or compromise in the face of wrongdoing.
 - ◆ For instance, ignoring illegal mining due to political pressure reflects an accommodative attitude rather than ethical commitment.
- **Attitude towards Citizens and Vulnerable Groups:** Empathetic attitudes foster inclusive governance, while apathy leads to exclusion and injustice.
 - ◆ **Sensitivity of district officials during disaster relief:** ensures equitable assistance; lack of empathy results in elite capture of resources.
- **Institutional Attitudes and Organisational Culture:** When institutions reward honesty and transparency, ethical conduct becomes the norm. Conversely, tolerance of corruption institutionalises unethical behaviour.
 - ◆ **Example:** Departments with strong internal vigilance and ethical leadership show lower instances of misconduct.

Conclusion:

Attitudes act as the moral compass of public administration, shaping how laws are interpreted and power is exercised. While legal frameworks provide structure, it is ethical attitudes, rooted in constitutional values, empathy, and integrity—that translate governance into ethical action. Therefore, attitude building through training, leadership example, and institutional reforms is essential for ethical public administration.

35. Accountability and transparency are foundational values of ethical governance. Analyze their ethical significance and explain how the absence of these values affects public trust in democratic institutions. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by explaining these values.
- In the body, Highlight the ethical significance of accountability and transparency.
- Analyse the impact of absence of these values and suggest measures to strengthen the same.
- Conclude accordingly.

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Introduction:

Accountability and transparency are core ethical principles that ensure power is exercised responsibly in a democracy. **Accountability implies that public officials are answerable for their actions, while transparency ensures openness in decision-making and access to information.** Together, they operationalize constitutional values such as rule of law, justice, and popular sovereignty, forming the moral backbone of ethical governance.

Body:

Ethical Significance of Accountability and Transparency

- **Prevention of Abuse of Power:** Transparency exposes decisions to public scrutiny, while accountability deters misuse of authority through sanctions and corrective action.
 - ◆ For example, mandatory asset declarations by public servants discourage accumulation of disproportionate assets.
- **Promotion of Integrity and Ethical Conduct:** When actions are visible and answerable, officials are more likely to act with honesty and fairness.
 - ◆ Example: Transparent procurement portals reduce discretion and ethical conflicts in public spending.
- **Enhancement of Informed Participation:** Transparency empowers citizens to make informed judgments and participate meaningfully in governance.
 - ◆ For instance, access to budgetary data enables civil society to question skewed policy priorities.
- **Strengthening Institutional Legitimacy:** Accountability mechanisms such as audits, parliamentary oversight, and vigilance institutions enhance moral legitimacy of the state
 - ◆ Reports of constitutional bodies help maintain checks and balances.

Impact of Absence of Accountability and Transparency on Public Trust

- **Erosion of Credibility and Trust Deficit:** Opaque decision-making creates suspicion of corruption and favoritism. **Citizens begin to doubt the intentions of public institutions.**

- **Normalization of Corruption and Impunity:** Lack of accountability fosters a culture where wrongdoing goes unpunished, weakening ethical standards.
 - ◆ For example, Delayed action on scams reduces faith in investigative agencies.
- **Alienation and Democratic Disengagement:** When people feel unheard or misled, voter apathy and cynicism increase, weakening democratic participation.
- **Undermining Rule of Law:** Selective accountability leads to perceptions of “rule by discretion” rather than rule of law, damaging democratic credibility.

Measures to Strengthen Accountability and Transparency to Enhance Public Trust

- **Strengthen Legal and Institutional Oversight:** Empower independent bodies like the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and Lokpal of India with adequate autonomy, staffing, and timely reporting to ensure effective checks on misuse of power.
- **Ensure Proactive Disclosure and Open Data:** Mandate suo motu disclosures under the Right to Information Act, 2005, publish budgets, contracts, performance dashboards, and beneficiary lists in machine-readable formats to reduce information asymmetry.
- **Digitisation and E-Governance Reforms:** Use end-to-end digital platforms (e-procurement, DBT, online grievance portals) to minimize discretion, create audit trails, and enable real-time monitoring—thereby curbing corruption and delays.
- **Time-Bound Grievance Redressal and Appeals:** Establish statutory timelines, escalation matrices, and public tracking of complaints to ensure responsiveness and deter administrative apathy.
- **Whistleblower Protection and Ethics Infrastructure:** Operationalize strong whistleblower safeguards, internal vigilance units, and ethics committees to encourage reporting without fear of retaliation.
- **Transparent Appointments and Transfers:** Adopt rule-based, publicly disclosed criteria for appointments, postings, and transfers to prevent arbitrariness and patronage.

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- Social Audits and Citizen Participation:** Institutionalize social audits, public hearings, and participatory budgeting to bring community oversight into governance processes.
- Capacity Building and Ethical Leadership:** Train officials in transparency norms, conflict-of-interest management, and records management; reward ethical leadership and integrity through recognition systems.
- Independent Evaluation and Public Communication:** Commission third-party evaluations and communicate findings clearly to citizens, closing the feedback loop and reinforcing trust.

Conclusion:

Accountability and transparency are **not merely administrative tools but ethical imperatives that sustain democratic trust**. Their absence corrodes institutional integrity and distances citizens from the state. Therefore, **strengthening social audits, independent oversight, proactive disclosure, and ethical leadership is essential to rebuild trust and ensure ethical governance in a democracy.**

36. "Emotional intelligence (EI) is as important as intellectual ability for effective leadership." Discuss this statement in the context of public service delivery. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by defining EI.
- In the body, argue its importance with suitable examples.
- Give measures to improve EI.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to understand, manage, and regulate one's own emotions while empathetically responding to the emotions of others. In public service, where leadership directly affects governance outcomes and citizen trust, emotional intelligence becomes as critical as intellectual competence for effective decision-making and humane administration.

Body:

Role of Emotional Intelligence in Enhancing Effective and Responsive Public Leadership

- Enhancing citizen-centric governance:** Public servants regularly engage with diverse and vulnerable populations. High emotional intelligence enables administrators to understand citizens' needs, grievances, and emotions beyond procedural formalities.
 - Example:** District collectors handling disaster relief or pandemic response require empathy and sensitivity to public distress alongside administrative efficiency.
- Improved decision-making under pressure:** Governance often involves complex situations with competing interests, limited information, and public scrutiny. Emotional regulation helps leaders remain calm, avoid impulsive decisions, and balance empathy with objectivity.
 - Example:** During crises like COVID-19 lockdowns, emotionally intelligent leadership helped balance public health concerns with humanitarian considerations.
- Conflict resolution and consensus building:** Public administration frequently involves negotiations—between communities, institutions, or political actors. Leaders with high EI can manage dissent, defuse tensions, and build consensus.
 - Example:** Effective district magistrates often resolve land acquisition or law-and-order issues through dialogue rather than coercion.
- Ethical leadership and public trust:** Emotional intelligence reinforces integrity, compassion, and moral judgement—key attributes of ethical governance. Leaders who understand the emotional impact of their decisions are less likely to act arbitrarily or abuse power.
 - Example:** Civil servants displaying empathy in welfare delivery enhance trust in state institutions.
- Motivation and team management within bureaucracy:** Public organisations depend on

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teamwork and morale. Emotionally intelligent leaders **inspire motivation, manage stress, and create inclusive work environments**, leading to higher administrative efficiency.

- ◆ **Example:** Successful district administrations often reflect strong people-management skills rather than mere technical expertise.
- **Adapting to complexity and change:** In an era of rapid socio-economic change, administrators must handle uncertainty, public pressure, and policy transitions. EI **enables flexibility, resilience, and adaptive leadership essential for governance reforms.**

Measures to Improve Emotional Intelligence (EI) in Public Service

- **Institutionalised Training and Capacity Building:** Regular inclusion of Emotional Intelligence modules in civil service training (LBSNAA, State ATIs) can enhance self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills. **Case-based learning, role-play, and behavioural simulations should be integral components.**
- **Experiential Learning and Field Exposure:** Field postings, grassroots interactions, and community engagement programs help officers understand diverse social realities, strengthening empathy and emotional regulation in real-life situations.
- **Mentoring and Feedback Mechanisms:** Structured mentoring by senior officers and **360-degree feedback systems** can help civil servants reflect on behaviour, communication style, and leadership effectiveness.
- **Stress Management and Mental Well-being Support:** Regular workshops on stress management, mindfulness, and emotional resilience can prevent burnout and enhance decision-making under pressure.
- **Ethics and Value-Based Training: Integrating ethical reasoning, empathy, and emotional awareness** into ethics and integrity modules strengthens moral judgment and compassionate governance.
- **Performance Evaluation Linked to Behavioural Competencies:** Including EI-related indicators such as teamwork, responsiveness, and leadership in performance appraisals can institutionalise emotionally intelligent conduct.

Conclusion:

While intellectual ability equips public servants with analytical and technical competence, emotional intelligence enables them to apply this knowledge with empathy, fairness, and wisdom. **In public service, where decisions directly impact human lives, effective leadership demands not just intellectual excellence but emotional maturity.** Together, **IQ and EI form the foundation of responsive, ethical, and people-centric governance.**

37. How does sound corporate governance contribute to ethical business practices and long-term sustainability of organizations? Illustrate with suitable examples. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by highlighting elements of sound corporate governance.
- Explain how it contributes to ethical business practice and long term sustainability.
- Conclude accordingly

Introduction:

Sound corporate governance refers to a framework of rules, practices, and processes through which a company is directed and controlled.

- It encompasses **transparency, accountability, fairness, ethical conduct, and responsibility towards stakeholders.**
- In an era marked by corporate scandals, climate risks, and rising stakeholder expectations, strong corporate governance has become central to ensuring ethical business conduct and long-term organisational sustainability.

Body:

How Sound Business Governance Ensures Ethical Business Practices:

- **Transparency In Decision-Making:** It ensures transparent disclosure of financial statements, board decisions, and risk exposures, enables investors and stakeholders to make informed judgments and builds long-term trust in the organisation.

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- **Accountability of Management:** Clear allocation of roles and responsibilities ensures that management is answerable for its actions and performance.
 - ◆ Mechanisms such as **performance evaluations, audits, and board oversight** prevent concentration of power and **reduce the risk of mismanagement**.
- **Protection Of Shareholder And Stakeholder Interests:** Good governance **balances the interests of shareholders with those of employees, customers, creditors, and society at large**.
 - ◆ It ensures minority shareholder protection, fair treatment, and equitable decision-making, preventing dominance by controlling interests.
- **Ethical Leadership And Integrity In Operations:** Ethical conduct forms the moral foundation of corporate governance.
 - ◆ **Codes of conduct**, whistle-blower mechanisms, and conflict-of-interest policies promote honesty, integrity, and ethical decision-making across all levels of management.
- **Effective Board Structure And Independence:** A well-composed **board with independent directors** enhances **objectivity, strategic oversight, and risk monitoring**.
 - ◆ Independent directors play a crucial role in safeguarding stakeholder interests and ensuring unbiased governance.
- **Regulatory Compliance And Long-Term Value Creation:** Adherence to legal and regulatory frameworks laid down by institutions such as **SEBI** and global standards like the **OECD Principles of Corporate Governance** ensures stability, investor confidence, and sustainable long-term growth rather than short-term profit maximisation.

How it Ensure Long Term Sustainability of Organizations:

- **Ensures Long-Term Financial Stability And Risk Management:** Sound corporate governance promotes **prudent financial practices, strong internal controls, and risk assessment mechanisms**, helping firms withstand economic shocks.
 - ◆ **Example:** Companies like **HDFC Bank** maintained stability during financial crises due to strong

- governance, risk management, and conservative lending practices.
- **Builds Investor Confidence And Ensures Capital Access:** Transparent governance and accountability attract long-term investors **by reducing information asymmetry and perceived risk**.
 - ◆ **Example:** Firms with strong governance standards consistently attract foreign institutional investment, as seen in well-governed Indian blue-chip companies.
- **Encourages Ethical Conduct And Reputational Sustainability:** Ethical governance frameworks **prevent fraud, corruption, and reputational damage that can erode long-term value**.
 - ◆ **Example:** The **Tata Group's** ethical code has sustained public trust for over a century, reinforcing brand credibility even during crises.
- **Enhances Adaptability And Long-Term Strategic Vision:** Well-governed organisations **focus on long-term value creation rather than short-term profits**, enabling better adaptation to technological, regulatory, and market changes.
 - ◆ **Example:** Companies investing early in ESG compliance and renewable technologies have gained competitive advantage amid global sustainability transitions.
- **Prevents Systemic Failures And Corporate Scandals:** Effective board oversight, independent audits, and whistle-blower mechanisms reduce the likelihood of governance failures that can threaten organisational survival.
 - ◆ **Example:** The collapse of firms like **Satyam** highlights how weak governance can undermine long-term sustainability.
- **Strengthens Stakeholder Trust And Social Legitimacy:** By balancing the interests of shareholders, employees, consumers, and society, corporate governance fosters inclusive growth and social acceptance.

Conclusion:

Sound corporate governance acts as the ethical and institutional backbone of sustainable business. By fostering transparency, accountability, and responsible leadership,

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it ensures that organisations not only pursue profitability but also uphold social trust and long-term resilience. In an increasingly complex and interconnected global economy, robust corporate governance is not merely desirable—it is indispensable for sustainable and ethical business growth.

Case Study

38. You are the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) of a flood-affected district. Thousands of people have been displaced in the recent floods. The state government has sent an emergency relief fund that is significantly lower than what is required. You are instructed to distribute it “based on urgency and vulnerability.”

However, you face the following situation:

1. Village A is politically influential. The local MLA pressures you to allot a major share of relief funds there. He hints that “future cooperation” will depend on your decision.
2. Village B is severely affected, but it has poor road connectivity. Delivering aid there will take extra time and resources.
3. Village C has fewer casualties but houses a large migrant labour population that lacks documents required for official relief distribution.
4. Your field staff privately suggests that you divert some funds for logistics (vehicles, fuel, meals). Official guidelines prohibit this, but without these expenses, delivery to remote areas will be delayed.
5. The media is reporting that the administration is “slow and careless,” adding further pressure.

You must decide how to allocate the limited resources **fairly, efficiently, and ethically**, while handling political pressure, administrative constraints, and humanitarian concerns.

Question:

1. Identify the major ethical issues involved in this situation.
2. As the SDM, outline the options available to you. Evaluate each option using ethical principles.

3. What would be your final course of action? Justify your decision with proper reasoning, referencing ethical theories and principles of public service.

Introduction:

The case presents a classic administrative dilemma of **“Distributive Justice under Scarcity.”** As the SDM, the core challenge is to balance limited resources against infinite needs while navigating political pressure, procedural hurdles, and humanitarian urgency. The situation tests the officer’s **emotional intelligence, integrity, and adherence to the spirit of the law.**

Stakeholders Involved

- **The State:** (SDM/Administration) - Duty to serve and uphold the law.
- **The Victims:**
 - ◆ Village A (Politically connected).
 - ◆ Village B (Remote, severely affected).
 - ◆ Village C (Migrants, undocumented).
- **The Political Executive:** Local MLA (Exerting undue influence).
- **Field Staff:** Facing logistical constraints.
- **Media:** Acting as a watchdog/pressure group.

1. Identify the major ethical issues involved in this situation.

- **Political Neutrality vs. Political Pressure (Village A):** The MLA’s demand to prioritize Village A violates the principle of **impartiality**.
 - ◆ Succumbing to the MLA ensures “future cooperation” (career safety) but compromises the Civil Service value of political neutrality.
 - ◆ Prioritizing the influential over the needy violates the fundamental maxim of **“Antyodaya”** (serving the last person first).
- **Efficiency vs. Equity (Village B):** Reaching Village B is resource-heavy and time-consuming. From a purely utilitarian perspective (maximum good for maximum people), one might argue to skip B to save resources for others.
 - ◆ **John Rawls’ theory suggests we must prioritize the “worst off.”** Village B is severely affected; ignoring them due to logistical cost is efficient but unethical and inequitable.

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- Letter of the Law vs. Spirit of the Law (Village C):** Migrants lack documents. Official rules likely prohibit aid to undocumented persons to prevent leakage.
 - Denying aid to starving migrants because of “missing paper” is an example of Weberian “**Goal Displacement**” (where rules become more important than the goal of saving lives).
 - The ethical demand here is **Human Rights**, which supersedes bureaucratic procedure during a disaster.
- Means vs. Ends (Logistics Funding):** Staff suggests diverting relief funds for fuel/vehicles (illegal means) to ensure timely delivery (noble end).
 - Deontological view:** Diverting funds is misappropriation/corruption, regardless of the intent. It violates **fiscal rectitude**.
 - Teleological view:** If funds aren’t diverted, aid won’t reach, and people might die. The end justifies the means.
- Crisis of Accountability vs. Media Perception:** The media calls the administration “slow.”
 - There is pressure to perform “visible” relief (e.g., quick distribution in Village A) to satisfy the media, versus the “invisible” hard work required to reach Village B.
 - The ethical test is to remain **stoic** and focused on duty rather than playing to the gallery.

2. As the SDM, outline the options available to you. Evaluate each option using ethical principles.

Option 1: Follow the path of “Strict Adherence & Political Safety”

Action: Allocate major funds to Village A (as per MLA’s wish), skip Village B (due to logistical costs), and deny aid to Village C (due to lack of documents). Strictly refuse staff request to use funds for logistics.

Demerits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Violation of Impartiality: Succumbing to political pressure erodes the neutrality of the civil service. Exclusion Errors: The most vulnerable (Village B & C) are left behind, violating the principle of Antyodaya. Moral Dissonance: Leads to a “Crisis of Conscience” for failing in humanitarian duty.
Ethical Principle	Legalism (Stick to the letter of the law) overrides Humanism. It represents a failure of Compassion.

Option 2: The “Ends Justify Means” Approach

Action: Ignore the MLA entirely. Divert relief funds illegally to pay for fuel/vehicles to reach Village B. Distribute aid to Village C without any documentation.

Evaluation	Analysis
Merits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Social Justice: Aid reaches the most needy and isolated populations. Compassion: Prioritizes human life over bureaucracy.
Demerits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Fiscal Impropriety: Diverting funds meant for “relief” to “logistics” is technically misappropriation, inviting departmental inquiry. Lack of Accountability: Distributing aid without documentation (even if noble) creates loopholes for corruption and leakage. Insubordination: Risk of conflict with the political executive affecting future administration.
Ethical Principle	Utilitarianism (Greatest good for the greatest number) but violates Deontology (Duty to follow rules/process).

Option 3: The “Constructive & Principled” Approach

(Selected Course of Action)

Action:

- Village A (Political Pressure):** Conduct a rapid, transparent needs assessment. Allocate funds only in proportion to actual damage. Politely but firmly inform the MLA that strict central monitoring prevents discretionary allocation.

Evaluation	Analysis
Merits	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Career Safety: Maintains good relations with the political executive. Procedural Safety: No audit objections regarding fund diversion or undocumented beneficiaries. Speed: Quick distribution in accessible areas satisfies the “visible” metrics.

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- Village B (Logistics):** Instead of diverting funds illegally, use Emergency Powers under the Disaster Management Act to requisition private vehicles/boats. Alternatively, partner with local NGOs/CSR initiatives to cover logistical costs (fuel/food for staff).
- Village C (Migrants):** Use discretionary powers to allow "Provisional Identification". Verify identities through a Panchnama (witness statement) by local elders or school teachers, ensuring aid reaches them under the "Right to Life" (Article 21), while maintaining a paper trail for audits.

Evaluation		Analysis
Merits	1. Integrity: Resists political pressure using objective data. 2. Inclusiveness: Ensures Village B and C receive aid through innovative, legal means. 3. Probity: Maintains fiscal discipline by finding alternative funding for logistics (NGOs/Requisition) rather than misuse.	
Demerits	1. High Effort: Requires significant coordination and extra work compared to Option 1. 2. Political Friction: The MLA may be unhappy, but the decision is defensible by law.	
Ethical Principle	Balances Weberian Rationality (Rules) with Gandhian Talisman (Empathy). Upholds Public Service Objectivity.	

Option 3 is the most ethical and administratively sound choice. It satisfies the demand of the question to balance fairness, efficiency, and ethics. It ensures that **Process (Rules)** does not become the enemy of the **Purpose (Relief)**.

3. What would be your final course of action? Justify your decision with proper reasoning, referencing ethical theories and principles of public service.

Step 1: Rapid Evidence-Based Triage (Addressing Village A & MLA)

- Action:** I will immediately deploy field teams to conduct a rapid needs assessment and categorize villages based on severity (High/Medium/Low). I will allocate funds strictly according to this objective data.

◆ I will politely but firmly inform the MLA that relief distribution is subject to central audit and must align with damage statistics.

- Justification:** This upholds the **Nolan Principle of Objectivity**, ensuring decisions are based on merit rather than patronage. It aligns with **Deontology (Duty Ethics)**, where my primary duty is to the Constitution and the "Rule of Law," not to the political executive's personal interests.

Step 2: Innovative Resource Mobilization (Addressing Village B & Logistics)

- Action:** To solve the logistics crisis without illegal fund diversion, I will invoke **Sections 34 & 65 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005**, which allow requisitioning private vehicles and boats for rescue.

◆ Simultaneously, I will partner with local NGOs and Civil Society Organizations to sponsor fuel and food for the field staff.

- Justification:** This approach respects **John Rawls' Difference Principle**, ensuring that the "least advantaged" (remote Village B) receive priority despite the high cost. Using legal provisions (DM Act) instead of diverting funds upholds **Probity in Governance** and fiscal rectitude.

Step 3: Compassionate Bureaucracy (Addressing Village C & Migrants)

- Action:** I will authorize a "Provisional Beneficiary List" for the undocumented migrants.

◆ Their identity and loss will be verified through a *Panchnama* (witness statement) signed by local elders, ASHA workers, or school teachers. I will ensure this process is video-recorded to maintain a transparent audit trail.

- Justification:** This adheres to **Gandhiji's Talisman** and the principle of **Antyodaya**, serving the most vulnerable first. It prioritizes **Human Rights (Article 21 - Right to Life)** over bureaucratic formalism ("Red Tapisim"), treating the migrants as ends in themselves (**Kant's Categorical Imperative**) rather than ignoring them due to a lack of paperwork.

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Step 4: Media and Staff Management

- **Action:** I will hold daily evening press briefings to share data on villages reached and funds distributed.
 - ◆ I will also assure my field staff that I take full administrative responsibility for the *Panchnama* decision, allowing them to work without fear of future inquiries.
- **Justification:** Transparency acts as an antidote to rumors, satisfying the ethical demand for **Accountability**. Protecting subordinates demonstrates **Emotional Intelligence** and leadership, preventing “bureaucratic paralysis” caused by fear of decision-making.

Conclusion:

In a resource-scarce crisis, the **ethical path lies in balancing compassion with legality and resisting political pressure through objective, transparent action**. By prioritizing the most vulnerable while upholding procedural integrity, the SDM ensures both justice and accountability. This approach reflects **true public service—where rules serve humanity, not replace it**.

39. You have recently taken charge as the District Collector of a semi-urban district dealing with frequent encroachment disputes and rising public expectations from the administration. Soon after assuming office, you notice that one of your junior officers, Raghav, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), has gained significant popularity on social media. He regularly posts updates of inspections, public interactions, and enforcement actions, portraying an image of an energetic and proactive officer. However, you gradually observe that his posts often include videos of surprise inspections, images of junior staff standing tensely behind him, and clips of punitive actions such as sealing shops—sometimes with strong captions like *“Action speaks louder than words.”* One such video of sealing a commercial establishment goes viral, drawing public praise but also criticism that procedural fairness was not clearly shown.

Colleagues quietly mention that this public display of authority may create more fear than trust. Shopkeepers

tell a senior police officer that they hesitate to visit the SDM office, worried that ordinary grievances may be recorded and posted online. An informal complaint from a local MLA describes the SDM’s conduct as “high-handed” and motivated by publicity. An anonymous petition also reaches your office alleging inadequate notice in the sealing operation, although the official records show non-compliance.

You realise that the issue does not involve an obvious legal violation but presents subtle ethical dilemmas, the line between transparency and intimidation, the responsible use of social media, the dignity of individuals during enforcement, and the need for young officers to balance enthusiasm with institutional propriety.

As District Collector, you must decide how to address the situation while preserving administrative integrity, maintaining the morale of a promising officer, and ensuring that citizens do not feel humiliated or threatened by the misuse, intentional or unintentional, of official power.

Question:

1. Identify the core ethical issues involved in this case. Explain their relevance to public administration.
2. Do you think the SDM’s use of social media, though legal, raises ethical concerns? Justify your answer using principles of public service, propriety, and dignity of individuals.
3. As the District Collector, what steps will you take to address the situation in a fair, balanced, and constructive manner? Provide short-term and long-term measures.
4. Suggest a code of conduct or guidelines for civil servants’ use of social media that balances transparency, accountability, and ethical restraint.

Introduction:

This case highlights an emerging ethical challenge in public administration, the use of social media by civil servants in exercising authority. **While transparency and public engagement are desirable, excessive public display of enforcement actions risks intimidation, erosion of dignity, and loss of public trust.** The dilemma lies in balancing visibility

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with restraint, and individual enthusiasm with institutional propriety.

Stakeholders Involved:

- **District Collector (Self)** : Responsible for administrative integrity and institutional culture
- **SDM (Raghav)** : A young, enthusiastic officer seeking impact and visibility
- **Citizens & Shopkeepers** : Subjects of enforcement actions and public perception
- **Junior Staff** : Subordinates whose dignity and morale may be affected
- **Political Executive (MLA)** : Concerned about conduct and public backlash
- **Media & Social Media Audience** : Amplifiers of administrative actions
- **District Administration as an Institution** : Reputation, trust, and legitimacy.

1. Identify The Core Ethical Issues Involved And Their Relevance

- **Transparency vs Intimidation:** While sharing administrative actions promotes transparency, repeatedly showcasing surprise inspections and punitive actions can create fear rather than trust.
 - ◆ Public administration must remain approachable and citizen-friendly, not coercive.
- **Propriety in Use of Authority:** Public display of authority, especially with strong captions and visuals of tense subordinates, risks turning governance into spectacle.
 - ◆ This violates the principle of propriety expected from civil servants.
- **Dignity of Individuals:** Viral videos of sealing shops or showing anxious staff may humiliate individuals.
 - ◆ This conflicts with Kant's principle of treating people as ends in themselves, not as means for publicity.
- **Personal Branding vs Institutional Neutrality:** Overprojection of individual action weakens institutional character and undermines Weberian bureaucratic neutrality, where authority flows from office, not personality.

- **Procedural Fairness vs Public Perception:** Even if legal procedures were followed, justice must also be seen to be done. Perceived high-handedness erodes public confidence in administration.

2. Does The Sdm's Use Of Social Media Raise Ethical Concerns? Justify

The SDM's conduct raises ethical concerns despite being legally permissible.

From the perspective of public service ethics:

- **Propriety:** Celebratory or aggressive portrayal of enforcement actions violates restraint expected of public office.
- **Dignity:** Citizens and staff appear as subjects of power rather than rights-bearing individuals.
- **Objectivity:** Selective depiction of actions may distort reality and promote fear-based compliance.
- **Compassion:** Citizens hesitate to approach the SDM's office, undermining trust and accessibility.

According to the **Nolan Principle of Integrity**, public power must not be used for personal visibility. Applying **Gandhiji's Talisman**, if the weakest citizen feels intimidated rather than empowered, the conduct fails the ethical test. Thus, while legal, the conduct is ethically problematic.

3. Steps to Address The Situation

- **Short-Term Measures**
 - ◆ **Confidential Counselling**
 - Hold a one-to-one discussion with the SDM, appreciating his enthusiasm while sensitising him to the unintended consequences of fear-based visibility. This reflects emotional intelligence and ethical leadership.
 - ◆ **Immediate Advisory on Social Media Use**
 - Direct the SDM to avoid posting punitive actions, images of subordinates or citizens, and strong captions. Encourage informational and service-oriented communication instead.
 - ◆ **Reinforcing Procedural Transparency**
 - Ensure future enforcement actions clearly document notice, hearing, and compliance processes to reinforce natural justice and public confidence.

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- **Long-Term Measures**

- ◆ **District-Level Social Media Guidelines**

- Frame clear SOPs for official social media use, encouraging institutional accounts over personal handles for enforcement communication.

- ◆ **Capacity Building and Mentorship**

- Conduct workshops on ethical communication, power restraint, and citizen-centric governance, especially for young officers.

- ◆ **Promote a Culture of Quiet Effectiveness**

- Reward outcomes and service delivery rather than optics or virality, strengthening institutional credibility.

4. Suggested Code Of Conduct For Civil Servants' Use Of Social Media

Foundational Principles

- **Public Service First:** Official social media use should prioritise public interest and public service, and should not be used for personal popularity, branding, or self-promotion.
- **Dignity and Respect:** It is advisable that all citizens, subordinates, and stakeholders featured directly or indirectly are treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of alleged violations.
- **Institutional Supremacy over Individual Visibility:** Administrative actions should be projected as actions of the institution rather than of individual officers, as excessive personal visibility may erode institutional trust.

Suggested Objectives of Official Social Media Use

- **Informative, Not Performative:** Social media communication should ideally focus on policy awareness, service delivery updates, citizen facilitation mechanisms, and outcomes, rather than on performative or force-centred actions.
- **Outcome-Based Communication:** Officers are encouraged to emphasise compliance achieved, public benefits realised, and corrective measures taken, instead of highlighting punitive moments or surprise actions.

Suggested Restrictions on Content

- **Avoid Live or Sensationalised Enforcement:** It is recommended that surprise inspections, raids, demolitions, or sealing operations are not live-streamed or dramatized. If enforcement visuals are shared, they should preferably be post-facto, anonymised, and adequately contextualised.
- **Protection of Identity and Presumption of Innocence:** Care should be taken to avoid revealing faces, names, shop boards, or other identifying markers unless legally mandated. Language used should not imply guilt prior to completion of due process.
- **Avoid Display of Subordinate Intimidation:** Content should not depict junior staff in situations of fear, silence, or humiliation. Leadership communication is expected to convey professionalism and confidence rather than coercion.

Conclusion:

In the digital age, **authority amplified without restraint can unintentionally become intimidation**. Ethical governance requires balancing transparency with empathy and visibility with humility. By guiding the SDM constructively rather than punitively, the District Collector preserves institutional integrity while nurturing a promising officer. **True public service lies not in online applause, but in sustained public trust.**

40. Ramesh Verma is the District Mining Officer (DMO) in a mineral-rich but economically backward district. The region has long struggled with illegal sand and stone mining, controlled by local contractors with strong political backing. These activities cause environmental damage, loss of state revenue, and frequent accidents involving villagers.

Soon after joining, Ramesh noticed that illegal mining continued openly at night despite repeated complaints. When he ordered surprise inspections and seizure of vehicles, he received a phone call from a local legislator, who advised him to "go slow" in the interest of maintaining social peace and employment. Informally, Ramesh was told by senior colleagues that previous officers who acted strictly were transferred within months.

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Over time, a clear nexus emerged. Local politicians protected mining operators, the police avoided registering cases, and criminal groups ensured intimidation of villagers who protested. In return, illegal operators funded election campaigns and paid regular bribes to officials at multiple levels. Files related to mining violations were deliberately delayed or diluted in the district offices.

One evening, a serious accident occurred when an overloaded mining truck hit a group of villagers, killing two people. Public anger erupted, and media attention focused on the administration's failure. Political leaders blamed "rogue elements" and pressured Ramesh to certify that the truck was operating legally.

Ramesh now faces a critical ethical dilemma. If he records the truth and initiates strict action, he risks political pressure, personal threats, and possible transfer. If he compromises, he becomes part of the political-bureaucratic-criminal nexus, undermining the rule of law, environmental protection, and public trust.

As a public servant, Ramesh must decide how to uphold integrity, legality, and accountability in an environment where institutional support appears weak and vested interests are deeply entrenched.

1. Identify the ethical issues involved in the above case.
2. How does the political-bureaucratic-criminal nexus affect public interest, environmental governance, and the credibility of public institutions?
3. What should be the most ethically appropriate course of action in this case? Suggest both immediate administrative steps and long-term institutional reforms to prevent the recurrence of such political-bureaucratic-criminal nexuses.

Stakeholders Involved

- **Ramesh Verma (District Mining Officer)** – Ethical responsibility to enforce law and protect public interest.
- **Local Villagers** – Victims of environmental degradation, accidents, and loss of livelihood.
- **Illegal Mining Contractors / Criminal Groups** – Beneficiaries of the nexus, driven by profit.

- **Political Representatives** – Protectors of illegal activities for electoral and financial gains.
- **Police and District Administration** – Enforcement agencies whose inaction weakens governance.
- **State Government and Exchequer** – Suffer revenue loss and reputational damage.
- **Environment and Future Generations** – Long-term ecological costs of illegal mining.

1. Ethical Issues Involved

- **Conflict between Ethics and Self-Interest:** Ramesh faces a dilemma between personal safety/career security and ethical public service.
- **Misuse of Power and Political Interference:** Pressure to certify false records shows abuse of political authority.
- **Violation of Rule of Law:** Selective enforcement, police inaction, and delayed files undermine legality and equality before law.
- **Corruption and Institutional Nexus:** Bribes, intimidation, and political funding reflect a deep political-bureaucratic-criminal nexus.
- **Neglect of Environmental Ethics and Human Life:** Illegal mining causes ecological damage and fatal accidents, violating sustainable development principles.

2. Impact of the Political-Bureaucratic-Criminal Nexus

Impact on Public Interest

- **Loss of State Revenue:** Illegal mining bypasses royalty payments, environmental compensation, and taxes, leading to significant revenue loss for the state. These funds could otherwise be used for welfare schemes, healthcare, education, and infrastructure in backward districts.
 - ◆ Continuous illegal extraction at night reflects systemic leakage of public resources into private hands.
- **Threat to Life and Safety of Villagers:** Unregulated mining leads to overloaded vehicles, unsafe roads, and abandoned pits, directly endangering local communities. Accidents become frequent due to lack of safety norms.

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- ◆ The fatal accident involving an overloaded mining truck killing villagers is a direct consequence of regulatory failure.
- **Marginalization of the Poor and Voiceless:** Villagers, daily wage workers, and tribal communities lack political voice and are often threatened into silence. Their complaints are ignored, reinforcing social injustice.
 - ◆ Intimidation of protesting villagers by criminal groups shows how power asymmetry suppresses the weakest sections.

Impact on Environmental Governance

- **Ecological Degradation:** Illegal sand and stone mining causes riverbed erosion, lowering of groundwater levels, soil instability, and destruction of aquatic ecosystems. These impacts are often irreversible.
 - ◆ Excessive sand mining weakens riverbanks, increasing flood risks during monsoons.
- **Undermining of Environmental Laws:** When enforcement agencies collude with violators, environmental regulations exist only on paper. Clearances, inspections, and penalties become procedural formalities rather than safeguards.
 - ◆ Deliberate dilution of violation files defeats the purpose of sustainable mining policies.

Impact on Credibility of Public Institutions

- **Perception of Partisan Administration:** Police and officials appear biased towards politically connected offenders, damaging the principle of neutrality. Law enforcement becomes selective rather than universal.
- **Erosion of Public Trust:** Citizens lose faith in democratic institutions when wrongdoing goes unpunished. This creates cynicism, reduced cooperation with authorities, and democratic disengagement.
- **Culture of Fear and Silence:** Honest officers, activists, and citizens fear retaliation, leading to normalization of corruption and ethical decay within institutions.
 - ◆ Past officers being transferred for strict action reinforces a message that integrity is penalized.

3. Most Ethically Appropriate Course of Action:

The most ethical course of action for Ramesh Verma must **balance personal courage with institutional prudence**,

ensuring truth, legality, and public welfare while minimizing avoidable risks.

Immediate Administrative Steps

- **Adhere to Truth and Rule of Law:** Ramesh must refuse to certify false records and ensure that facts related to the accident and illegal mining are accurately documented. Truthfulness is a non-negotiable ethical value in public service.
 - ◆ False certification would not only shield offenders but also implicate Ramesh in criminal negligence and moral wrongdoing.
- **Maintain Accurate Official Records:** Proper documentation ensures transparency and creates an institutional trail that can enable future inquiry and accountability.
 - ◆ Correct seizure records, inspection reports, and accident details strengthen the case against illegal operators.
- **Seek Institutional Safeguards:** Ramesh should formally report political pressure to senior officers, vigilance authorities, or departmental heads. Seeking **written instructions** prevents verbal coercion and shifts responsibility upward.
 - ◆ Written orders act as ethical and legal shields for honest officers.
- **Multi-Agency Coordination:** Illegal mining is a multi-dimensional problem involving environment, policing, revenue, and judiciary. Coordinated action reduces individual vulnerability and improves effectiveness.
 - ◆ Joint raids with police and environmental authorities reduce scope for political isolation of one officer.
- **Victim-Centric Response:** Immediate relief, compensation, and legal support for victims' families must be ensured. Ethical governance prioritizes human life over administrative convenience.
 - ◆ Timely compensation restores public faith and signals compassion in administration.

Long-Term Institutional Reforms

- **Independent Oversight Mechanisms:** Creation of autonomous mining regulators and use of technology

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like GPS tracking, drones, and satellite imagery can reduce human discretion and corruption.

- ◆ **Digital monitoring** makes illegal operations traceable and transparent.

● **Protection for Ethical Officers:** Fixed tenure, whistleblower protection laws, and witness security are essential to encourage moral courage among civil servants.

- ◆ Officers are more likely to act ethically when integrity is institutionally protected.

● **Police and Political Reforms:** Reducing political interference in policing ensures impartial law enforcement and restores rule of law.

- ◆ Independent police leadership improves enforcement against powerful offenders.

● **Community Participation:** Social audits, local vigilance committees, and citizen reporting platforms empower villagers and reduce fear.

- ◆ When communities become watchdogs, illegal activities are harder to conceal.

Conclusion :

"The true measure of governance is not power exercised, but trust earned." Ethical governance demands **integrity, courage, and commitment to constitutional values**, even under pressure. While individual honesty is vital, sustainable solutions lie in systemic reforms that dismantle the political–bureaucratic–criminal nexus and restore public trust.

41. Ananya Sharma is the Deputy Manager in a large public sector organization responsible for infrastructure development. The organisation has a strong technical reputation but suffers from a toxic work culture. Senior officers often shout at subordinates during meetings, take credit for juniors' work, and discourage dissenting opinions. Long working hours without recognition have become the norm, leading to low morale and high staff turnover.

Ananya observes that talented young officers hesitate to share innovative ideas due to fear of humiliation. Women employees, in particular, feel uncomfortable raising concerns, as informal networks dominated by senior

male officers control decision-making. Although there is no explicit harassment, the environment is psychologically unsafe and demotivating.

Recently, a capable junior officer, Ravi, made a small procedural error in a project file. Instead of constructive feedback, he was publicly reprimanded by a senior officer during a meeting. Deeply demoralized, Ravi applied for transfer, citing "personal reasons." Similar incidents have become common, affecting productivity and team cohesion.

As a mid-level officer, Ananya is respected by her team but has limited authority over senior officials. She believes that such a toxic work culture not only harms employee well-being but also compromises efficiency, innovation, and public service delivery.

Ananya now faces a dilemma: whether to remain silent to protect her own career progression or take steps—formal or informal—to improve workplace culture, promote dignity, and uphold ethical values within the organization.

1. Identify the ethical issues involved in the above case related to workplace culture. How do such issues affect employee morale, productivity, and organizational effectiveness?
2. What ethical dilemmas does Ananya face as a mid-level officer in addressing toxic workplace practices? Discuss the possible courses of action available to her, highlighting their merits and limitations.
3. How can ethical leadership and positive organizational culture contribute to improved governance and employee well-being? Suggest measures to promote a healthy and inclusive work environment in public institutions.

Stakeholders Involved

- **Ananya Sharma (Deputy Manager)** – Mid-level officer facing ethical and professional dilemmas.
- **Junior Officers and Employees (including Ravi)** – Direct victims of toxic work culture, humiliation, and lack of psychological safety.
- **Senior Officers/Management** – Those exercising authority and shaping workplace culture through their behavior.

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- **Women Employees** – Particularly affected due to informal power structures and lack of inclusive spaces.
- **The Organization/Public Institution** – Whose efficiency, credibility, and service delivery are impacted.
- **Citizens/Public** – Indirect stakeholders affected by reduced efficiency and poor quality of public service delivery.

1. Ethical Issues Involved and Their Impact

Ethical Issues Involved

- **Abuse of Authority:** Senior officers misuse power by humiliating subordinates and discouraging dissent, violating principles of dignity and respect.
- **Lack of Empathy and Emotional Intelligence:** Public reprimands and disregard for employee well-being reflect emotional insensitivity and poor leadership ethics.
- **Suppression of Ethical Voice and Innovation:** Fear of ridicule discourages honest feedback, creativity, and ethical reporting.
- **Gender Insensitivity and Exclusion:** Informal male-dominated networks marginalize women and restrict equal participation.
- **Erosion of Professional Ethics:** Credit-taking and blame-shifting undermine fairness, trust, and integrity.

Impact on Morale, Productivity, and Organizational Effectiveness

- **Low Morale:** When employees work in an environment where fear, humiliation, and lack of appreciation are common, their motivation gradually declines. Over time, this weakens their sense of belonging and commitment to the organisation.
- **Reduced Productivity:** A demotivated workforce is less likely to take initiative or perform efficiently. Employees begin to work only to meet minimum requirements rather than striving for excellence, ultimately reducing overall productivity.
- **High Attrition and Talent Loss:** A toxic work environment pushes capable and sincere officers to seek transfers or alternative opportunities. **Frequent turnover** results in the loss of experienced personnel, disrupts continuity in administration, and increases the burden on remaining staff.

- **Decline in Innovation and Creativity:** When employees fear criticism or humiliation, they avoid sharing new ideas or suggesting improvements. This suppresses creativity and prevents institutions from evolving, adapting, or improving service delivery.
- **Weakened Public Service Delivery:** Poor morale and low motivation directly affect the quality of public services. Delays, inefficiency, and lack of responsiveness become common, ultimately harming citizens who depend on effective governance.

2. Ethical Dilemmas Faced by Ananya and Possible Courses of Action

A. Ethical Dilemmas Faced by Ananya

- **Integrity vs Career Security:** Ananya faces a conflict between **upholding ethical values such as fairness, dignity, and justice** and safeguarding her own career progression.
 - ◆ Speaking against toxic practices may invite retaliation, while silence ensures personal safety but compromises moral integrity.
- **Duty to Organization vs Duty to Colleagues:** While she owes loyalty to the institution, she also has a moral responsibility towards her colleagues who are being humiliated and demoralized.
 - ◆ Balancing institutional loyalty with compassion for co-workers poses a serious ethical challenge.
- **Conformity vs Moral Courage:** The prevailing culture rewards silence and conformity. Standing against unethical practices requires moral courage but may lead to isolation, professional hostility, or career stagnation.
- **Short-Term Stability vs Long-Term Organizational Health:** Ignoring toxic behaviour may preserve temporary harmony, but it damages long-term organizational effectiveness, trust, and morale.
 - ◆ Acting ethically may cause short-term disruption but ensures sustainable governance.
- **Personal Values vs Institutional Culture:** Ananya must choose between adapting to a flawed system or attempting to reform it, even if institutional norms discourage dissent and accountability.

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B. Possible Courses of Action

- **Passive Compliance (Maintain Status Quo):** Ananya may choose to remain silent to protect her career and avoid confrontation.
 - ◆ *Merit:* Ensures personal safety and stability.
 - ◆ *Limitation:* Perpetuates injustice, erodes self-respect, and contributes to organizational decay.
- **Informal and Persuasive Engagement:** She may engage seniors privately, promote respectful communication, and mentor juniors to create a positive micro-work culture.
 - ◆ *Merit:* Non-confrontational and practical; may gradually influence behaviour.
 - ◆ *Limitation:* Limited impact if senior leadership remains indifferent.
- **Formal Institutional Action:** Raising concerns through official channels such as HR, internal grievance redressal mechanisms, or ethics committees.
 - ◆ *Merit:* Rule-based and transparent; creates documented accountability.
 - ◆ *Limitation:* Risk of backlash or victimization if institutional safeguards are weak.
- **Leading by Ethical Example:** Ananya can demonstrate ethical leadership by treating subordinates with dignity, encouraging participation, and rewarding merit.
 - ◆ *Merit:* Builds trust and sets a moral precedent within her sphere of influence.
 - ◆ *Limitation:* Cultural change may be slow and limited to her immediate team.
- **Seeking Collective and Systemic Solutions:** Encouraging peer support, anonymous feedback systems, and workplace sensitization programs to address structural issues.
 - ◆ *Merit:* Sustainable and less confrontational; shifts focus from individuals to systems.
 - ◆ *Limitation:* Requires institutional willingness and time to show results.

A balanced and phased strategy is most appropriate:

- Begin with **ethical role modelling and informal mentoring**.
- Engage seniors **constructively and privately**, focusing on outcomes and public service delivery.

- Gradually push for **institutional mechanisms and collective reform**, backed by data and constitutional values.

This approach reflects **practical wisdom (phronesis)**—combining moral courage with prudence—while upholding the core civil service values of **empathy, integrity, accountability, and commitment to public good**.

3. Role of Ethical Leadership and Positive Organizational Culture

Ethical leadership and a healthy organizational culture play a crucial role in building efficient, humane, and accountable institutions. They shape how employees behave, interact, and perform their duties, ultimately influencing the quality of public service delivery.

Contribution of Ethical Leadership

- **Promotes Trust, Fairness, and Integrity:** Ethical leaders act with honesty and impartiality, which builds trust among employees. When leaders are fair in decision-making and transparent in their actions, employees feel respected and valued, leading to higher morale and commitment.
- **Creates a Psychologically Safe Work Environment:** Ethical leadership ensures that employees can express ideas, raise concerns, or admit mistakes without fear of humiliation or punishment. Such psychological safety encourages open communication and innovation.
- **Strengthens Accountability and Responsibility:** Leaders who practice ethical conduct set clear expectations and take responsibility for their decisions. This promotes a culture where accountability is shared at all levels of the organization.
- **Enhances Moral Legitimacy of Authority:** When leaders act with integrity, they gain moral authority, not just formal power. Employees are more willing to follow directions and align with organizational goals.

Measures to Promote a Healthy and Inclusive Work Culture

- **Clear Codes of Conduct:** Well-defined rules regarding behaviour, respect, and professionalism help set clear expectations. Zero tolerance towards harassment,

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discrimination, or abuse reinforces dignity at the workplace.

- **Training in Ethics and Emotional Intelligence:** Regular training helps employees develop empathy, self-awareness, and conflict-resolution skills, enabling healthier interpersonal relationships and better decision-making.
- **Effective Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** Confidential and accessible grievance systems encourage employees to report issues without fear of retaliation, strengthening trust in the institution.
- **Leadership by Example:** Senior officials must model ethical behaviour through their actions. When leaders

demonstrate fairness, humility, and respect, it sets a standard for others to follow.

- **Recognition and Positive Feedback Systems:** Acknowledging good performance and ethical conduct boosts morale, motivates employees, and reinforces positive behaviour across the organization.

Conclusion:

Ethical leadership and a positive workplace culture are essential for effective and people-centric governance. They foster trust, motivation, and accountability among employees. Without these values, institutions risk inefficiency, low morale, and erosion of public trust.



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ESSAY

42. The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.

Quotes to Enrich Your Essay:

- **Marcel Proust:** “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”
- **William Blake:** “To see a World in a Grain of Sand and a Heaven in a Wild Flower, hold Infinity in the palm of your hand.”
- **Anaïs Nin:** “We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.”

Theoretical and Philosophical Dimensions:

- **Perception as the Basis of Reality:**
 - ◆ Immanuel Kant’s philosophy suggests we do not experience the world directly but through our own mental frameworks (phenomena). Changing the framework changes the world.
 - ◆ **Scientific Paradigm Shifts:** Progress often comes not from new data, but from looking at old data differently (e.g., Copernicus viewing the solar system not as Earth-centric but Sun-centric).
- **Mindfulness and Appreciation:**
 - ◆ **Zen Philosophy:** Emphasizes “Shoshin” (Beginner’s Mind)—approaching life with openness and lack of preconceptions.
 - ◆ **Thich Nhat Hanh:** Teaches that the miracle is not to walk on water, but to walk on the green earth with full awareness.
- **Reinterpreting Adversity:**
 - ◆ **Stoicism (Marcus Aurelius):** Events are neutral; it is our judgment of them that causes distress. “New eyes” allow us to see obstacles as opportunities.

Policy and Historical Examples:

- **Redefining Resistance (The Indian Freedom Struggle):**
 - ◆ **Gandhi’s Satyagraha:** While others saw “force” only as physical violence (seeking a new landscape of war), Gandhi viewed moral truth as a force.

This “new eye” transformed the nature of political protest globally.

● Resource Management and Economics:

- ◆ **Demographic Dividend:** Malthusian theory viewed population growth as a disaster (more mouths to feed).
 - Modern economists viewed it with “new eyes” as “human capital” (more hands to work), leading to the Asian Tigers’ economic boom.
- ◆ **Waste to Wealth:** The Circular Economy model re-envisioned “garbage” not as something to be discarded, but as a resource to be mined.

● Social Reform Movements:

- ◆ **Raja Ram Mohan Roy:** He did not seek a new religion but looked at ancient texts with rationalist eyes to fight Sati and advocate for women’s rights.

Contemporary Examples:

● Technological Shifts:

- ◆ **Remote Work (Post-COVID):** The pandemic forced the world to view the “office” not as a physical landscape, but as a digital space, revolutionizing work-life balance.
- ◆ **Uber/Airbnb:** These companies didn’t build new cars or hotels (landscapes); they looked at existing idle assets with “new eyes” to create the sharing economy.

● Disability Rights:

- ◆ **Social Model of Disability:** Shifting from seeing disability as a “medical defect” in a person to seeing it as a “structural defect” in society (lack of ramps, accessible tech). This change in perspective leads to inclusivity.

43. Power is meaningful only when it empowers others.

Quotes to Enrich Your Essay:

- **Lao Tzu:** “A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.”

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- **Abraham Lincoln:** “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”
- **Robert G. Ingersoll:** “We rise by lifting others.”

Theoretical and Philosophical Dimensions:

- **Servant Leadership vs. Authoritarianism:**
 - ◆ Robert Greenleaf’s concept of “Servant Leadership” argues that the primary goal of a leader is to serve. Power is a tool for service, not status.
- **The Concept of Stewardship:**
 - ◆ The “Trusteeship” model proposed by Mahatma Gandhi suggests that the wealthy and powerful hold their resources in trust for the welfare of the common people.
- **Ubuntu Philosophy (African Humanism):**
 - ◆ “I am because we are.” A person’s power or humanity is inextricably bound to the empowerment of the community.

Policy and Historical Examples:

- **Constructive Use of Political Power:**
 - ◆ Nelson Mandela: Instead of using power for retribution against apartheid oppressors, he used it to empower the nation through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
 - ◆ Ashoka the Great: After the Kalinga war, he transformed his power from military conquest (Digvijaya) to moral upliftment (Dharmavijaya), empowering his subjects through welfare and ethics.
- **Failures of Self-Serving Power:**
 - ◆ Totalitarian Regimes (Hitler): Power concentrated in one individual led to the disempowerment and destruction of millions.
 - ◆ Feudalism: A system where power was used to extract value from serfs rather than empower them, leading to stagnation and eventual revolution.

Contemporary Examples:

- **Governance and Welfare:**
 - ◆ JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile): The state used its administrative power not to control,

but to empower the unbanked population with financial identity and direct benefits.

- ◆ **Right to Information (RTI):** The government sharing power with citizens, empowering them to hold authority accountable.

Corporate and Social Sector:

- ◆ **Microfinance (Grameen Bank):** Muhammad Yunus used the power of banking to empower rural women, proving that credit is a human right.
- ◆ **Open Source Movement:** Developers of **Linux** or **Wikipedia** use their intellectual power to create tools that empower everyone freely, rather than locking it behind patents.

44. In an age of increasing efficiency, humanity’s greatest need is compassion, not perfection.

Quotes to Enrich Your Essay:

- **Swami Vivekananda:** They alone live who live for others; the rest are more dead than alive.
- **Mahatma Gandhi:** The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.

Introduction:

- The contemporary world prioritises speed, precision, and optimisation across governance, markets, and technology.
 - ◆ However, as systems grow more efficient, they often become less humane.
- The statement highlights a deeper truth: while efficiency enhances capability, compassion preserves humanity.
 - ◆ As Albert Schweitzer noted, “The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others.”

Philosophical and Theoretical Dimensions

- **Limits of Instrumental Rationality:** Max Weber warned that excessive rationalisation could create an “iron cage,” where efficiency overrides human values.
 - ◆ Perfection in systems may reduce errors, but it cannot replace moral judgment or empathy.
- **Ethics of Compassion:** Buddhism places karuna (compassion) at the centre of ethical life, prioritising sensitivity to suffering over rigid rule-following.

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- ◆ The African philosophy of Ubuntu, "I am because we are", emphasises relational humanity rather than individual excellence.
- ◆ Hannah Arendt argued that moral responsibility, not technical efficiency, prevents ethical collapse.
- **Human Imperfection as a Moral Reality**
 - ◆ Anaïs Nin observed, "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are," highlighting that human subjectivity cannot be standardized.
 - ◆ Compassion acknowledges fallibility, whereas perfection demands uniformity.

Historical Perspectives: Lessons from the Past

- **Efficiency without Compassion**
 - ◆ Totalitarian regimes of the 20th century perfected administrative efficiency but produced mass dehumanisation.
 - ◆ The Holocaust demonstrated how technically flawless systems can coexist with moral blindness.
- **Compassion as Moral Resistance**
 - ◆ Mahatma Gandhi rejected efficient violence and coercion, asserting that humane means are inseparable from just ends.
 - ◆ Nelson Mandela used political power not for retribution but reconciliation, valuing healing over administrative expediency.

Governance and Public Policy

- **Welfare and Administration**
 - ◆ Excessively rule-bound welfare systems often exclude the most vulnerable due to procedural rigidity.
 - ◆ Compassionate governance adapts policies to lived realities rather than enforcing mechanical compliance.
- **Democratic Empowerment**
 - ◆ The Right to Information Act reflects compassion by trusting citizens with transparency rather than controlling information.
 - ◆ JAM Trinity initiatives show that administrative power, when guided by inclusion, can humanise efficiency.

- **Crisis Management**
 - ◆ Disaster response focused only on numbers and timelines risks ignoring trauma and dignity.
 - ◆ Humane relief prioritises care, communication, and community trust alongside efficiency.

Technology and Contemporary Society

- **Algorithmic Decision-Making**
 - ◆ AI and automation promise precision but lack empathy.
 - ◆ Automated hiring, policing, and credit systems risk reinforcing exclusion without contextual understanding.
- **Healthcare and Education**
 - ◆ Standardised protocols improve outcomes, but compassionate discretion remains vital in patient care and teaching.
 - ◆ Perfection-driven metrics often undervalue emotional labour and human connection.
- **Corporate Culture**
 - ◆ Hyper-efficiency leads to burnout, alienation, and loss of purpose.
 - ◆ As Lao Tzu observed, "Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness."

Ethical Synthesis: Efficiency with a Human Face

- Efficiency is a tool; compassion is a value.
- Perfection seeks error-free systems; compassion seeks dignified lives.
- Sustainable progress emerges when efficiency is guided by empathy, not detached optimisation.

Conclusion:

- In an era dominated by metrics and machines, compassion remains the defining human capacity.
- Systems may function perfectly, but societies endure only when they care.
- True advancement lies not in eliminating human imperfection, but in responding to it with understanding.
- As Martin Luther King Jr. reminded, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"

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45. "Justice must be rooted in principles, not in public opinion."

Quotes to Enrich Your Essay:

- **Plato:** "Justice means minding one's own business and not meddling with other men's concerns."
- **Immanuel Kant:** "In law, a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others."
- **Mahatma Gandhi:** "In matters of conscience, the law of the majority has no place."
- **John Rawls:** "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought."

Introduction:

- Justice is the moral backbone of any **civilised society, ensuring fairness, rights, and dignity.**
- Public opinion, while important in a democracy, is often **fluid, emotional, and influenced by prejudice or misinformation.**
- The statement underscores that justice derives legitimacy from enduring principles, not from popular approval.
- As Plato argued, "**Justice means minding one's own business and not meddling with other men's concerns.**"

Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations

- **Rule of Law vs. Rule of Majority**
 - ◆ The rule of law demands consistency, predictability, and equality before law.
 - ◆ Public opinion may reflect the will of the majority, but justice protects even unpopular minorities.
- **Natural Justice and Moral Universals**
 - ◆ Thinkers like John Rawls emphasised justice as fairness, rooted in impartial principles rather than social pressures.
 - ◆ Immanuel Kant argued that moral actions must be guided by duty and universal maxims, not consequences or popularity.
- **Indian Philosophical Perspective**
 - ◆ Dharma in Indian thought represents moral order and righteous conduct beyond transient social approval.

- ◆ As Mahatma Gandhi observed, "An unjust law is itself a species of violence," stressing principle over acceptance.

Historical Illustrations: When Principles Defied Popular Opinion

- **Colonial and Social Justice**
 - ◆ Abolition of Sati and child marriage faced strong public resistance but were morally necessary reforms.
 - ◆ Raja Ram Mohan Roy upheld rational and ethical principles against prevailing customs.
- **Judicial Courage**
 - ◆ The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* went against popular segregationist sentiment but upheld constitutional equality.
 - ◆ Courts worldwide have often protected free speech and minority rights despite public outrage.
- **Indian Constitutional Experience**
 - ◆ Dr. B.R. Ambedkar warned that democracy cannot survive if public morality is divorced from constitutional morality.
 - ◆ Fundamental Rights act as safeguards against the tyranny of majority opinion.

Justice, Public Opinion, and Democracy

- **Value of Public Opinion**
 - ◆ Public opinion is vital for democratic participation and accountability.
 - ◆ However, it is not a moral compass and may be shaped by misinformation, fear, or populism.
- **Dangers of Populist Justice**
 - ◆ Media trials and mob justice undermine due process and presumption of innocence.
 - ◆ Instant public verdicts often ignore evidence, proportionality, and rehabilitation.
- **Constitutional Morality**
 - ◆ The judiciary is mandated to uphold constitutional values even when they are unpopular.
 - ◆ As Justice H.R. Khanna demonstrated during the Emergency, principle-bound justice may demand personal sacrifice.

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Contemporary Relevance

- Social Media and Opinion Pressure**
 - ◆ Viral outrage can pressure institutions into hasty or symbolic actions.
 - ◆ Justice based on trends risks becoming inconsistent and arbitrary.
- Human Rights and Minority Protection**
 - ◆ Issues such as LGBTQ+ rights, freedom of expression, and preventive detention require principled adjudication.
 - ◆ Courts often act as counter-majoritarian institutions to preserve rights.
- Global Perspective**
 - ◆ International human rights law is founded on universal principles, not national popularity.
 - ◆ Nelson Mandela upheld reconciliation and rule of law despite calls for retributive justice.

Ethical Synthesis: Balancing Voice and Values

- Public opinion informs governance; principles guide justice.
- Justice must listen to society but not surrender to it.
- Enduring legitimacy flows from moral consistency, not mass approval.

Conclusion: Upholding the Moral Core of Justice

- History shows that public opinion changes, but injustice leaves permanent scars.
- Justice anchored in principles safeguards liberty, dignity, and equality across generations.
- A just society is one where principles prevail even when they stand alone.

46. “Popular will may shape law, but it cannot be the foundation of justice.”

Quotes to Enrich Your Essay

- **MK Gandhi** : “In matters of conscience, the law of the majority has no place.”
- **Plato** : “Justice means minding one’s own business and not meddling with other men’s concerns.”
- **John Rawls**: “Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.”

Interpreting the Statement

- Popular will represents collective preferences, emotions, and social consensus at a given time.
- Justice, however, is rooted in enduring moral principles such as fairness, dignity, equality, and truth.
- While democratic societies allow public opinion to influence law-making, justice must remain anchored in ethical universals rather than shifting majorities.

Philosophical and Ethical Foundations

- Distinction between Opinion and Principle**
 - ◆ Public opinion is descriptive—it reflects what society thinks.
 - ◆ Justice is normative—it reflects what society ought to uphold.
 - ◆ Plato warned that truth and goodness cannot be determined by numbers but by reason.
- Moral Universality**
 - ◆ Immanuel Kant argued that moral actions must be guided by universal principles, not by social approval.
 - ◆ If morality were crowd-dependent, ethical consistency would collapse across time and cultures.
- Indian Ethical Thought**
 - ◆ The concept of **Dharma** in Indian philosophy signifies righteousness beyond convenience or consensus.
 - ◆ Swami Vivekananda asserted, “Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern.”

Contemporary Relevance

- Media and Instant Opinion**
 - ◆ Social media amplifies outrage and majoritarian sentiment.
 - ◆ Justice guided by trending opinions risks becoming impulsive and inconsistent.
- Minority and Marginalised Voices**
 - ◆ Popularity will often sidelines vulnerable groups.
 - ◆ Justice exists precisely to protect those without numerical strength.

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- Governance and Policy

- Welfare, policing, and public morality debates reveal tension between empathy-based justice and populist demands.
- Ethical governance requires resisting pressure to satisfy the crowd at the cost of fairness.

Ethical Synthesis

- Law may evolve through democratic participation.
- Justice must evolve through moral reflection.
- Popular will can inform justice, but cannot define it.
- As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar warned, **without constitutional morality, democracy becomes merely a form without substance.**

Conclusion

- Public opinion is transient; justice must be timeless. Societies progress when principles restrain power and popularity.
 - Justice rooted in conscience safeguards human dignity across generations. Also, **true justice often begins as dissent.**

47. “Integrity begins where convenience ends.”

Quotes to Enrich Your Essay

- C. S. Lewis:** “Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.”
- Swami Vivekanand:** “Stand up, be bold, be strong.”
- Warren Buffett:** “In looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence and energy. And if they do not have the first, the other two will kill you.”

Introduction: Understanding the Idea

- Integrity is the alignment of values, words, and actions, especially under pressure.
- Convenience offers shortcuts, comfort, and compromise.
- The statement highlights that integrity reveals itself not in ease, but in ethical resistance.
 - As C.S. Lewis observed, “Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching”

Philosophical and Ethical Dimensions

- Integrity as Moral Consistency:** Ethics demands action even when it entails personal loss.
 - Aristotle viewed virtue as habitual right action, not situational adjustment.
- Indian Philosophical Insight**
 - The *Bhagavad Gita* emphasises *Nishkama Karma*—doing one’s duty without attachment to outcomes.
 - Mahatma Gandhi embodied integrity by choosing suffering over expedient compromise.
- Psychology of Moral Choice**
 - Convenience reduces ethical dilemmas into cost-benefit calculations.
 - Integrity restores conscience as the guiding force.

Integrity Tested in Adversity

- Individual Level**
 - Speaking the truth despite social isolation.
 - Refusing corruption despite financial hardship.
 - Whistleblowers often act at great personal cost.
- Leadership and Public Life**
 - Leaders face pressure to prioritise popularity over principles.
 - Abraham Lincoln noted, “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”
- Institutional Integrity**
 - Organisations lose credibility when ethics are sacrificed for efficiency or profit.
 - Trust erodes faster than it is built.

Social and Contemporary Context

- Workplace Ethics**
 - Normalisation of shortcuts, data manipulation, and ethical blindness.
 - Integrity-driven institutions sustain long-term legitimacy.
- Technology and Modern Life**
 - Ease of misinformation, plagiarism, and digital anonymity tests moral restraint.

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- ◆ Ethical conduct becomes harder—but more necessary—in low-accountability spaces.
- **Public Trust**
 - ◆ Societies function on trust, which depends on integrity, not convenience.
 - ◆ Once compromised, trust is difficult to restore.

Ethical Synthesis

- Convenience asks, “What is easiest?”
- Integrity asks, “What is right?”
 - ◆ Progress without integrity produces efficiency without ethics.

Conclusion

- **Integrity is not situational; it is foundational.** Moral character is shaped by choices made under pressure. Civilisations endure not because they choose convenience, but because individuals choose conscience. **Integrity, though costly, remains the most sustainable form of strength.**

48. A rising tide lifts all boats.

Quotes for Enrichment

- **Mahatma Gandhi:** “The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.”
- **John Rawls:** “Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged.”
- **Amartya Sen:** “Development is about expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.”

Introduction: Understanding the Metaphor

- The phrase “a rising tide lifts all boats” suggests that when overall progress occurs, everyone benefits. It reflects the **idea that collective growth—economic, social, or moral**—has the potential to uplift individuals across classes and communities.
 - ◆ However, this optimism rests on the assumption that growth is inclusive and accessible. Without equity, the tide may rise, but many boats remain anchored or submerged. Thus, the statement invites reflection on the nature of development and its distribution.

Philosophical and Ethical Dimensions

- **Collective Progress vs Individual Advancement:** Philosophically, the idea aligns with communitarian ethics, which view society as an interdependent whole.
 - ◆ Aristotle viewed the good life as one achieved within a just polis, where collective well-being enables individual flourishing.
- **Moral Responsibility of Growth:** Growth without justice can deepen inequality.
 - ◆ John Rawls' theory of justice argues that social and economic inequalities are acceptable only if they benefit the least advantaged.
- **Indian Ethical Thought: The Indian idea of Sarvodaya (welfare of all),** championed by Gandhi, holds that true progress must uplift the weakest.
 - ◆ Economic or technological advancement devoid of compassion risks becoming exclusionary.

Historical and Social Perspective

- **Post-Independence Development:** India's economic planning aimed to raise living standards collectively through industrialisation and social welfare.
 - ◆ However, uneven regional development revealed that growth alone does not guarantee shared prosperity.
- **Globalisation and Growth:** Economic liberalisation has created immense wealth but also widened inequalities within and among nations.
 - ◆ The benefits of globalisation have often accrued to skilled sectors, leaving informal workers vulnerable.
- **Lessons from History:** The Industrial Revolution increased overall wealth but also produced exploitation until reforms ensured fair labour practices.
 - ◆ This shows that growth must be guided by ethical and institutional frameworks.

Contemporary Relevance

- **Inclusive Development:** Policies like **financial inclusion, digital public infrastructure, and social security** aim to ensure that growth reaches the margins.
 - ◆ Initiatives such as universal education and healthcare enable individuals to participate meaningfully in growth.

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- Sustainability and Climate Justice:** Climate change reveals that unchecked growth can disproportionately harm the vulnerable.
 - ◆ A rising tide must be environmentally sustainable to truly lift all boats.
- Technology and Opportunity:** Digital platforms can democratise opportunity, but the digital divide risks excluding many.
 - ◆ Inclusivity determines whether technological progress becomes empowering or polarising.

Critical Reflection

- Growth is not inherently equitable.
- Without ethical governance, rising tides can drown the weakest.
- True progress lies in creating systems that ensure access, dignity, and opportunity for all.

Conclusion

A rising tide can lift all boats—but only when guided by fairness, inclusion, and responsibility. Economic growth must be accompanied by social justice, ethical governance, and compassionate policymaking.

As Mahatma Gandhi reminded us, **the true measure of progress lies not in how fast a nation grows, but in how well it cares for its weakest members.** Only then does prosperity become shared rather than selective.

49. Education is not the learning of facts. It's rather the training of the mind to think.

Quotes for Enrichment

- Albert Einstein** – “Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.”
- John Dewey** – “Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.”
- Rabindranath Tagore** – “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”

Introduction: Understanding the Essence of Education

Education is often reduced to the accumulation of information, examination scores, and credentials. However, true education transcends memorisation and mechanical learning. It seeks to cultivate reasoning, curiosity, judgment, and independent thought.

- The real purpose of education lies not in filling minds with data, but in shaping individuals capable of critical reflection, ethical reasoning, and creative problem-solving.

Philosophical Foundations of Education

- Ancient Indian Perspective:** The **Gurukul** system emphasised ***manana* (reflection) and *nididhyasana* (deep contemplation)**, not rote learning.
 - ◆ Education aimed at wisdom (*jnana*) and character formation rather than information accumulation.
- Western Philosophical Thought:** Socrates championed questioning as the path to truth, asserting that wisdom begins with doubt.
 - ◆ John Dewey viewed education as a process of thinking and inquiry, not passive reception of facts.
- Purpose of Learning:** True education develops the ability to analyse, reason, and judge rather than merely recall.
 - ◆ Knowledge without understanding can lead to conformity, while thinking nurtures freedom.

Education and Human Development

- Cultivating Critical Thinking:** A thinking mind can question misinformation, challenge prejudice, and adapt to change.
 - ◆ In a world of rapid technological advancement, adaptability matters more than static knowledge.
- Moral and Ethical Formation:** Education shapes character by nurturing empathy, responsibility, and ethical reasoning.
 - ◆ As Swami Vivekananda said, **“Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.”**
- Creativity and Innovation:** Innovation emerges when individuals question assumptions and imagine alternatives.
 - ◆ Societies that encourage curiosity and experimentation progress faster than those enforcing conformity.

Contemporary Relevance

- In the Age of Information Overload:** Facts are instantly available; the ability to evaluate, interpret, and apply them is scarce.

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- ◆ Critical thinking enables individuals to navigate misinformation and digital manipulation.
- **Education and Democracy:** A thinking citizenry is essential for meaningful participation in democratic processes.
 - ◆ **Democracies** weaken when education prioritises obedience over reasoning.
- **Workplace and Future Skills:** Automation and AI have reduced the value of routine tasks.
 - ◆ The future belongs to individuals who can think creatively, ethically, and independently.

Challenges to True Education

- **Overemphasis on examinations** and rote memorisation
- Standardised testing that discourages questioning
- Commercialisation of education prioritising grades over growth
 - ◆ These trends risk producing skilled workers without wisdom or moral compass.

Ethical and Social Significance

- Education that fosters thinking nurtures responsible citizens rather than passive followers.
- It enables individuals to question injustice, resist manipulation, and act with conscience.
- Therefore, **Education, at its core, should be a process of awakening**, a means of expanding the mind, nurturing creativity, and fostering a deeper understanding of life

Conclusion

Education is not the accumulation of facts but the cultivation of intellect and character. In a world flooded with information, **the ability to think critically, ethically, and independently is the true measure of learning**.

The ultimate goal of education is not to create walking encyclopaedias, but thoughtful human beings capable of shaping a just, innovative, and compassionate society.



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