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October 2025



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CONTENTS

General Studies Paper-1	3
History	3
Geography	5
Indian Heritage and Culture	8
Indian Society	8
General Studies Paper-2	11
Polity and Governance	11
International Relations	15
Social Justice	21
General Studies Paper-3	23
Economy	23
Biodiversity and Environment	28
Science & Technology	30
Internal Security	34
Disaster Management	35
General Studies Paper-4	37
Theoretical Question	37
Case Study	46
Essay	56

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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-1

History

1. Discuss how the Mauryan art and architecture reflected the ideals of the Mauryan state, especially Ashoka's Dhamma and imperial authority. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefing about art and culture of Mauryan Period
- Delve into the Reflection of Imperial Authority and Centralized State and Reflection of Ashoka's Dhamma and about Synthesis-Power through Morality
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

The **Mauryan period (321–185 BCE)**, particularly under Emperor Ashoka, marked the emergence of a **distinct imperial art style** that served not merely aesthetic ends but also **projected political power and moral ideology**.

- Mauryan art became both a **symbol of centralized authority** and a **medium for disseminating Ashoka's Dhamma**, thereby transforming architecture into a tool of governance and ethical statecraft.

Body:

Reflection of Imperial Authority and Centralized State

Architectural/ Artistic Element	Reflection of Imperial Authority
Monolithic Ashokan Pillars	Symbolized centralized power and administrative control, as single-stone pillars were quarried and transported over vast distances.
Polished Sandstone ('Mauryan Polish')	The mirror-like polish denoted wealth, precision, and imperial grandeur, showcasing a refined, state-controlled craftsmanship .
Pillar Capitals (e.g., Lion Capital of Sarnath)	Projected the emperor's Chakravartin (universal ruler) status, with four lions facing the cardinal directions, symbolizing all-pervasive sovereignty.

Royal Palaces and Halls

Monumental palaces (like the 80-pillared hall at Kumrahar) reflected a strong, unified monarchy capable of mobilizing vast resources.

Reflection of Ashoka's Dhamma

Architectural/ Artistic Element	Reflection of Dhamma
Rock and Pillar Edicts	Served as open-air scriptures spreading Dhamma, non-violence, compassion, and moral living, in local Prakrit languages .
Construction of Stupas	Enshrined Buddhist relics , making stupas focal points for devotion and moral education.
Rock-Cut Caves (Barabar and Nagarjuni)	Patronized Ajivikas and other ascetic sects, reflecting religious tolerance .
Symbolism in Capitals (e.g., Dharma-Chakra)	The Wheel of Law and harmonious animal motifs visualized righteous rule (Dhamma-vijaya) over violent conquest.

Synthesis: Power through Morality

Mauryan art achieved a **fusion of form and philosophy**, where **political authority** and **moral vision** coexisted:

- The **uniform stone architecture** across India reflected administrative unity.
- The **inscriptions and symbols** embedded within reflected **ethical governance** and **public welfare**.
- Art thus became a **visible and enduring language** of statecraft—linking **imperial order** with **moral duty**.

Conclusion:

Mauryan art and architecture represented the **state's ideological synthesis**, a harmony between **political centralization** and **ethical universalism**. Through its monumental form and moral content, it not only **legitimized Mauryan rule** but also **fostered social cohesion** across a vast and culturally diverse empire.

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2. “Decolonisation after the Second World War was both a moral reckoning and a strategic necessity.” Examine how the global balance of power and nationalist movements influenced the decolonisation process in Asia and Africa. (250 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the historical context of decolonisation.
- Examine how the global balance of power and nationalist movements influenced the decolonisation process in Asia and Africa.
- Conclude with the enduring impact of decolonisation.

Introduction:

The end of the Second World War marked a decisive turning point in global politics. Decolonisation emerged as both a **moral imperative** and a **strategic necessity**. European colonial powers, weakened economically and militarily, faced mounting pressure from nationalist movements in Asia and Africa. At the same time, the rise of the **United States and the Soviet Union** as superpowers, coupled with the establishment of the **United Nations**, created a new international environment that demanded self-determination and challenged the legitimacy of colonial empires.

Body:

Global Balance of Power and Strategic Considerations

- **Weakening of European Powers:** Britain, France, and the Netherlands suffered severe economic and infrastructural damage during WWII, reducing their ability to maintain distant colonies.
- **Rise of Superpowers:** Both the US and USSR opposed colonialism, albeit for different reasons—the US promoted democracy and self-determination, while the USSR framed anti-colonial struggles as part of its anti-imperialist ideology.
- **United Nations and International Pressure:** The UN Charter (1945) enshrined principles of human rights and self-determination, providing moral and political legitimacy to nationalist demands.
- **Cold War Dynamics:** Colonial powers could not afford to antagonize newly independent nations that might align with either superpower, making decolonisation a

strategic necessity to maintain influence in the emerging bipolar world.

Nationalist Movements in Asia

- **India:** The Indian National Congress and Muslim League mobilized mass movements, strikes, and civil disobedience campaigns, compelling Britain to transfer power in 1947.
- **Southeast Asia:** In Indonesia, nationalist leaders like **Sukarno** led armed struggle against the Dutch; Vietnam's **Ho Chi Minh** combined guerrilla warfare with diplomatic appeals to weaken French control.
- **Regional Symbolism:** Leaders framed independence as both a moral struggle against oppression and a strategic assertion of national sovereignty in the post-war world.

Nationalist Movements in Africa

- **North Africa:** Egypt's revolution (1952) and Algeria's independence struggle (1962) demonstrated a combination of armed resistance and negotiation.
- **Sub-Saharan Africa:** Ghana (1957), Kenya (1963), and other nations achieved independence through political organization, mass mobilization, and pan-African solidarity.
- **Mass Participation:** Urban elites, rural communities, and labor movements collaborated to challenge colonial rule, reflecting the ethical and practical dimensions of liberation.

Moral Imperatives and Strategic Necessity

- **Moral Dimension:** The horrors of WWII and the rhetoric of human rights emphasized the injustice of colonial domination. Nationalist leaders harnessed these moral arguments to rally domestic and international support.
- **Strategic Dimension:** European powers faced declining global influence, economic constraints, and the risk of Cold War entanglements, making decolonisation a pragmatic solution.

Conclusion:

Decolonisation after the Second World War was a product of both **ethical imperatives** and **strategic calculations**. Nationalist movements in Asia and Africa exploited the weakened position of colonial powers and leveraged global

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ideological currents to assert independence. This **dual dynamic transformed the post-war world**, giving rise to **new sovereign states** and reshaping international relations, ultimately marking **the decline of European imperialism** and the emergence of a more multipolar world order.

Geography

3. Discuss the geographical factors responsible for the uneven distribution of mineral and energy resources in India. How does this influence regional development? (250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefing about distribution of mineral and energy resources in India.
- Delve into the Geographical Factors Responsible for Uneven Distribution
- Highlight its Influence on Regional Development
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

India's mineral and energy resources are **highly unevenly distributed** due to its ancient and varied geological history, primarily concentrated in the **Peninsular Shield areas**. This distribution is a direct result of differing **geological formations, tectonic events, and environmental processes** over millennia.

Body:

Geographical Factors Responsible for Uneven Distribution

- Geological Age and Structure (Metallic and Non-Metallic Minerals)
 - ◆ Most metallic and high-value non-metallic minerals are products of the **Pre-Palaeozoic age**.
 - They are associated with the **old crystalline, igneous, and metamorphic rocks** of the **Peninsular Plateau**.
 - ◆ For instance, The **Chota Nagpur Plateau (North-Eastern Belt)** is rich in iron ore, manganese, and bauxite.
 - Conversely, the young fold mountains of the Himalayas have very few economically viable deposits.

- Sedimentation and Basin Formation (Coal)
 - ◆ Over 97% of India's coal reserves are concentrated in the **Gondwana rock system**, which formed in subsided river valleys through the accumulation and compression of ancient vegetation.
 - ◆ The majority of coal reserves are found in the valleys of the **Damodar, Sone, Mahanadi, and Godavari** rivers, leading to heavy concentration in Jharkhand, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh.
- Tectonic Activity and Geosynclines (Petroleum and Natural Gas)
 - ◆ These fossil fuels are found in **sedimentary rocks of the Tertiary period**, typically in fault traps, anticlines, and synclines in continental margins, offshore areas, and foreland basins.
 - ◆ Major reserves are concentrated in the **offshore Mumbai High**, the **plains of Assam (Digboi)**, and the **sedimentary basins of Gujarat and the Krishna-Godavari basin**, leaving the vast majority of the mainland deficient.
- Exclusion of Northern Plains (Alluvial Cover)
 - ◆ The **vast Indo-Gangetic Plain**, formed by **alluvial deposits**, lacks the specific geological conditions (high pressure, high temperature, tectonic stress) required for mineral formation.
 - ◆ The entire **Northern Plain** is virtually devoid of significant economic mineral and energy resources, forming a massive non-resource region.
- Lateritic Weathering (Bauxite)
 - ◆ The formation of Bauxite (aluminium ore) is associated with intense tropical **chemical weathering** on plateau and hill surfaces.
 - ◆ **High-quality bauxite deposits are found in the Eastern Ghats of Odisha** and parts of **Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra**, confining its distribution to areas with specific climate and topographical conditions.

Influence on Regional Development

- **Widening Regional Economic Disparities: Mineral-deficient states (e.g., Punjab, Kerala)** depend on

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imports from resource-rich states for raw materials and energy, incurring higher costs and impacting their industrial competitiveness, which often leads to trade imbalances between states.

- Uneven Social and Human Development

- ◆ **'Resource Curse' Phenomenon:** Paradoxically, many mineral-rich regions, particularly in the Chota Nagpur Plateau, are often inhabited by **tribal populations (Adivasis)** who face **displacement**, land alienation, and severe **environmental degradation** (e.g., water pollution, deforestation) due to intense mining.

- ◆ **Social Disparities:** The wealth generated from minerals often fails to **'trickle down'** to the local communities, leading to socio-economic inequalities, inadequate social infrastructure (education, healthcare), and social unrest in these areas.

Conclusion:

The uneven distribution of mineral and energy resources is a **fixed geographical constraint** that deeply entrenches regional development disparities in India. Sustainable and inclusive regional development necessitates a strategic policy shift from mere extraction to **value addition, coupled with equitable resource revenue sharing** (like the **District Mineral Foundation**), aggressive promotion of distributed **renewable energy**, and targeted investment in human capital and infrastructure in resource-poor regions.

4. Trace the spatial distribution of the world's offshore petroleum basins and explain the geological and environmental factors influencing their formation. (150 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the offshore petroleum basins.
- Trace the spatial distribution of the world's offshore petroleum basins.
- Explain the geological and environmental factors influencing their formation.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Offshore petroleum basins are **submarine sedimentary regions** where hydrocarbons accumulate within porous rocks beneath the seabed. They account for nearly **30% of global crude oil** and **27% of natural gas** output. Their occurrence is closely associated with **continental margins, rifted shelves, and sedimentary troughs**, shaped by geological and environmental processes over millions of years.

Body:

Global Spatial Distribution:

- Offshore petroleum basins are **unevenly distributed** across the globe, mainly along **passive continental margins** and **shallow continental shelves** where thick sedimentary sequences prevail.

- ◆ **Atlantic Margins:**

- **North Sea Basin (UK–Norway)** – one of the oldest and most productive offshore zones.
- **West African Shelf** (Nigeria, Angola) and **Brazilian Basins** (Campos, Santos) – host deepwater oil fields along the South Atlantic rifted margins.

- ◆ **Gulf of Mexico Basin:**

- Shared by the **USA and Mexico**, it features prolific deepwater fields contributing significantly to global output.

- ◆ **Middle East and Indian Ocean Region:**

- **Persian Gulf** (world's richest petroleum basin) and **Arabian Sea shelf** (Mumbai High, KG Basin) are key to Asia's energy security.

- ◆ **Asia-Pacific Region:**

- **South China Sea, Timor Sea, and North West Shelf of Australia** contain vast gas reserves.

- ◆ **Polar and Arctic Basins:**

- **Barents Sea and Beaufort Sea** are emerging frontiers with untapped hydrocarbon potential.

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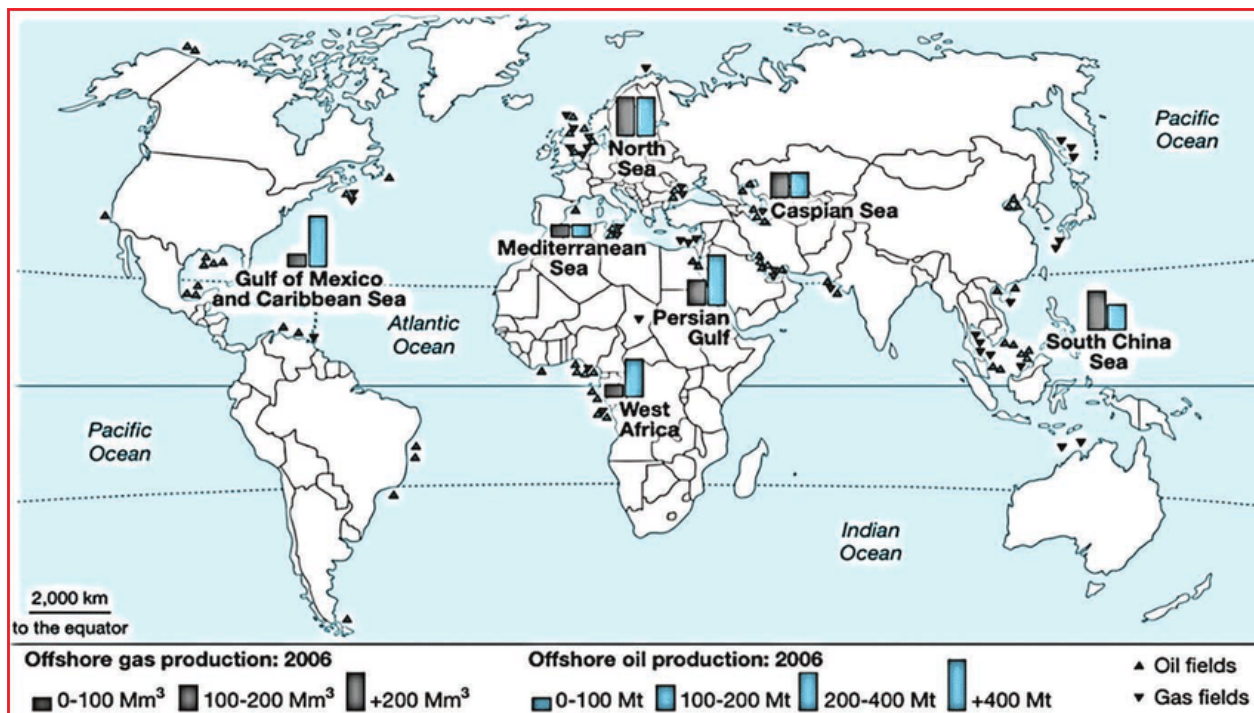


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Geological Factors Influencing Formation

- **Tectonic Setting:** Most basins occur on **passive continental margins** formed by **rift-induced subsidence**, such as the Atlantic coasts of Africa and South America.
- **Sedimentation:** Continuous **marine sediment deposition** (5–10 km thick) provides suitable source and reservoir rocks.
- **Source and Reservoir Rocks:** **Organic-rich marine shales** generate hydrocarbons, while **sandstone or limestone** layers act as reservoirs.
- **Structural Traps:** **Anticlines, fault traps, and salt domes** (e.g., Gulf of Mexico) ensure hydrocarbon entrapment.
- **Thermal Maturation:** Appropriate **temperature–pressure conditions** during burial convert organic matter into oil and gas.

Environmental Factors

- **Marine Productivity:** Warm, shallow, low-oxygen seas promote organic matter accumulation.
- **Sea-Level Changes:** Fluctuations influence sedimentation rates and reservoir formation.
- **Coastal Geomorphology:** Determines basin morphology and sediment influx.
- **Climatic Conditions:** Affect erosion and organic deposition patterns.

Conclusion:

Offshore petroleum basins are products of **complex geological evolution** and **favourable marine conditions** concentrated along continental margins. As terrestrial reserves decline, exploration is extending to **deepwater frontiers** like the **Guyana-Suriname and Mozambique Channel**. Balancing **energy security** with **marine environmental sustainability** will define the next phase of global offshore petroleum development

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Indian Heritage and Culture

5. Pala architecture reflects a synthesis of religious devotion, royal patronage, and regional aesthetics. Illustrate with suitable examples. (150 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the Pala dynasty.
- Discuss how Pala architecture reflects a synthesis of religious devotion, royal patronage, and regional aesthetics.
- Illustrate with suitable examples
- Conclude with the enduring legacy of Pala architecture.

Introduction:

The Pala dynasty (8th–12th century CE), ruling over Bengal and Bihar, is renowned for its monumental contributions to Buddhist architecture. Their constructions reflect a unique **synthesis of religious devotion, royal patronage, and regional aesthetics**, combining functionality with artistic sophistication. Pala architecture not only served spiritual purposes but also asserted political authority and celebrated local craftsmanship.

Body :

Religious Devotion:

- **Monastic Complexes:** Major Buddhist monasteries such as **Vikramashila, Nalanda, and Somapura Mahavihara** became centers of learning, meditation, and devotion.
- **Stupas and Temples:** Pala temples and stupas, like the **cruciform Somapura Mahavihara**, symbolized cosmological principles and housed relics of Buddha.
- **Sculptural Narratives:** Stone and bronze sculptures depict **Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and Jataka tales**, integrating religious teachings with artistic expression.

Royal Patronage:

- **State-Sponsored Projects:** Pala rulers such as **Dharmapala and Devapala** were devout patrons of Buddhism. They actively funded large-scale monasteries and temples, reflecting **political legitimacy and divine endorsement**.

- **Architectural Innovation:** Terracotta panels, intricate stone carvings, and multi-storeyed viharas demonstrate **royal support for artistic excellence**.
- **Inscriptions and Dedications:** Many architectural sites include royal inscriptions, linking divine authority with kingship — for instance, Dharmapala's patronage of Somapura and Devapala's support of Nalanda's expansion.

Regional Aesthetics:

- **Local Materials and Craftsmanship:** Bricks, terracotta, and stone were skillfully utilized, reflecting **regional availability and expertise**.
- **Distinctive Features:** Curvilinear towers (shikhara), ornate doorways, and patterned facades highlight **local artistic sensibilities**.
- **Cross-Cultural Influence:** Architectural designs show interactions with **Nepalese, North Indian, and Southeast Asian styles**, as seen in Somapura's terraces resembling Cambodian temple layouts.

Exemplary Sites:

- **Somapura Mahavihara (Paharpur):** UNESCO World Heritage site; features monumental layout, terraced structures, and elaborate sculptural panels.
- **Vikramashila:** Planned for meditation and scholarship, exemplifying symmetry and functional design.
- **Nalanda:** Integrated residential, educational, and religious spaces with intricate terracotta and stone artistry.

Conclusion:

Pala architecture exemplifies a **harmonious blend of devotion, political vision, and regional artistry**, reflecting the dynasty's role in promoting Buddhism, cultural synthesis, and artistic innovation. Its enduring legacy influenced later architectural traditions in Bengal, Nepal, and Southeast Asia, establishing the Palas as pioneers of medieval Indian architectural excellence.

Indian Society

6. The proposed Demographic Mission aims to shift focus from population control to population optimisation in India. Critically analyse its prospects and policy imperatives. (250 words)

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Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the proposed Demographic Mission.
- Critically analyse its prospects and policy imperatives.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

The **Demographic Mission** is a comprehensive national initiative designed to monitor, manage, and interpret India's evolving population dynamics. Moving beyond traditional notions of population control, it focuses on **optimising demographic potential** through evidence-based planning. Its key objectives include curbing **illegal immigration**, preventing **demographic imbalances**, protecting **vulnerable and tribal communities**, and assessing the **socio-economic and cultural impacts** of migration on national stability and development.

Body :**Need and Prospects of the Demographic Mission**

- **Curbing Unchecked Immigration and Ensuring Border Security:** Unchecked illegal immigration, particularly from **Bangladesh and Myanmar**, has led to demographic and cultural shifts in border states like **Assam, West Bengal, and the Northeast**.
 - ◆ These inflows strain local resources, heighten ethnic tensions, and threaten internal security.
 - ◆ The mission aims to ensure effective border management while maintaining humanitarian principles.
- **Balancing Internal Migration:** With over **450 million internal migrants**, India faces challenges of disenfranchisement, welfare exclusion, and social marginalisation.
 - ◆ The mission seeks to promote inclusive urbanisation and ensure **portability of rights** such as ration cards and healthcare access under the *One Nation One Ration Card* framework.
- **Human Capital Development:** India's **median age of 29 years** offers a short demographic window to capitalise on its youth potential.
 - ◆ The mission seeks to promote **skill development, education, and health** to convert this demographic bulge into an engine of productivity.

- **Social Security and Ageing Preparedness:** Life expectancy has risen from **63 years (2000)** to **72 years (2025)**, and the elderly population (60+) will reach **320 million by 2050**, up from **154 million in 2025**.
 - ◆ The mission emphasises creating a **multi-pillar pension system**, promoting productive ageing, and rethinking retirement norms.
- **Demographic Sensitivity in Policy:** Beyond mere numbers, the mission stresses **population quality and composition** — age structure, gender balance, and skills — integrating demographic insights across policies in **health, education, urbanisation, and welfare**.
- **Technological Integration:** The mission proposes **AI-based demographic governance**, leveraging **big data, satellite mapping, and biometrics** for real-time monitoring.
 - ◆ The **digitised Census 2027** and a **National Refugee Law** reflect the shift to data-driven and region-specific planning.

Key Challenges

- **Border Management Deficiencies:** India's **porous borders** — 4,096 km with Bangladesh and 1,643 km with Myanmar — face surveillance gaps, enabling illegal immigration, smuggling, and insurgent activity.
- **Political and Social Sensitivities:** Migration issues, especially from Bangladesh, are politically charged, causing **social tensions and regional unrest**. Balancing security and inclusivity is critical.
- **Regional Fertility Disparities:** Fertility rates vary sharply — **Bihar (2.8–3.0)** remains above replacement level (2.1), while **Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Delhi** are below 1.5. This duality complicates policy uniformity and resource distribution.
- **Youth Unemployment and Skill Mismatch:** Despite a youthful population, **83% of India's unemployed in 2022 were youth**, highlighting structural gaps in skill training and job creation.
- **Gender Disparities:** Women's **labour force participation** remains low at **41.7%**, particularly in urban areas, limiting demographic productivity.

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- **Resource and Environmental Strain:** India supports 18% of the global population on 2.4% of the world's land, causing severe pressure on water, land, and ecosystems. Rapid urbanisation and climate change amplify sustainability challenges.

Policy Imperatives and Way Forward

- **National Demographic Intelligence Framework:** Integrate data from Census, NFHS, Labour Bureau, and Aadhaar for a unified demographic platform enabling targeted, data-driven policies.
- **Border and Migration Management:** Strengthen Integrated Border Management Systems (CIBMS) with drones, night-vision cameras, motion sensors, and AI-based surveillance.
 - ◆ Parallely, adopt humane migration policies with legal and welfare safeguards.
- **Skilling and Employment Generation:** Expand Skill India to backward regions, align training with industry needs, and scale apprenticeships.
 - ◆ Between 2018–2024, India added 17 crore formal jobs, a trend that must continue through youth-centric economic planning.
- **Regional Equity:** Develop Human Capability Indices to guide investment in lagging states.

- ◆ Emulate Kerala's success in health and literacy for inclusive growth.

- **Ageing and Social Security:** Create multi-tier pension systems, promote lifelong learning, and strengthen geriatric healthcare to address the ageing challenge.
- **Institutional Coordination:** Establish a National Commission for Demography and Migration to harmonise central and state efforts and integrate demographic considerations across all sectors.
- **Environmental Integration:** Align demographic planning with Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT, and Clean Ganga Mission to ensure sustainable urban and ecological balance.

Conclusion:

India's Demographic Mission represents a transformative step from population control to **population optimisation**, focusing on harnessing youth potential, managing migration, and preparing for an ageing future. As **Auguste Comte** observed, "*Demography is destiny.*" Through institutional reform, technological innovation, and participatory governance, India can convert its demographic diversity into a **resilient, equitable, and future-ready advantage** for generations to come.

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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-2

Polity and Governance

7. Criminal defamation in India often conflicts with the right to freedom of speech. Critically examine the need to decriminalize defamation and suggest reforms to balance free speech and protection of reputation. (150 words)

Approach:

- Begin with a brief definition of defamation and its conflict with the right to freedom of speech.
- Examine the need to decriminalize defamation.
- Suggest reforms to balance free speech and the protection of reputation.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Section 356 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 defines **defamation** as making or publishing any **imputation** intended or known to harm a person's **reputation**. Courts interpret **reputation** as part of the **right to life under Article 21**. However, **criminalising defamation** raises concerns over its **chilling effect** on **free speech**, **journalistic freedom**, and **democratic dissent**.

Body :

The Need for Decriminalising Defamation in India

- **Protecting Freedom of Speech:** Criminal defamation laws have a "chilling effect" on **free speech**, inhibiting **journalists**, **whistle-blowers**, and **citizens** from expressing **legitimate criticism** or **dissent**, resulting in self-censorship.
 - ◆ In **September 2025**, the **Supreme Court** itself noted that fear of **criminal prosecution** restricts the exercise of **Article 19(1)(a)** rights and that **civil remedies** sufficiently address **reputational harm**.
 - ◆ The **Supreme Court** in **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015)** struck down the criminal section on **online defamation (Section 66A of IT Act)** precisely because it was **vague** and had a **chilling effect** on **free speech**.

- **Preventing Abuse and Harassment:** Criminal defamation has become a **weapon** for **powerful individuals** like **politicians**, **actors**, and **industrialists** to file **Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP)**.
- **Reducing Judicial Backlog and Delays:** Defamation trials clog **lower courts** and consume vast **judicial resources** for private disputes.
 - ◆ The **Supreme Court**, while hearing the **Wire-JNU case** in **September 2025**, observed **protracted litigation** and **delays** in thousands of **criminal defamation cases**.
- **Safeguarding Press Freedom:** Legal experts highlight that **criminal defamation** risks **gagging the media** and **stifling democratic debate**.
 - ◆ India is ranked **151st out of 180 countries** in the **World Press Freedom Index (2025)**, highlighting significant challenges to **journalistic freedom** and **media independence**.
- **Upholding Democratic Values:** The **Supreme Court**, in its recent remark, emphasised that the **dignity of reputation** should be protected, but not at the cost of **democratic pluralism** and **critical discourse**.
- **Conformity with Global Standards:** International human rights organisations, including the **Committee to Protect Journalists** and **UNHRC**, urge India to **repeal criminal defamation laws**.

Reforms to Balance Free Speech and the Protection of Reputation.

- **Decriminalise Private Defamation, Retain Criminal Defamation for Public Interest:** A balanced approach recommended by **legal experts** is to restrict **criminal defamation** only to cases involving **public interest**, **national security**, or **public figures**, while shifting private reputation disputes entirely to **civil courts**.
- **Strengthen and Fast-track Civil Defamation Proceedings:** India should introduce **fast-track courts** or **dedicated benches** to handle **civil defamation cases** with **clear timelines** and **reasonable compensation**.

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limits, thus offering **effective** and **timely remedies** without **criminalising speech**.

- **Introduce Anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) Legislation:** SLAPP suits are used by **powerful individuals and corporations** to **intimidate critics** with **costly litigation**.
- **Provide Specific Judicial Guidelines on Fair Criticism and Public Good:** Drawing from the **Supreme Court's observations** and **international best practices**, **clear judicial principles** should be codified to demarcate **fair criticism, satire, and opinion** from **malicious defamation**.
- **Promote Media Literacy and Public Awareness on Responsible Speech:** Encouraging **responsible speech** and educating **citizens** on the distinction between **criticism and defamation** can reduce **frivolous cases**.

Conclusion:

Reforming defamation laws in India requires balancing **freedom of expression** with the **protection of reputation**. As **John Stuart Mill** argued (in *On Liberty*), "**silencing an opinion deprives humanity of the opportunity to exchange error for truth, thereby stifling critical thought and democratic accountability.**" Thus, decriminalising **private defamation**, strengthening **civil remedies**, and enacting **anti-SLAPP measures** can protect journalists and citizens, foster responsible discourse, and uphold both constitutional freedoms and social justice.

8. Transparency is the cornerstone of democracy, but without accountability, it risks becoming ornamental. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Right to Information Act, 2005, in promoting transparency, accountability, and participatory governance in India. (150 words)

Approach:

- Discuss transparency and accountability in the context of democracy and briefly introduce the RTI Act.
- Explain how RTI promotes transparency, accountability, and participatory governance in India.
- Critically evaluate limitations and challenges in implementation.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Transparency ensures that governmental actions are open to public scrutiny, while accountability ensures that public officials are answerable for their conduct. The **Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005**, a landmark in India's democratic evolution, operationalises these principles by empowering citizens to demand information from public authorities, thereby transforming governance from secrecy to openness.

Body :

RTI as a Tool for Transparency, Accountability and Participatory Governance

- **Institutionalising Citizen Empowerment:** RTI gives every citizen the legal right to access government records, decisions, and policies, thereby reducing information asymmetry between the state and the people.
- **Curbing Corruption:** RTI has exposed large-scale irregularities — such as the **Adarsh Housing Scam**, **MNREGA fund misuse**, and **PDS corruption** — showcasing its potential as an anti-corruption instrument.
- **Enhancing Administrative Responsibility:** Fear of disclosure encourages officials to act prudently and document decisions accurately, reinforcing internal accountability mechanisms within bureaucracies.
- **Facilitating Judicial and Media Activism:** RTI strengthens investigative journalism and judicial scrutiny by providing factual data essential for uncovering malpractices.
- **Citizen-Centric Decision-Making:** RTI promotes inclusive governance by allowing citizens to question development priorities, project implementation, and public expenditure.
- **Strengthening Local Democracy:** At the grassroots level, the use of RTI in **Gram Sabhas** and **Panchayati Raj Institutions** enhances transparency in fund utilization and local development schemes.
- **Catalyst for Social Audits:** Schemes like **MGNREGA** and **PMGSY** incorporate RTI-based audits, creating a culture of bottom-up accountability and participatory planning.

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Key Challenges Facing the RTI Act, 2005

- **Considerable Delays:** Most Information Commissions (ICs) take over a year to resolve cases; extreme delays exist in Telangana (29 years, 2 months) and Tripura (23 years).
- **Vacant Positions:** Between 2023–24, six ICs were entirely non-functional due to unfilled posts. Currently, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh ICs are defunct, while CIC, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh operate without a Chief Information Commissioner.
- **Erosion via Legislative Changes:** The **RTI Amendment Act, 2019** reduced IC autonomy by giving the central government power to fix tenure and salaries. The **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023** amended Section 8(1), exempting all personal information, including public officials', from disclosure.
- **Expansion of Exemptions:** Departments often deny information citing the Official Secrets Act, 1923. Agencies like **RAW, IB, and CERT-In** are fully exempt under the Second Schedule of the RTI Act, 2005.
- **Threats to RTI Activists:** Activists face harassment and violence, with many attacked or killed. Weak implementation of the **Whistleblower Protection Act, 2014** exacerbates the risk.

Reforms Needed to Ensure Transparency in the RTI Framework

- **Strengthening Information Commissions:** Ensure timely, transparent appointments, adequate staffing, technology, and infrastructure.
- **Integrating Technology:** Use AI chatbots and automated assistants for drafting applications; blockchain for data authenticity. Link RTI portals with DigiLocker and real-time tracking to improve access and monitoring.
- **Strict Adherence to the Law:** Enforce mandatory proactive disclosure under Section 4; penalize PIOs for wrongful denials or delays.
- **Protection of RTI Activists:** Fully implement the Whistleblower Protection Act with anonymous complaints, emergency safeguards, and fast-track courts.
- **Partial Reinstatement of Autonomy:** Introduce parliamentary oversight in appointments; periodic

reviews by the Supreme Court and High Courts to strengthen IC independence.

Conclusion:

The **RTI Act** has revolutionized India's democratic landscape by institutionalizing transparency and accountability. However, its transformative promise risks dilution without robust implementation and political commitment. For transparency to move beyond ornamentation, it must be paired with **active accountability and citizen empowerment**, ensuring that democracy remains participatory in both letter and spirit.

9. Do you think the recurrent resort to ordinances by the Executive undermines the principles of separation of powers and parliamentary accountability in India? Discuss.

Approach:

- Introduce the constitutional basis and intent of the ordinance-making power.
- Give arguments to Ordinances Undermining Separation of Powers and Parliamentary Accountability
- Give how Ordinances Have Also Served Constructive Purposes
- Conclude with a balanced way forward.

Introduction:

Article 123 of the Constitution empowers the President (and Article 213 empowers the Governor) to promulgate ordinances when the Legislature is not in session. The intent is to ensure **continuity of governance** in **urgent and unforeseen circumstances**.

- However, **recurrent and politically driven use**, such as the **Tribunal Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021**, has triggered debate over **executive overreach** and its impact on **parliamentary sovereignty** and **separation of powers**.

Body:

Ordinances Undermining Separation of Powers and Parliamentary Accountability:

- **Bypassing Legislative Scrutiny:** Ordinances often substitute **parliamentary debate**, reducing **legislative oversight and deliberation**.

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- **Distortion of Checks and Balances:** There-promulgation practice struck down in **D.C. Wadhwa (1987)** and reaffirmed in **Krishna Kumar Singh (2017)** shows how ordinances can become a parallel law-making mechanism.
- **Reduced Parliamentary Accountability:** Ordinances take effect immediately, limiting opportunities for questioning ministers or debating policy impacts.
- **Erosion of Democratic Norms:** Excessive ordinance use concentrates power in the Executive, weakening institutional equilibrium envisaged in the Constitution.

However, Ordinances Have Also Served Constructive Purposes:

- **Ensuring Governance Continuity:** Enable timely action during parliamentary recesses, economic crises, or emergencies.
- **Filling Legislative Gaps:** Used to implement urgent reforms like banking regulation, and Triple Talaq abolition measures pending legislative approval.
- **Constitutional Validity:** In **A.K. Roy (1982)**, the Supreme Court upheld ordinance-making as a legitimate legislative tool if exercised responsibly.

Conclusion:

While ordinance-making power is a constitutional necessity for exigencies, its frequent and politically motivated use undermines the principle of separation of powers and the accountability of the Executive to Parliament. Hence, excessive reliance on ordinances weakens the democratic fabric and must be curbed through institutional checks and procedural discipline.

10. "Despite being the 'pharmacy of the world', India lacks a robust paediatric drug regulatory framework." Critically analyse the challenges in ensuring safety, quality, and ethical standards in medicines intended for children in India. (150 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the paediatric drug regulatory framework in India.
- Critically analyse the challenges in paediatric drug regulation in India.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

India is globally recognised as the "pharmacy of the world", supplying over 20% of global generic drugs and 60% of vaccines. However, this pharmaceutical strength contrasts sharply with its weak regulatory framework for paediatric drugs. Despite children constituting over 40% of India's population, drug development, clinical oversight, and ethical standards for paediatric use remain fragmented, underregulated, and poorly defined.

Body :

Challenges in Regulating Paediatric Medicines in India

- **Inconsistent and Weak Regulatory Oversight:** India's regulatory fragmentation between the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and various state drug controllers continues to cause enforcement gaps.
 - ◆ During the 2025 Madhya Pradesh cough syrup crisis, regulators found 364 violations at Sresan Pharmaceuticals, the firm producing Coldrif, which contained diethylene glycol (DEG), a toxic substance found in industrial solvents.
- **Absence of Dedicated Paediatric Pharmacovigilance:** Existing laws (*Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, National Policy for Children 2013*) do not address medicine safety for children specifically; Article 39(f) of the Constitution enjoins the State to protect children's health and development but is insufficiently operationalized in pharmacovigilance.
 - ◆ Drugs are often only tested for use in adults, with pediatric doses extrapolated from adult data, resulting in unsafe and non-optimized treatments for children.
- **Corruption, Negligence, and Poor Quality Control:** A recurring pattern of toxic contaminations shows that the problem is systemic, not accidental.
 - ◆ In 2022–2023, around 70 childhood deaths in Gambia and 18 in Uzbekistan were traced to Indian-made syrups.
- **Over-the-Counter (OTC) Misuse and Parental Unawareness:** Studies indicate most paediatric medicine purchases in India occur without prescriptions, especially in urban slum areas and Tier-2 towns.

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- **Absence of Comprehensive Paediatric Drug Policy:** India still lacks a **Paediatric Drug Regulation Authority** or dedicated **Child-Specific Medicines Code**, despite repeated **WHO** and **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** recommendations.

- ◆ Testing for **toxins** like **DEG** and **EG** became mandatory only for **export syrups** in **2023** after **WHO** alerts, not for **domestic sales**.

Measures to Strengthen the Regulatory Framework of Paediatric Medicines in India

- **Establish a National Paediatric Drug Safety and Ethics Authority (NPSEA):** India should create NPSEA under the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** to oversee **paediatric drug licensing, formulation approval, and ethical trials**.
 - ◆ The **Mashelkar Committee Report (2003)** highlighted the **inadequacy of India's drug regulatory infrastructure** and called for **greater budgetary allocation** to establish a **robust, "world-class" drug controlling authority**.
- **Zero Tolerance Regime and Criminal Accountability:** Amend the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act (1940)** to include **non-bailable offences** for deaths caused by **substandard paediatric medicines**.
 - ◆ Introduce **mandatory recall and disclosure policy**, with **real-time updates** to public health portals.
- **Create a National Paediatric Clinical Research and Data Ecosystem:** Establish a **national registry for Paediatric Clinical Trials (PCT-India)** to collect **pharmacodynamic and safety data**.
 - ◆ Offer **fiscal incentives** to pharma companies undertaking **ethical, India-specific paediatric R&D**.
- **Institutionalize Pharmacist and Caregiver Education:** Introduce **mandatory certification** in **paediatric dispensing protocols** for pharmacists under the **Pharmacy Council of India**.
 - ◆ Run **nationwide caregiver awareness drives** on **dosing and label reading** through schools and **Anganwadi centers**.
 - ◆ WHO's **"Make Medicines Child Size"** campaign (2007) improved **medication literacy** and **pharmacist training** in 40+ developing nations.

- **Mandatory Batch Testing and Supply Chain Traceability:** The approving agencies should ensure compulsory **multi-lab toxicological testing** (CDSCO + NABL-accredited labs) for all **paediatric formulations** before release.

- ◆ The government should implement **QR-based batch tracking** to trace product origin to the **raw chemical stage**.

- **International Benchmarking and Ethical Transparency:** India's **global pharmaceutical role** demands transparency aligned with **WHO standards** and **UNCRC (Article 24)**.

- ◆ India should commit to **international drug safety frameworks** such as **OECD pharmacovigilance standards** and **ICH E11(R1) guidelines** for paediatric medicine development.

Conclusion:

As the **WHO** emphasized, **"Every child deserves safe, quality healthcare from the very beginning."** To realize this vision, India's **pharmaceutical governance** must prioritize **ethical regulation, rigorous testing, effective federal coordination, and transparent accountability**. By adopting **WHO-aligned quality standards, strengthening pharmacovigilance systems, and designing paediatric-focused drug policies**, India can evolve from a **reactive framework** to a **proactive guardian of children's health rights**.

International Relations

11. "South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) aims to promote knowledge sharing and sustainable development among developing countries." Examine India's role in SSTC and its impact on global development partnerships. (250 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC).
- Discuss India's Role in Advancing South-South and Triangular Cooperation
- Discuss its impact on global development partnerships.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

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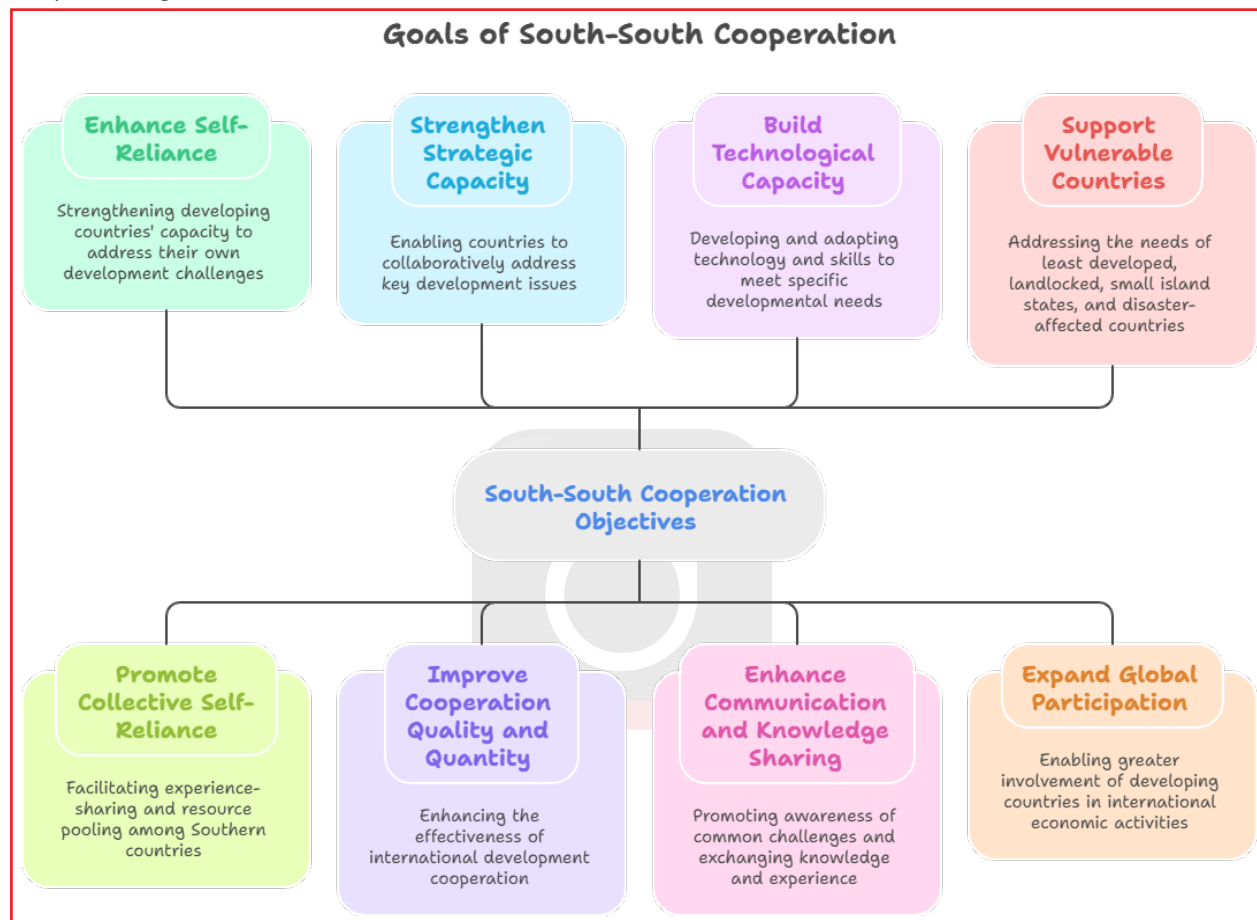


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Introduction:

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) is a collaborative development framework where two or more developing (Global South) countries exchange knowledge, skills, resources, and technology to advance mutual development goals, often with the support of a developed country or multilateral agency; it is guided by principles of equality, solidarity, respect for sovereignty, and aims to empower countries through shared experience and collective self-reliance, complementing traditional North-South aid.

**Body:****India's Role in Advancing South-South and Triangular Cooperation**

- **Leadership in Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing:** India launched the **India-UN Global Capacity-Building Initiative** to share Indian best practices with other Global South nations.
 - ◆ It facilitates **skills training, knowledge exchanges, pilot projects, and institutional cooperation** to accelerate the SDGs.
- **Contributions through the India-UN Development Partnership Fund:** Established in **2017** with a contribution of **\$150 million**, the fund backs **demand-driven, transformational projects** across the Global South.

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- **Promotion of Digital Public Infrastructure for Equitable Development:** India leverages scalable digital tools like **Aadhaar** and **UPI** to support **digital finance** in partner countries.
- **Institutionalising and Strengthening Regional Networks:** India hosts **Voice of the Global South Summits**, reinforcing its role as a **voice for developing countries**.
 - ◆ During its **G20 presidency**, India secured the **African Union's permanent membership** in the G20, enhancing the **political and economic influence** of Africa and other southern countries.
- **Innovative Agricultural and Food Security Initiatives:** Through partnerships with **ICRISAT** and **DAKSHIN (Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative)**, India promotes agricultural innovation and climate-smart farming.
- **Advocacy for Global South Priorities in Multilateral Forums:** India actively promotes initiatives such as the **UN Day for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC)**, emphasising **innovative collaborations**, **climate resilience**, and **socio-economic development**.
- **Cost-effective, Scalable, and Context-specific Development Solutions:** SSTC offers **locally tailored solutions** to pressing challenges like **climate change**, **health**, and **digital finance**.
 - ◆ The cooperation enables replication of **cost-effective innovations** such as India's **Aadhaar digital ID system** and **UPI payments model** shared with other developing countries.
- **Enhancing Institutional and Technical Capacities:** **South-South partnerships** strengthen **institutional capacities**, **technical knowledge**, and **resource mobilisation**.
 - ◆ **Costa Rica**, the **Dominican Republic**, and **Germany** collaborate through a **triangular partnership** on **coral reef restoration**, combining **finance**, **technical expertise**, and **community practices** to boost **reef resilience** and **marine biodiversity** in the Caribbean region.
- **Mainstreaming SSTC within Global Development Agendas:** SSTC is increasingly **institutionalised** in **UN policies** and **development frameworks**, with over **60 resolutions and outcome documents** recognising its importance.
 - ◆ **United Nations entities** are integrating **SSTC strategies** globally to support **member states** in areas such as **health**, **climate action**, **social protection**, and more, reflecting rising **demand** from **developing countries**.

Impact on Global Development Partnerships

- **Empowerment through Solidarity and Equality:** SSTC is based on principles of **mutual respect**, **solidarity**, **equality**, and **shared learning** among **developing countries**.
 - ◆ This approach builds **political and economic self-reliance** in the **Global South**, a key principle since the **1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action**.
- **Driving Global Economic Growth:** Countries of the **Global South** have contributed to over **half of the recent global economic growth**.
 - ◆ **Intra-South trade** now accounts for more than **one-quarter of world trade**, and **foreign direct investment (FDI) outflows** from the South represent a **third of global flows**.
 - ◆ SSTC harnesses these dynamics for **shared development outcomes**.

Conclusion:

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) embodies **solidarity** and **shared innovation** among **developing countries**, but its full potential requires addressing **funding**, **capacity**, and **coordination challenges**. It is crucial for advancing **sustainable** and **resilient development** aligned with the **SDGs**. Moving forward, **strengthening institutional capacities**, **scaling nature-positive solutions**, and **fostering inclusive partnerships** remain vital to harness SSTC's full potential for a **greener** and **equitable future**.

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12. India's foreign policy demonstrates a delicate balance between strategic cooperation with the United States and the pursuit of autonomy in relations with Russia and China. Comment.

Approach:

- Introduce the concept of strategic autonomy in India's foreign policy.
- Examine how India balances its relations with the United States, Russia, and China.
- Highlight the rationale for balance
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

India's foreign policy has evolved from **non-alignment** during the Cold War to **strategic autonomy, and Multi-alignment** in the contemporary multipolar order. This principle allows India to **pursue independent foreign policy choices** while engaging major powers to advance national interests. The simultaneous cooperation with the **United States** and partnership with **Russia** alongside managing complex ties with **China** reflects this calibrated balance.

Body:

● Strategic Cooperation with the United States:

- ◆ India-U.S. ties have deepened across **defence, trade, and technology** domains.
 - Foundational agreements like **LEMOA (2016)**, **COMCASA (2018)**, and **BECA (2020)** institutionalize defence collaboration.
- ◆ Engagement in the **QUAD** and **Indo-Pacific frameworks** aligns with India's maritime and security interests.
- ◆ The **Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET, 2023)** strengthens cooperation in AI, quantum computing, semiconductors, and space technology.
- ◆ The U.S. is now India's **largest trading partner**, with bilateral trade surpassing **USD 190 billion (2023–24)**; collaboration extends to **clean energy and climate initiatives**.
- ◆ The **4.8 million-strong Indian diaspora** in the U.S. acts as a bridge enhancing socio-economic and strategic engagement.

● Sustaining Partnership with Russia:

- ◆ Russia remains a key defence supplier (**S-400 systems, BrahMos, nuclear cooperation**) and a reliable partner in **energy and space sectors**.
- ◆ India continues engagement through **BRICS, SCO**, and **Eurasian platforms**, despite U.S. sanctions pressure.
- ◆ India has increased **oil imports from Russia** post-Ukraine crisis, ensuring affordable energy and diversifying supply sources.
- ◆ The **Annual India–Russia Summit** and **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue** sustain high-level engagement, reaffirming mutual trust.
- ◆ Collaboration in **civil nuclear projects (Kudankulam)** and **space technology (Gaganyaan support)** reflects enduring strategic alignment.

● Managing Relations with China:

- ◆ India maintains dialogue with China through **SCO** and **BRICS**, while countering Chinese assertiveness along the **LAC** and within the Indo-Pacific.
 - The approach combines **deterrence with diplomacy**, avoiding bloc alignment.
- ◆ Despite political and security frictions, China remains one of India's **largest trading partners**, with **bilateral trade exceeding USD 118 billion (2023–24)**.
 - However, India faces a **trade deficit of over USD 100 billion**, largely due to dependence on **Chinese imports in electronics, pharmaceuticals, and machinery**; this remains a major strategic vulnerability.

Rationale for Balance:

- **Preserving Strategic Flexibility:** Prevents dependence on any bloc while expanding options in global affairs.
- **Agency over Alignment:** India exercises **independent agency**, choosing cooperation based on national interest, not camp politics.
- **Equidistant Diplomacy:** Maintains calibrated engagement with competing powers to maximise strategic space.

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- **Principled Pragmatism:** Balances **moral commitments (rule-based order)** with **pragmatic choices** rooted in security and development needs.

Conclusion:

India's foreign policy exemplifies **multi-alignment** cooperating with diverse powers while avoiding dependence on any single bloc. As **Dr. S. Jaishankar** highlights in *The India Way*, India's diplomacy is guided by the need to **manage differences rather than choose sides**, advancing its national interests through **pragmatic engagement and balanced partnerships**.

13. "Engagement without formal recognition" sums up India's approach to the Taliban-led regime in Afghanistan. Critically examine this policy in terms of India's security, economic and ethical interests. (250 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to India's approach to the Taliban-led regime in Afghanistan.
- Critically examine this policy.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Engagement without formal recognition aptly characterises India's measured and pragmatic approach toward the **Taliban-led regime in Afghanistan**. While India has refrained from officially recognising the Taliban, it continues limited diplomatic and humanitarian engagement to safeguard its **security, economic, and ethical interests**. This policy reflects a balance between **strategic necessity and moral restraint**.

Body :

India's Security Interests

- **Strategic Geopolitical Partnership:** India considers Afghanistan vital for **regional security** and countering adversarial influence, particularly **Pakistan's**.
 - ◆ Deterioration in **Afghan-Pakistan relations** influenced India's **strategic calculus** for engaging the **Taliban** as a **counterbalance** to Pakistan's **regional influence**
 - ◆ India's support for the **Northern Alliance** in the 1990s and its role as one of Afghanistan's **largest**

regional development partners showcase a long-term **strategic commitment**.

- **Counterterrorism Collaboration:** Post-2001, India actively engaged in **capacity building** of Afghan security forces to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a **terror hub**.
 - ◆ The recent pledge by the **Taliban-led Afghan government** not to allow the use of Afghan soil against India marks evolving **counterterrorism cooperation** amid shifting realities.
- **Diplomatic Engagement Amid Political Shifts:** India's recent **diplomatic outreach** to **Taliban-led Afghanistan**—including **upgrading its Kabul mission to full embassy status** and hosting **Taliban diplomats**—demonstrates **pragmatic diplomacy** balancing **recognition hesitancy** with ground realities.
 - ◆ India-Afghanistan ties counterbalance **China's growing Central Asian influence** and **Pakistan's destabilizing activities**.
 - ◆ India's participation in regional forums like the **Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process** further reinforces its role in promoting **political cooperation** and **regional connectivity**.
- **Security Concerns:** Despite **diplomatic engagement**, **terrorism** remains a grave challenge.
 - ◆ The **Taliban's historic links** with terrorist groups like **Lashkar-e-Taiba** and **Jaish-e-Mohammed** raise fears of **Afghanistan** serving as a **safe haven** for anti-India militants.
 - ◆ **Afghanistan's position** as the world's largest **opium producer**, forming the core of the **Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan)**, fuels **regional instability**.

India's Economic Interests

- **Economic and Trade Connectivity:** With Afghanistan's **mineral wealth** valued between **\$1-3 trillion**, India sees **economic opportunities** in mining and trade.
 - ◆ Enables India to participate in regional forums and infrastructure projects such as **Chabahar Port (Iran-Afghanistan-India corridor)** to bypass Pakistan and facilitate trade.

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- **Safeguarding Development and Reconstruction Contributions:** India has invested heavily in infrastructure projects: **Salma Dam**, **Zaranj-Delaram highway** (strategic trade route bypassing Pakistan), **Kabul's parliament building**, hospitals, and power substations, showing India's commitment to **Afghan development** as a form of **soft power**.
- A stable Afghanistan is essential for India's "**Connect Central Asia**" policy, **Chabahar Port project**, and the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**.
- **Economic and Infrastructure Challenges:** Afghanistan remains one of the world's **poorest countries**.
 - ◆ **Security concerns** impede India's **multiple investment projects**, such as the **Salma Dam** and the **Kabul parliament**.
 - ◆ **Also, China's expanding role** in Afghanistan, including **dialogue with the Taliban** and **infrastructure investments**, presents a **strategic challenge** for India.

Ethical and Humanitarian Dimensions

- **Balancing values and realism:** India faces the dilemma of upholding **democratic and human rights principles** while ensuring **humanitarian support** for the Afghan people.
 - ◆ Recognising the Taliban would contradict India's commitment to gender equality and inclusive governance.
- **Support for Afghan women and minorities:** While India continues to advocate **education and rights for women**, the lack of formal recognition limits its ability to influence **human rights reforms** within Afghanistan.
 - ◆ The exclusion of **women journalists** during the **2025 Taliban visit** to India sparked criticism but underscored India's challenge to balance **ethical concerns** with **diplomacy**.
- **Moral leadership:** India's cautious stance aligns with its global image as a **responsible democracy**, showing empathy without legitimising an oppressive regime.

Strategic Steps Should India Take to Strengthen ties with Afghanistan

- **Sustain Diplomatic Engagement while Withholding Full Recognition:** India should continue to maintain

and **deepen official channels** (full embassy, regular diplomatic exchanges) without immediate political recognition.

- **Expand Targeted Development & Humanitarian Diplomacy:** India should continue to counter the rising **Chinese influence** by expanding **capacity-building aid**, **infrastructure cooperation**, and **diplomatic engagement**, maintaining **strategic autonomy**—a principle highlighted in India's **foreign policy doctrines** like "**Act East**" and "**Neighbourhood First**."
- **Strengthen Counter-terrorism Cooperation:** Drawing from the **2011 Strategic Partnership Agreement**, India should continue to support **Afghan security capacity-building programs**, reflecting international best practices for **counterterrorism cooperation**.
- **Secure Economic Connectivity & Goeconomic Options:** Expand trade and investment via alternative routes and projects that bypass hostile transit and pursue resource-sector partnerships with clear safeguards.
 - ◆ **For instance**, Economic engagement through the use of **Chabahar Port**, resumption of the **India-Afghanistan Air Freight Corridor (2025)**, etc.
- **Multilateral & Regional Cooperation to Share Burden and Legitimacy:** Work through **Heart of Asia**, **SCO**, **Moscow Format**, **UN** and partner countries (Iran, Central Asian states) for coordinated aid, counterterror, and reconstruction plans.
- **Advocacy for Social, Gender, and Human Rights Concerns:** India's **engagement strategy** may resemble **EU's cautious diplomacy** with countries under **authoritarian rule**, where **aid is conditional on reforms**.
 - ◆ At the same time, **India should continue to expand scholarships**, vocational training, cultural exchanges, and media/communication outreach that reach ordinary Afghans.

Conclusion:

India-Afghanistan **relations** today reflect **strategic pragmatism** blended with deep **historical ties**. As **Harsh Pant (Foreign Policy Expert)** observes, "**Engagement** does not equate to **endorsement**," highlighting India's delicate

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balance between **principled concerns** and **realpolitik**. The path forward demands **patient, principled engagement**, robust **humanitarian aid**, and **multilateral collaboration** to safeguard India's **interests** while supporting Afghanistan's **peace and progress**.

Social Justice

14. Examine the key factors driving women's empowerment in India and analyse the major barriers that continue to impede its full realization. (150 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the process of women's empowerment in India.
- Examine the key factors driving women's empowerment in India.
- Analyse the major barriers that continue to impede its full realization
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Women's empowerment refers to the process of enhancing women's ability to participate fully and equally in political, economic, social, and cultural life. In India, empowerment is both a **constitutional promise** and a **developmental necessity**, central to achieving inclusive growth and social justice. Over the decades, India has witnessed significant progress in education, health, and political participation of women. Yet, deep-rooted structural and cultural barriers continue to limit their full realization.

Body:

The key factors driving women's empowerment in India

- **Increasing Female Literacy:** India's female literacy rate was projected at around **70.3% in 2025**, showing a steady upward trend thanks to government schemes like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**.
- **Rising Workforce Participation:** Female labour force participation rate has shown encouraging growth, reaching **41.7% in 2023-24**, up from under 30% a decade ago.
- **Entrepreneurship and Economic Independence:** Women-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

(MSMEs) have nearly doubled over the last decade to about **1.92 crore enterprises in 2023-24**.

- **Political Representation:** Women's representation in local governance remains robust, with nearly **46% of elected representatives** at the **Panchayati Raj Institutions** being women, supported by several **state-level provisions** for up to **50% reservation**.

◆ The landmark **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023)** mandates a **33% reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies**, currently awaiting implementation post-delimitation.

- **Health and Safety Improvements:** Key health indicators for women have improved, with the **maternal mortality rate** declining to **97 per 100,000 live births** and **institutional deliveries** reaching over **88%**.
- **Legal and Social Reforms:** Laws like the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, Nirbhaya Act**, and amendments to **sexual harassment laws** provide **legal support and deterrence**, although **enforcement gaps** remain.
- **Cultural and Societal Shifts:** Campaigns on **gender equality** and **women's rights** are slowly redefining **cultural expectations** and encouraging **self-confidence** among women.

The major barriers that continue to impede its full realization

- **Labour Force Exclusion and Informalisation:** Over **90% of working women** are in the **informal sector**, lacking **social security and career growth**, while India's **female labour force participation** remains nearly **half that of men** and below the **global average of 48.7%**.
- **Political Underrepresentation and Tokenism:** Women hold only about **14% of seats in Parliament** (18th Lok Sabha), with even fewer in **state legislatures**.
◆ Political power is further diluted by practices like the **"sarpanch-pati" system**, where male relatives act on behalf of **elected women**.
- **Health Inequality and Gendered Neglect:** Despite improvements, **systemic health barriers** persist. **NFHS-5** reports **57% of women aged 15-49** are **anaemic**, contributing to **poor physical well-being**.

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- **Educational Disparities and Skill Disconnect:** While enrollment has increased, learning outcome gaps, high dropout rates, and underrepresentation in STEM remain challenges.
- **Digital and Infrastructure Exclusion:** The NSO survey reveals that 51.6% of women aged 15 years and above in rural areas do not own a mobile phone, highlighting a significant digital gender divide.
- **Socio-Cultural Patriarchy and Stereotypes:** Entrenched patriarchal norms restrict women's choices around education, careers, and personal freedoms.

- **Gender-Based Violence and Safety Concerns:** With over 445,000 cases reported in 2022, crimes against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and dowry deaths, remain pervasive.

Conclusion:

To achieve true equality (SDG 5), persistent barriers must be addressed via holistic policies such as gender budgeting, quality education, accessible healthcare, and robust infrastructure. As Jawaharlal Nehru famously noted, "To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves."



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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-3

Economy

15. India's manufacturing sector shows momentum but faces persistent bottlenecks. Critically examine the challenges in this sector and suggest reforms in light of recent initiatives. (250 words)

Approach:

- Begin by highlighting the significance of the manufacturing sector in India.
- Highlight the persistent challenges and bottlenecks in India's Manufacturing Sector.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Manufacturing, the backbone of economic development, contributes nearly 17% of India's GDP. The sector showed 4.26% growth in FY 2024–25, with manufacturing exports rising 2.52% YoY to USD 184.13 billion and FDI inflows reaching USD 81.04 billion (14% YoY growth). Despite these gains, the sector faces structural bottlenecks that limit its full potential.

Body:

Key Challenges Facing India's Manufacturing Sector

- **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** India's logistics costs have fallen to 7.97% of GDP, showing notable efficiency gains.
 - ◆ Yet, gaps in multimodal connectivity continue to hinder seamless integration of road, rail, and ports.
 - ◆ Frequent power outages, inadequate water supply, and poor transport networks disrupt manufacturing efficiency.
- **Regulatory and Policy Bottlenecks:** Complex regulations and multiple clearances increase transaction costs.
 - ◆ India's manufacturing MSMEs face over 1,450 regulatory obligations annually across labour, environment, taxation, and corporate laws, making compliance complex and time-consuming.

- **Skill Gap:** Only 4.7% of India's workforce has formal skill training versus 96% in South Korea.
 - ◆ Lack of trained manpower restricts productivity, quality control, and adoption of advanced technologies.
- **Access to Finance:** MSMEs struggle with limited access to affordable credit and face working capital shortages.
 - ◆ As of March 2025, the total commercial credit exposure to MSMEs in India reached ₹35.2 lakh crore (USD 4.3 trillion), growing by 13% year-on-year. Yet, a significant credit gap remains, limiting many MSMEs' growth and modernization.
- **Global Competition and Innovation Deficit:** Indian manufacturers face stiff competition from low-cost producers like China and Vietnam.
 - ◆ Limited investment in R&D, weak design capabilities, and dependence on imported technology reduce competitiveness.
- **Environmental and Sustainability Pressures:** Manufacturing is resource-intensive, straining water, land, and energy.
 - ◆ Pressure to decarbonize and meet net-zero 2070 targets adds compliance costs.
- **Trade & Market Access Barriers:** Non-tariff barriers in developed countries limit exports.
 - ◆ Developed countries impose NTBs such as stringent product standards, carbon taxes, deforestation regulations, and certification requirements that restrict Indian exports.
 - For example, the European Union's carbon border adjustment tax and forestry regulations have become hurdles for Indian goods.
- **Slow Technological Adoption:** India's Industry 4.0 market size was valued at around USD 5.5 billion in 2024 and is projected to grow to nearly USD 27 billion by 2033, at a CAGR of 19.2%.

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- ◆ Despite this rapid growth, **adoption** remains **uneven** and comparatively **slow among MSMEs** and **traditional manufacturers**.

Measures to Strengthen Manufacturing Momentum in India

- **Simplify Regulatory Frameworks:** Fast-track **land acquisition**, rationalize **taxes**, and improve **contract enforcement**, as per **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry** recommendations.
- **Augment R&D Investment:** Allocate more funds for **innovation** and promote **industry-academia collaboration** in **emerging sectors**, following **Korean** and **German innovation clusters**.
- **Expand Credit to MSMEs:** Implement **specialized financing schemes** and **Credit Guarantee Funds** for **MSMEs** and **startups**.
- **Accelerate Infrastructure Build-Out:** Ensure **reliable power**, **transport**, **water**, and **digital connectivity** by completing pending **industrial corridor projects** and expanding **dedicated freight corridors**.
- **Promote Export Competitiveness:** Lower **logistics costs**, negotiate **trade agreements** for better **market access**, and incentivize **standards certification** for **global markets**.
- **Integrate Sustainability:** Launch **Green Manufacturing Missions** to align with **SDGs** and global requirements, and incentivize **energy-efficient technologies**.

Conclusion:

India's **manufacturing sector** is set for **robust expansion**, driven by **policy pushes**, **global demand shifts**, and **technology adoption**. Achieving a **25% GDP share** and **global leadership in manufacturing** requires **visionary reforms**, **sustained investment**, and **collaborative efforts** across **stakeholders** and **sectors**.

16. "The proposed GST 2.0 seeks to address the structural inefficiencies of India's indirect tax framework. Critically examine its rationale and challenges for transforming India's indirect tax regime. (250 words)"

Approach :

- Provide a brief introduction to the GST2.0 reforms.
- Discuss the rationale behind the recent GST reforms in India.
- Highlight the challenges that emerged in the course of GST reforms.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

The **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** introduced through the **101st Constitutional Amendment Act 2017** is a comprehensive indirect tax on goods and services in India. Over time, GST faced challenges such as **multiple rates**, **inverted duty structures**, and **high compliance costs**.

- **GST 2.0** simplifies the system by adopting a **two-tier structure** with 5 percent for essential items, 18 percent for standard goods, and a 40 percent demerit rate for luxury and sin goods, making the tax regime **more efficient, transparent, and growth-oriented**.

Body :

Rationale Behind the Recent GST Reforms in India:

- **Lower Prices, Higher Demand:** Reduced GST rates make goods and services cheaper, increasing **household savings** and stimulating **consumption**, especially in essential and employment-intensive sectors.
 - ◆ The reforms are expected to **stimulate domestic demand**, **encourage formalization of the economy**, and contribute to **long-term fiscal stability**.
- **Support for MSMEs:** Lower input costs on items like **cement**, **auto parts**, and **handicrafts** make **micro, small, and medium enterprises** more competitive and promote **entrepreneurship**.
- **Ease of Compliance:** The simplified **two-rate structure** reduces **tax disputes**, accelerates **decision-making**, and lowers **compliance costs** for businesses.
 - ◆ Evidence from past reforms suggests that **lower rates combined with better compliance** can **increase GST collections** in the medium term.
- **Wider Tax Base :** Simpler rates encourage voluntary compliance, **broadening the tax net** and potentially improving **government revenues** over time.

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- **Support for Manufacturing:** Correcting inverted duty structures enhances domestic value addition, strengthens export competitiveness, and boosts the Make in India initiative.
- **Social Protection:** Exemptions on insurance and essential medicines strengthen household security and improve access to healthcare, addressing equity concerns.
- **Consumption and Production Efficiency:** By eliminating cascading taxes and rationalizing rates, GST 2.0 promotes resource allocation efficiency across sectors.

Issues have Emerged in the Course of GST Reforms

- **Fiscal Revenue Shortfall:** The reforms entail significant revenue loss, with estimates around ₹48,000 crore annually, primarily due to reduced rates and zero-rating of many goods.
 - ◆ This creates fiscal pressure on both the central and state governments, forcing them to either cut expenditures or increase borrowing.
- **Input Tax Credit (ITC) and Cascading Tax Issues:** Exemptions and zero-rated supplies restrict eligibility for ITC, leading to cascading taxes on inputs.
- **Rate Structure and Classification Ambiguities:** Simplification to fewer slabs helps but classification disputes persist over which goods fall under given categories.
 - ◆ Special rates and the new 40% slab for sin goods increase complexity in areas such as luxury and harmful goods taxation.
- **Compliance Complexity and Technological Integration:** Although slabs are rationalized, businesses face transitional compliance burdens, including recalibrating pricing, billing systems, and ERP updates.
 - ◆ MSMEs may lack the capacity to swiftly adapt, facing higher compliance costs and learning curves.
 - ◆ The GST Network (GSTN) and government leverage technologies like AI and data analytics to improve compliance and detect evasion, but frequent rule changes still complicate adherence.
- **Enforcement and Dispute Resolution Delays:** The GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT), essential for resolving disputes quickly, remains non-functional or delayed in several states.

Measures to Strengthen GST 2.0 Reforms

- **Strengthen GST Administration:** Enhance the GST Network (GSTN) and use AI/data analytics to improve compliance monitoring and reduce evasion.
- **Support MSMEs:** Provide capacity building, simplified compliance, and technological assistance to help small businesses adapt to new slabs.
- **Monitor Fiscal Impact:** Use targeted fiscal measures or liquidity management to offset revenue shortfall without compromising social and infrastructure spending.
- **Seamless Input Tax Credit (ITC) Mechanism:** Ensuring a frictionless ITC chain prevents working capital blockages for businesses.
 - ◆ Linking ITC eligibility with real-time invoice matching can reduce fraud while maintaining liquidity.
- **Promote Awareness and Training:** Conduct taxpayer education campaigns for businesses and consumers on new rates and compliance procedures.
 - ◆ Expand digital invoicing, e-way bills, and automation to reduce administrative burden.

Conclusion:

The Next-Generation GST reforms represent a bold step towards building a simpler, fairer, and future-ready tax architecture. By reducing the tax burden on citizens and empowering farmers, MSMEs, women, youth, and middle-class families, GST 2.0 lays the foundation for inclusive prosperity, fiscal resilience, and global competitiveness.

17. Fiscal health determines the developmental resilience of a state. How can the FHI (Fiscal Health Index) help bridge the gap between fiscal capacity and fiscal performance across Indian states? (150 words)

Approach:

- Begin by defining Fiscal Health and the Fiscal Health Index (FHI).
- Highlight the challenges in Fiscal Capacity–Performance Gap.
- Discuss the role of FHI in bridging these gaps.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

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Introduction:

Fiscal health reflects a state's ability to **mobilise revenue**, **manage expenditure**, and **sustain debt**, directly affecting its **developmental resilience** — maintaining **welfare spending** and handling **economic shocks**. The **Fiscal Health Index (FHI)** by **NITI Aayog** evaluates the fiscal health of **18 major states**, considering their **GDP contribution**, **demography**, **public expenditure**, **revenues**, and overall **fiscal stability**.

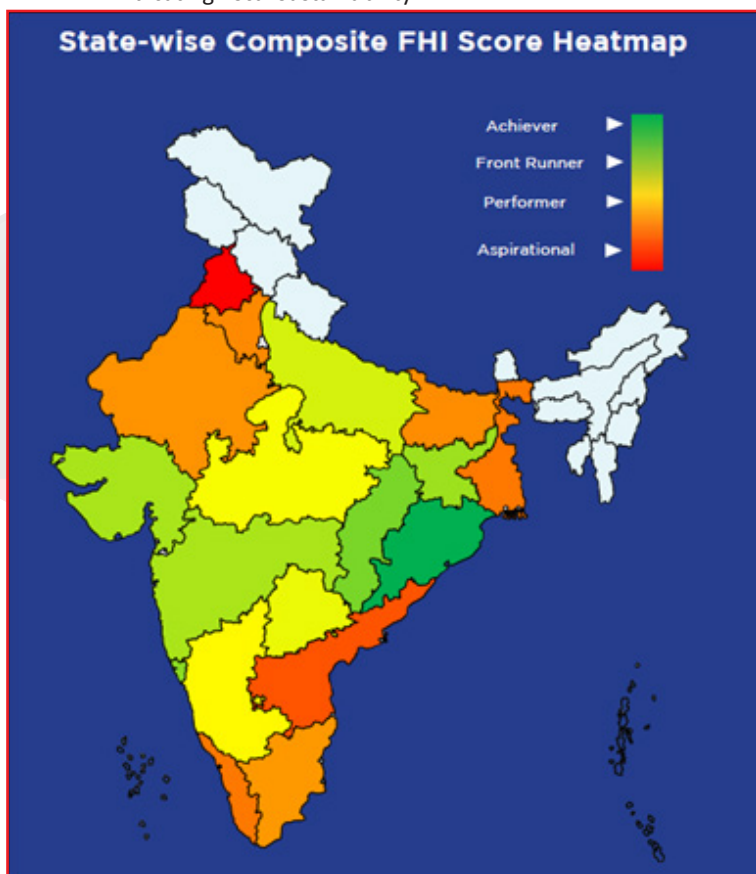
Body :**Challenges in Bridging the Fiscal Capacity–Performance Gap**

- **Unequal Revenue Bases:** Industrialised states like **Gujarat** generate higher tax revenue than agrarian states like **Jharkhand**, limiting fiscal flexibility.
- **Dependence on Central Transfers:** States like **Bihar** rely heavily on **Finance Commission grants** and **GST compensation**, reducing fiscal autonomy.
- **Inefficient Expenditure Management:** Poor planning in a few states like **Uttar Pradesh** increases debt without improving service delivery.
- **Populist Schemes:** Excessive subsidies in **West Bengal** strain finances, affecting sustainable development.
- **Debt Burden:** High borrowing for recurring expenditure in **Kerala** limits capital investment in infrastructure and welfare programs.

Role of Fiscal Health Index (FHI)

- The FHI helps bridge the Fiscal Capacity–Performance Gap by acting as a diagnostic and policy tool.
- FHI ranks states based on five key sub-indices:

- ◆ **Quality of Expenditure:** Measures the proportion of spending on long-term growth (developmental) vs. routine operations (non-developmental).
 - Assesses capital investments as a share of economic output.
- ◆ **Revenue Mobilisation:** Reflects a state's ability to generate its own revenue and cover its expenditures independently.
- ◆ **Fiscal Prudence:** Tracks deficits (fiscal and revenue) and borrowing relative to economic output, signalling fiscal health.
- ◆ **Debt Index:** Assesses the state's debt burden, focusing on interest payments and liabilities relative to economic size.
- ◆ **Debt Sustainability:** Compares Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth to interest payments, with a positive difference indicating fiscal sustainability.

State-wise Composite FHI Score Heatmap**Conclusion:**

The **Fiscal Health Index (FHI)** provides a **framework** to align **fiscal capacity** with **performance**. By **benchmarking** states, promoting

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transparency, and incentivising reforms, FHI strengthens fiscal federalism and enhances developmental resilience. States adopting FHI-driven reforms can achieve efficient spending, sustainable borrowing, and strategic investments in human and physical capital, fostering equitable and resilient development across India.

18. "India's startup ecosystem is dynamic but lacks future readiness." Critically examine. (250 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to India's startup ecosystem.
- Discuss the dynamism of India's startup ecosystem.
- Highlight the concerns over its future readiness.
- Suggest measures to enhance its future readiness.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

India's startup ecosystem has emerged as one of the most vibrant globally, driving innovation, job creation, and digital transformation. With over 1.95 lakh DPIIT-recognized startups (2025) across 800+ districts, India is the third-largest startup hub after the US and China. Yet, despite this dynamism, concerns persist about its future readiness—the ability to sustain innovation, adapt to technological disruptions, and remain globally competitive in the long term.

Body:

Dynamism of India's Startup Ecosystem

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) & Financial Inclusion:** The massive rollout of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)—notably UPI and Aadhaar—has radically reduced the cost of access and transaction friction, creating fertile ground for Fintech and E-commerce startups.
 - ◆ The Fintech revolution is driving financial inclusion, enabling startups to instantly verify users and process small-value payments at scale.
 - ◆ UPI recorded 19.63 billion transactions worth ₹24.90 lakh crore (Sept 2025), demonstrating the foundation for models like Quick Commerce.
- **Supportive Government Policies and Regulatory Framework:** Government initiatives like Startup India

and schemes such as the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) have created an enabling policy environment through compliance simplification and targeted funding.

- ◆ This state support, along with tax exemptions and fast-tracked IPR approvals, has de-risked entrepreneurship, especially in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.
- **Maturing Venture Capital and Private Equity Landscape:** Despite global uncertainty, India's VC ecosystem remains resilient, shifting toward sound unit economics and deep-tech investments.
 - ◆ In 2024, VC funding surged 43% YoY to \$13.7 billion, with seed-stage startups growing 29%, signalling investor confidence in early innovation.
- **Large and Rapidly Digitising Domestic Market:** India's vast population and growing internet penetration create a massive digital market.
 - ◆ Projected to account for 16% of global consumption (PPP) by 2050, India's consumer technology sector attracted \$5.4 billion in 2024, driven by digital demand.
- **Growing Focus on Deep-Tech and AI Innovation:** A pivot toward Deep-Tech, Generative AI, CleanTech, and SpaceTech is evident, backed by the National Deep-Tech Startup Policy.
 - ◆ Startups like Niramai, using AI for non-invasive breast cancer screening, exemplify social-impact innovation. Deep-Tech funding rose 78% in 2024 to \$1.6 billion, with 87% in AI-led ventures.
- **Abundant and Skilled Talent Pool:** India's demographic dividend and competitive engineering workforce sustain startup growth.
 - ◆ Platforms like Scaler retrain engineers in data science and AI, bridging skill gaps. The working-age population is expected to reach 1 billion by 2047, reinforcing human capital for innovation.
- **Global Ecosystem Integration and Cross-Border Collaborations:** Through platforms like the G20 Startup20 Engagement Group, India is building global linkages, simplifying Foreign Venture Capital Investor

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(FVCI) norms and removing the **Angel Tax**, making it the **second-largest VC destination in Asia-Pacific (2024)**.

Concerns over Future Readiness

- **Prolonged Funding Winter and Valuation Correction:** The ongoing **funding winter** and valuation corrections have disrupted growth, with **funding dropping to \$10 billion (2023)**. This cautious shift slows **Unicorn creation** and strains early-stage startups.
- **Critical Talent Shortage and Skill Gap in Deep-Tech:** A severe **skill mismatch** persists in **AI, ML, and cybersecurity**.
 - ◆ Only **42.6% of Indian graduates** were employable in 2024, down from 44.3% in 2023.
- **High Geographic Concentration of Startup Activity:** Startup activity remains concentrated in **Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, and Mumbai**, which account for **83% of Unicorns**, limiting the rise of Tier-2 and Tier-3 hubs.
- **Persistent Gender Disparity and Funding Gap:** Only **18% of startups** were **women-led (2022)**, and **VC funding for women fell to 9.3% (2023)**, reflecting systemic gender bias.
- **Complex and Evolving Regulatory Landscape:** Despite reforms, startups face **regulatory uncertainty**, especially with new laws like the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023**, adding compliance burdens.
- **Limited Exit Avenues and Investor Lock-in:** Weak **IPO** and **M&A** pipelines hinder **exit opportunities**. While **\$5 billion in exits (2024)** occurred, inconsistent public market performance deters large-scale listings.

Measures to Enhance Future Readiness

- **Regulatory Simplification and Single-Window Clearance:** A unified **digital compliance platform** with graded obligations based on business scale would reduce uncertainty and enhance predictability.
- **Deep-Tech and R&D Innovation Hubs:** Creating **AI, biotech, clean energy, and defense innovation clusters** with **university-industry linkages** and **tax incentives** can bridge research-commercialization gaps.
- **Decentralized Access to Capital:** Regional **startup funds** combining **government seed capital, private**

equity, and CSR financing can democratize funding beyond metros.

- **Global Market Access Platforms:** Establishing **Startup Embassies** abroad and **cross-border e-commerce frameworks** can help Indian startups scale internationally.
- **Talent Mobility and Entrepreneurial Skilling:** Introducing **entrepreneurial sabbaticals, gig-friendly labor laws, and future-skilling programs** can align workforce readiness with startup needs.
- **Public Procurement as a Catalyst:** Integrating startups in **public procurement** through **GeM** and **smart city projects** can provide stable demand.
- **Sustainable and Inclusive Startup Policies:** Embedding **ESG-linked incentives**, supporting **green innovation** and **women-led enterprises**, ensures social and environmental sustainability.

Conclusion:

India's startup ecosystem is transitioning from metro-centric growth to a **broad-based innovation movement**. As **Aravind Srinivas, CEO of Perplexity**, notes, "*Indians can build firms, not just manage them.*" To realize this vision, India must embed **sustainability, diversity, and frontier technologies** while ensuring **equitable access to capital and talent**. Strengthening these pillars will ensure a **self-reliant, globally competitive, and resilient** future for Indian startups.

Biodiversity and Environment

19. While mining drives economic growth and industrial development, it simultaneously threatens ecological balance. Examine how mining activities contribute to environmental degradation and suggest sustainable strategies to minimise their adverse impacts. (150 words)

Approach:

- Briefly introduce the significance of the mining sector.
- Examine how mining activities contribute to environmental degradation.
- Suggest sustainable strategies to minimise their adverse impacts.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

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Introduction:

Mining is a crucial driver of India's industrialisation, providing raw materials for sectors like energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing. However, unsustainable mining practices have led to severe ecological degradation. India, being the world's **second-largest coal producer** and among the top ten mineral-rich nations, faces a dual challenge — ensuring economic growth while safeguarding the environment.

Body :**Environmental Impacts of Mining**

- **Deforestation and Loss of Biodiversity:** Mining in forest-rich regions like **Odisha, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh** causes large-scale deforestation.
 - ◆ Between 2014–15 and 2023–24, under the *Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980*, about **1.74 lakh hectares** of forest land were diverted for non-forestry uses, with the **mining and quarrying sector alone accounting for around 23% (40,096 ha)** of the total diversion.
 - ◆ Habitat fragmentation threatens species such as elephants and leopards in central India.
- **Soil and Land Degradation:** Open-cast mining strips away fertile topsoil, rendering land barren.
 - ◆ Reports indicate that coal mining has led to the degradation of nearly **35% of the native land cover** in India's **central coal belt**, severely impacting local ecosystems.
- **Water Pollution and Scarcity:** Acid mine drainage contaminates rivers with heavy metals like arsenic and mercury.
 - ◆ Coal mining in **Jharia and Singrauli** has polluted groundwater, affecting local communities.
 - ◆ Over-extraction lowers the water table, aggravating water scarcity.
- **Air and Noise Pollution:** Dust emissions from blasting and transport increase particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) levels.
 - ◆ According to **CPCB data**, mining belts like Dhanbad and Korba often exceed safe air quality limits.
- **Climate Change Contribution:** Mining, processing, and transportation collectively emit large amounts of **CO₂ and methane**, intensifying India's carbon footprint.

Sustainable Strategies for Mitigation

- **Adoption of Eco-friendly Mining Practices:** Use of **remote sensing, drone surveys, and green explosives** to minimise land disturbance.
 - ◆ Implementation of **Mine Closure and Reclamation Plans (MCRP)** under the **MMDR Act, 2015**.
- **Strengthening Environmental Governance:** Enforce stricter **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)** and post-clearance monitoring.
 - ◆ Transparent digital tracking of mine operations through the **STAR Rating System** by the Ministry of Mines.
- **Rehabilitation and Afforestation:** Mandatory afforestation in mined-out areas under the **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)**.
 - ◆ Community-driven reforestation in states like Odisha shows encouraging results.
- **Promoting Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency:** Recycling of metals and use of mine waste for construction materials reduce virgin extraction.
 - ◆ Encouraging **urban mining** for e-waste recovery supports sustainable mineral sourcing.
- **Community Participation and CSR:** Active involvement of **local communities** in mine planning, monitoring, and rehabilitation ensures **transparency** and **shared ownership**.
 - ◆ **CSR initiatives** focused on **healthcare, education, and alternative livelihood generation** help **diversify income sources, reduce dependence on mining, and promote long-term socio-economic resilience**.

Conclusion:

As India **aims for net-zero emissions by 2070**, aligning mining practices with environmental ethics and sustainability is no longer a choice but an imperative. A **"green mining" approach — combining technology, regulation, and community engagement** — can ensure that mineral wealth becomes a source of sustainable development, not ecological destruction.

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Science & Technology

20. India's space programme has evolved from a tool for scientific exploration to an instrument of socio-economic transformation. Discuss. (150 words)

Approach:

- Begin by highlighting India's space journey.
- Discuss the socio-economic contributions of India's Space Programme.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

India's space journey began with the launch of **Aryabhata in 1975**, marking the country's foray into **satellite technology and scientific research**. Initially aimed at **scientific advancement and technological self-reliance**, India's space programme, led by **ISRO**, has gradually evolved into a significant **instrument of socio-economic transformation**, supporting agriculture, education, healthcare, disaster management, and governance. This evolution highlights how space technology has moved from research labs to directly impacting the lives of millions of Indians.

Body :

Socio-Economic Contributions of India's Space Programme

- **Scientific Exploration and Technological Foundations:**
 - ◆ The development of **SLV, ASLV, PSLV, and GSLV** established indigenous launch capabilities.
 - ◆ Missions like **Chandrayaan-1, Mangalyaan, and Astrosat** enhanced India's global scientific credibility.
- **Agriculture and Food Security:**
 - ◆ **IRS satellites** provide **crop monitoring, yield estimation, drought prediction, and soil health mapping**.
 - ◆ These tools support **farmer decision-making** and strengthen **food security**.
- **Disaster Management:**
 - ◆ Satellites such as **INSAT and RISAT** enable **early warning systems for cyclones, floods, and forest fires**.
 - ◆ During the **Odisha cyclone 2021**, satellite data facilitated **timely evacuation and relief planning**.

● Telecommunication, Education, and Digital Inclusion:

- ◆ **GSAT satellites** improve **rural connectivity, tele-education, and e-governance**.
- ◆ Programs like **EDUSAT** enable **remote learning in inaccessible regions**.

● Healthcare and Environment Monitoring:

- ◆ Satellite imagery aids in **epidemiological mapping, pollution monitoring, and climate observation**, informing **public health and environmental policies**.

● Navigation and Transportation:

- ◆ **NavIC (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System)** enhances **maritime safety, urban transport planning, and logistics efficiency**.

● Economic Growth and Private Sector Participation

- ◆ **Commercial satellite launches** generate revenue and foster **start-ups and technology spin-offs**.
- ◆ Initiatives like **Antrix and NSIL** support private sector engagement in satellite manufacturing.

● Strategic and Diplomatic Influence:

- ◆ India leverages space for **international partnerships** with countries like the **USA, France, and Japan**, enhancing **geopolitical influence**.

Conclusion:

India's space programme has transformed from a **scientific exploration tool** to a **catalyst for socio-economic development**, impacting agriculture, disaster management, healthcare, education, governance, and economic growth. As **Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** noted, Space technology is a central tool for socio-economic transformation of a nation. Leveraging space innovations for both science and society ensures **long-term developmental benefits and national progress**.

21. AI holds the potential to bridge governance gaps or exacerbate digital divides. Examine how the IndiaAI Mission can promote equitable access to AI benefits across different regions and sectors in India. (250 words)

Introduction:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a transformative technology that can **bridge governance gaps**, enhance **service delivery**, and improve **decision-making**. At the same time, uneven access risks **exacerbating digital divides** across regions,

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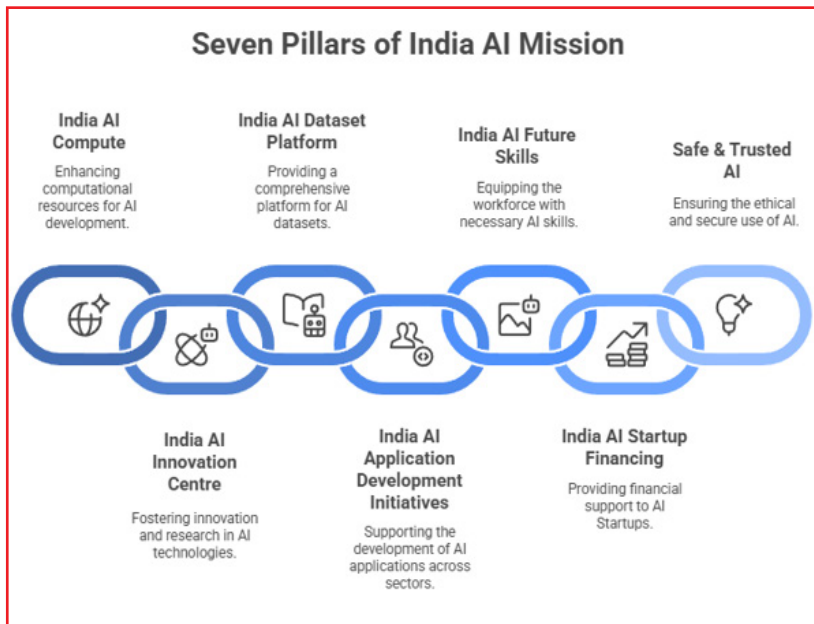
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sectors, and socio-economic groups. To address this, the Government of India launched the **IndiaAI Mission**, aimed at “**Making AI in India and Making AI Work for India.**” With an investment of over ₹10,300 crore and deployment of 38,000 GPUs, the mission seeks to promote **inclusive and responsible AI adoption** nationwide.



Body

Role of the IndiaAI Mission in promoting equitable access to AI benefits

- **Democratizing AI Infrastructure** : The **IndiaAI Compute Pillar** ensures affordable access to high-end **GPUs** for startups, academia, and innovators.
 - ◆ Expansion into **Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities** reduces the **urban-rural digital divide** and allows diverse regions to develop **localized AI solutions**, such as crop advisories for farmers or telemedicine platforms for rural healthcare.
- **Developing India-Specific AI Applications** : The **Application Development Initiative** fosters AI solutions for **healthcare, agriculture, governance, climate, and education**.
 - ◆ Programs like **CyberGuard AI** promote cybersecurity applications, while agriculture-focused AI tools assist farmers in crop planning. This ensures **sectoral inclusivity** and addresses **region-specific developmental challenges**.
- **AI Skilling and Capacity Building**: The **IndiaAI FutureSkills** program emphasises **population-scale skilling**, training students, ITI trainees, educators, and women entrepreneurs.
 - ◆ Establishing **AI Labs** in smaller cities fosters **geographic inclusivity**. Partnerships with industry and academia build **human capital**, enabling equitable participation in the AI-driven economy.
- **Data Accessibility and Indigenous AI Models** : Platforms like **AIKosh** provide **3,000+ datasets and 243 AI models**, reducing the barrier of developing foundational data. Multilingual **Large Multimodal AI Models** ensure **linguistic inclusivity**, supporting innovators from diverse regions.
- **Startups, Innovation, and Global Competitiveness** : Through the **Startup Financing Pillar** and **Global Acceleration Programme**, IndiaAI supports scaling of innovative solutions nationally and internationally.

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- ◆ This ensures that **AI benefits reach innovators across states and sectors**, not just urban or high-income areas.

- **Safe, Responsible, and Ethical AI** : The **Safe and Trusted AI** pillar promotes **ethical AI deployment**, including **bias mitigation, privacy protection, and explainability**, ensuring AI benefits are equitable and inclusive.

Challenges

- **Digital Divide**: Limited internet penetration and digital literacy in rural areas can restrict AI access.
 - ◆ Mobile phone ownership stands at **73.4%** at the **all-India level**, with **rural ownership** at **69.3%** lagging behind **urban ownership** at **82%** by nearly **13 percentage points**, and **female ownership** at **63%** trailing **male ownership** at **83.3%** by **20 percentage points**.
- **Data Privacy and Security**: Handling sensitive citizen data raises risks of misuse or cyber threats.
- **Infrastructure Gaps**: Many Tier 2/3 cities and public institutions lack AI-ready infrastructure.
- **Skilling Limitations**: Rapid AI evolution makes continuous reskilling a challenge, especially for marginalized groups.
- **Funding and Adoption Barriers**: High costs and slow adoption in public sector and SMEs can limit impact.

Conclusion:

The **IndiaAI Mission** provides a holistic framework to **democratize AI access**, foster **sectoral innovation**, build **skilled human capital**, and promote **ethical deployment**. While challenges like digital divides, infrastructure gaps, and privacy concerns exist, strategic initiatives under IndiaAI—combined with **policy support, funding, and capacity building**—can ensure AI serves as a tool for **inclusive development**, bridging governance gaps and enhancing **equitable growth across India**.

22. "The rise of AI-generated content has intensified the threat of misinformation and deepfakes." Critically evaluate India's efforts to ensure responsible digital governance. (250 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the rising threat of AI-generated content in India.
- Discuss India's efforts to ensure responsible digital governance.
- Highlight the challenges for India's digital governance.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed the information landscape by enabling the creation of **hyper-realistic images, videos, and text**. While AI-generated content offers vast opportunities in **education, healthcare, and governance**, it also poses **serious ethical and security challenges**. The emergence of **deepfakes**—synthetic media that manipulate identities or events—has amplified the threat of **misinformation, reputational harm, and erosion of public trust**. For a digitally connected democracy like India, ensuring **responsible digital governance** has become an urgent priority.

Body :

India's Efforts to Ensure Responsible Digital Governance

- **Legal Framework**
 - ◆ **Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act)**: Addresses offenses related to **identity theft (Section 66C)**, **impersonation (Section 66D)**, **privacy violations (Section 66E)**, and **transmission of obscene or illegal content (Sections 67, 67A)**.
 - It empowers the government under **Section 69A** to issue **blocking orders** and mandates **intermediaries' due diligence (Section 79)** to prevent the spread of unlawful content.
 - ◆ **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**: Amended in **2022 and 2023**, these Rules hold **intermediaries** accountable for **preventing the hosting or transmission of synthetic or unlawful content**.
 - ◆ **Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP), 2023**: Ensures **lawful processing of personal data** with **user consent** and **security safeguards**.

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- Deepfakes misusing personal data without consent are punishable offenses, reinforcing privacy protection.

◆ **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** Section 353 penalizes the spread of misinformation causing public mischief, while Section 111 allows prosecution of organized cybercrimes involving deepfakes, expanding law enforcement capacity.

◆ **Mandatory Labelling of AI-Generated Content:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has proposed amendments to the IT Rules, 2021 to require labelling of AI-generated or modified content.

- All synthetically produced media must be clearly marked to ensure user transparency.

● India's Multi-Layered Cyber Response Ecosystem

- ◆ **Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs):** Provide appellate mechanisms for users to challenge intermediary decisions.
- ◆ **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** Coordinates cybercrime response across States and empowers agencies to issue content removal notices.
- ◆ **SAHYOG Portal:** Centralised platform for automated takedown notices to intermediaries.
- ◆ **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal:** Allows citizens to report deepfake-related frauds and content misuse.
- ◆ **CERT-In:** Issues advisories on AI-related threats—its November 2024 advisory highlighted steps for deepfake detection and protection.
- ◆ **Awareness Campaigns:** Initiatives like Cyber Security Awareness Month (NCSAM), Safer Internet Day, Cyber Jagrookta Diwas (CJD), and Swachhta Pakhwada promote digital literacy and responsible online behaviour.

Challenges in India's Digital Governance

- **Proliferation of Advanced AI Tools:** Open-source tools like DeepFaceLab and ChatGPT have made deepfake creation easier.
 - ◆ In 2024, over 8 million deepfake files were detected globally—a 16-fold increase since 2020.

India saw a 550% rise in cases since 2019, with ₹70,000 crore in projected losses.

- **Escalating Financial Frauds and Cybercrimes:** Deepfake-based financial scams and voice phishing are rising.

◆ Global deepfake frauds surged 3,000% in 2023.

- **Political Misinformation and Electoral Manipulation:** During the 2024 General Elections, fake videos of political leaders spread widely, undermining democratic integrity and public trust.

- **Inadequate Legal Framework:** Despite the IT Act, 2000 and DPDP Act, 2023, there is no comprehensive law specifically addressing deepfake misuse, leaving regulatory gaps.

- **Low Digital Literacy and Public Awareness:** According to McAfee (2023), 47% of Indians have encountered or been victims of deepfakes, while 70% cannot distinguish AI-generated voices from real ones.

◆ This lack of awareness increases societal vulnerability and erodes trust in digital communication.

Further Steps India Can Adopt

- **Stringent Legal Definitions and Regulations:** Clearly define “synthetically generated content” and criminalise malicious deepfake use, similar to the EU’s AI Act and UK’s Online Safety Bill.
- **Mandatory Content Labelling and Metadata Embedding:** Enforce watermarking, digital signatures, and machine-readable metadata for AI-generated content, ensuring traceability and authenticity.
- **Establish Specialised Regulatory Bodies:** Create dedicated institutions akin to the FTC (US) or ICO (UK) to monitor AI compliance and enforcement.
- **Invest in Technological Solutions:** Promote indigenous AI-based detection algorithms, blockchain verification, and content authenticity platforms for real-time monitoring.
- **International Collaboration:** Join global alliances like INTERPOL’s Cybercrime Directorate to share data, best practices, and threat intelligence.

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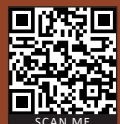
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- **Encourage Ethical AI Development:** Incentivise developers to adopt **responsible AI standards** and **self-regulatory codes**, ensuring **transparency** and **accountability**.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Expand initiatives like **Cyber Jagrookta Diwas** to educate citizens about deepfake identification and verification techniques.

Conclusion:

The rise of **deepfakes** and **AI-driven misinformation** demands a **vigilant, multi-dimensional response** integrating **legal, technological, and societal measures**. Moving forward, India must strengthen **international cooperation**, invest in **detection technologies**, enhance **digital literacy**, and refine **regulatory frameworks** to safeguard **democracy, privacy, and public trust** in the digital age.

Internal Security

23. The Indian Ocean is emerging as the strategic heartland of the 21st century. Discuss the evolving maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and evaluate India's preparedness to safeguard its strategic interests. (250 words)

Approach:

- Briefly introduce the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean.
- Discuss the evolving maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Evaluate India's preparedness to safeguard its strategic interests.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

The Indian Ocean, linking Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, has become the **epicentre of 21st-century geopolitics**. Nearly **80% of global oil trade** and **60% of maritime trade** transit through its critical sea lanes, including the **Straits of Hormuz, Malacca, and Bab-el-Mandeb**. For India situated at its centre with a 7,500-km coastline—the region is both a **geostrategic opportunity** and a **security challenge** demanding multidimensional preparedness.

Body:

Strategic Significance of the Indian Ocean

- **Energy Lifeline:** Over **65% of global oil** and **50% of container traffic** pass through the IOR, making it vital for global energy security.
- **Economic and Resource Potential:** The region hosts **rich hydrocarbon deposits, fisheries, and seabed minerals**, sustaining millions of livelihoods.
- **Geopolitical Theatre:** With the rise of the **Indo-Pacific construct**, major powers like the US, China, Japan, and Australia are intensifying their strategic engagement.
- **India's Centrality:** India's geographic location and historical maritime ties make it the **natural net security provider** in the IOR.

Evolving Maritime Security Challenges

- **Geopolitical Rivalries:** The **expanding Chinese presence** under the *String of Pearls* strategy and its naval base in Djibouti challenge India's influence.
 - ◆ The **competition between QUAD and BRI frameworks** reflects a deepening power contest.
- **Piracy and Maritime Crime:** **Somalia-based piracy, human trafficking, and arms smuggling** continue to threaten maritime routes, despite global patrols.
- **Terrorism and Non-traditional Threats:** The **2008 Mumbai attacks** exposed vulnerabilities in coastal security.
 - ◆ Sea routes are increasingly used for **drug trade and terror financing**.
- **Environmental and Climate Risks:** **Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, oil spills, and coral reef destruction** endanger marine ecosystems.
 - ◆ **Rising sea levels** pose existential threats to small island states.
- **Technological and Cyber Challenges:** Growing dependence on **undersea cables, autonomous vessels, and maritime AI systems** exposes new cyber vulnerabilities.

India's Preparedness and Strategic Initiatives

- **Naval Modernisation and Capability Building:** Induction of **INS Vikrant**, nuclear submarines under the *Arihant* class, and **Project 75(I)** for advanced submarines.

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- ◆ Mission SAGAR and Indian Navy's HADR operations reflect India's role as a responsible maritime power.

- Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA): Establishment of the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) and coastal radar chains enhances real-time surveillance.

- Regional Cooperation and Diplomacy: Active engagement through QUAD, IORA, BIMSTEC, and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

- ◆ Defence cooperation with Seychelles, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka for joint patrols and logistics support.

- Infrastructure and Connectivity: Development of Andaman & Nicobar Command as a tri-service theatre.

- ◆ Sagarmala and Project Mausam reinforce India's maritime connectivity and cultural diplomacy.

- ◆ Strategic access to Chabahar Port (Iran) and Duqm (Oman) enhances operational reach.

Conclusion:

The Indian Ocean is no longer just a conduit of trade but a **strategic arena defining global power hierarchies**. India's central location, naval strength, and democratic credibility position it as a **key stabilising force** in the region. To safeguard its strategic interests, India must blend **hard power modernisation with cooperative maritime diplomacy**, ensuring that the Indian Ocean remains a **zone of peace, prosperity, and stability**.

Disaster Management

24. Stampedes are often preventable tragedies rooted in inadequate planning, lack of accountability, and weak enforcement. Comment. (150 words)

Approach:

- Begin by defining stampede in the context of public safety.
- Highlight the root causes of these preventable tragedies, including inadequate planning, lack of accountability, and weak enforcement.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

A stampede is an **impulsive mass movement** of a crowd leading to **injuries and deaths**, often triggered by **panic, loss of space**, or the **urge to attain something gratifying**. It represents a **preventable public safety disaster**, commonly seen during **religious festivals, political rallies, or sporting events**, reflecting deep failures in **crowd management, governance, and enforcement mechanisms**.

Body :

Inadequate Planning

- Underestimated Crowd Size: The Karur, Tamil Nadu, political rally (Sept 2025) killed 39 people as attendance far exceeded planned capacity, overwhelming infrastructure and exit routes.

- ◆ Similar lapses at Chinnaswamy Stadium (RCB IPL victory parade) caused 11 deaths, exposing dangers of ticket overselling and lack of simulation exercises.

- Infrastructure Shortcomings: Stampedes at the Mansa Devi Temple (July 2025) and Maha Kumbh Mela (Jan 2025) revealed poor crowd flow planning, crumbling pedestrian paths, and insufficient facilities like toilets and resting zones, endangering participants during peak gatherings.

Lack of Accountability

- Blame-shifting Post-Tragedy: After the Mansa Devi stampede, officials blamed rumors, weak infrastructure, and each other's inaction, showing absence of clear guidelines and shared responsibility.

- ◆ Similarly, in Karur, both political organizers and local police failed to conduct crowd density checks or emergency drills.

- Absence of Safety Audits: Safety audits at temples and stadiums are rare and mostly post-tragedy measures.

- ◆ Recommendations like separate entry-exit points and attendance limits are reactively implemented, not proactively enforced.

Weak Enforcement :

- Non-Enforcement of Guidelines: NDMA crowd management guidelines prescribing contingency planning and attendance limits are often ignored.

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- ◆ Events like the **Kumbh Mela (2025)** and **Shirgao Temple festivals** allegedly breached **sanctioned capacities**, resulting in **fatal stampedes**.

- **Poor Communication and Absence of Technology:** In the **Pushpa 2 film screening (Dec 2024)**, inadequate **public address systems** and lack of **real-time surveillance (CCTV, drones)** triggered **panic and misinformation**, worsening casualties.

Inadequate Planning



Poor Crowd Estimation → Overcrowding → Panic



Weak Infrastructure → Blocked Exits → Injuries/Deaths



Lack of Accountability → Blame-Shifting & Delays



Weak Enforcement → Non-Compliance with Safety Norms

Way Forward for Preventing Future Tragedies

- **Strengthened Pre-Event Planning:** Accurate **crowd estimation** and **capacity planning**, along with **safe site selection** and **scientific layout design**, are crucial to ensure safety.
 - ◆ **Mandatory crowd capacity certification** by engineers and disaster experts.
 - ◆ Events must have **clearly demarcated entry, exit, and movement routes** that remain **unobstructed**, supported by **contingency arrangements** and **risk assessment drills** to effectively **prevent stampedes**.
 - ◆ Deploy a **network of sensors (thermal, LiDAR)** to monitor crowd density in real-time.
 - This data can feed into AI models to predict crowd surges and trigger early warnings.

Legal and Administrative Accountability:

- ◆ Enact a **Crowd Safety Act** clearly defining **organizer liability** for negligence.
 - Mandate **independent safety audits** for large gatherings and establish a **national stampede database** to systematically **record incidents, causes, and lessons learned**, enabling **evidence-based preventive measures**.
- ◆ Making violations of safety norms punishable under the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**.

Integrated Institutional Mechanisms:

- ◆ Formation of **Crowd Management Cells** at district levels for coordinated planning.
- ◆ Regular mock drills and safety audits before mass gatherings.
- ◆ Provide on-site medical aid, deploy **Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs)** for emergencies, and establish a clear **Incident Command System** for swift decision-making.

Public Awareness and Behavioural Training:

- ◆ Dissemination of safety messages via local media and community leaders.
- ◆ Deployment of trained volunteers and signage to guide crowd movement.

Conclusion:

Stampedes are not **natural disasters** but **failures of governance** and **preparedness**. Each tragedy underscores the need to **institutionalize accountability**, **strengthen planning**, and ensure **strict enforcement of safety norms**. With **proactive crowd management**, **technological tools**, and **ethical governance**, such **preventable tragedies** can be **averted**, turning India's **vibrant gatherings** into symbols of **safety** and **order** rather than **sorrow** and **neglect**.



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GENERAL STUDIES PAPER-4

Theoretical Question

25. "Empathy transforms authority into service." Discuss the relevance of emotional intelligence and compassion in administrative responsibilities. (150 words)

Approach:

- Begin with a brief introduction explaining the relationship between authority, empathy, and emotional intelligence.
- Discuss the relevance of emotional intelligence and compassion in administrative responsibilities.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Authority in governance earns moral legitimacy when exercised with **empathy and compassion**, allowing administrators to understand citizens' problems beyond rigid procedures. By transforming authority from mere control into **empowerment, emotional intelligence (EI)**, which is the ability to recognise and manage one's own and others' emotions, helps officers apply power as a tool of service.

Body:

Relevance of EI & Compassion in Administrative Responsibilities

- **Decision-Making and Policy Implementation:** EI allows administrators to consider both **rational analysis and human impact**, ensuring policies are effective and humane.
 - ◆ During **Covid-19**, empathetic district magistrates provided food, shelter, and safe transport to migrant workers, balancing administrative guidelines with citizens' real needs.
- **Leadership and Team Motivation:** An emotionally intelligent leader inspires and motivates subordinates.
 - ◆ **T.N. Seshan**, former Chief Election Commissioner, combined strict enforcement with fairness, earning team commitment and ensuring smooth electoral processes.

- **Citizen-Centric Service Delivery:** Compassion ensures inclusive and responsive governance.
 - ◆ **IAS officer Armstrong Pame**, known as the "*Miracle Man*" of Manipur, mobilized local communities to construct a 100 km road without government funds, reflecting empathy-driven leadership that prioritized community welfare over bureaucratic rigidity.

- **Conflict Resolution and Grievance Redressal:** Compassion helps resolve disputes and reduce tensions.

- ◆ In **Medak, Telangana**, the district administration personally engaged with farmers protesting procurement policies, adjusting procedures based on dialogue, demonstrating trust-building through empathetic engagement.

- **Crisis Management and Resilience:** EI equips officers to manage high-pressure situations calmly.

- ◆ During natural disasters, such as floods in Kerala, empathetic collectors coordinated relief operations while addressing psychological needs, ensuring efficient resource allocation and public reassurance.

Challenges in Practising Empathy

- Rigid bureaucratic structures, workload pressure, and the absence of emotional intelligence training often make administrators rule-bound rather than people-oriented.
- Emotional fatigue and institutional apathy can also blunt compassion in long service tenures.

Conclusion:

Empathy and compassion transform **authority** into **ethical service**, ensuring governance that not only **enforces rules** but also **uplifts lives**. Reforms like **Mission Karmayogi** emphasise **behavioural training, self-awareness, and citizen engagement**. Embedding **emotional intelligence (EI)** and **compassion** in administrative education and **rewarding humane governance** can institutionalise effective and people-centred administration.

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26. India's rapid economic growth coexists with social inequalities and environmental challenges. Discuss the need for an ethical framework to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. (150 words)

Approach:

- Begin by highlighting India's economic growth trajectory and its simultaneous social and environmental challenges.
- Discuss the need for an ethical framework to ensure inclusive and sustainable development.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

India has achieved **rapid economic growth** and set an ambitious goal of becoming a **developed country by 2047**. However, this growth coexists with **social inequalities** such as income disparity, gender gaps, and regional imbalances, as well as **environmental challenges** like pollution, resource depletion, and climate vulnerability. An **ethical framework**, rooted in **justice, equity, and responsibility**, is essential to guide policies toward **inclusive and sustainable development**.

Body :

Relevance of an Ethical Framework:

- **Justice and Equity:** Ethical governance demands prioritizing **marginalized populations** who remain excluded despite **GDP growth**.
 - ◆ For example, while **171 million Indians** escaped extreme poverty since 2011, the **richest 1%** now hold over **40% of national wealth**, while the **bottom 50%** own a mere 3% (**World Inequality Lab, 2025**).
 - ◆ This stark disparity calls for **redistributive policies** grounded in **distributive justice**.
- **Gender and Social Equity:** Women earn **34% less** than men, and **female labour force participation** is **41.7%** compared to men's **78.8%**.
 - ◆ **Equity** demands proactive policies like **affirmative action** and **workplace fairness** to reduce these gaps ethically.
- **Sustainability and Responsibility:** Ethical stewardship entails safeguarding **ecosystems** amid rapid growth.

Delhi's air quality index routinely exceeds hazardous levels (**AQI >700**), and **urban water bodies** degrade from **unplanned urbanisation**.

- ◆ Initiatives like **Kanchan Verma's restoration** of the **Sasur Khaderi rivulet** reflect **ethical responsibility** toward **intergenerational equity**.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** **Equitable governance** requires **transparent decision-making** and **accountability mechanisms** to prevent **elite capture**, **corruption**, and **policy distortions** that worsen inequality.
 - ◆ According to **Transparency International's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)**, India is ranked **96th out of 180 countries**, reflecting ongoing challenges in **transparency, accountability, and governance integrity**.
- **Social Reconstructionism:** It emphasises **education** and **participatory governance** as tools to **rebuild society** by **empowering marginalised communities** and fostering **inclusive decision-making** in India.
 - ◆ This is reflected in **grassroots institutions** like **Gram Sabhas**, **women-led Self-Help Groups** such as **Kudumbashree**, and platforms like **MyGov**, which collectively promote **social equity, ethical governance, and community-led development**, aligning with the **ethical imperative** to transform **socio-economic disparities** into opportunities for **collective progress**.
- **Integrating Ethics in Development Programs:** Ethical considerations encourage policies that are **inclusive, long-term, and environmentally conscious**.
 - ◆ Corporate initiatives under the **Companies Act 2013 (CSR)** ensure businesses contribute to social welfare.
 - ◆ Government programs like the **Clean Ganga Mission** and the **National Electric Mobility Mission** incorporate sustainability into development planning.

Conclusion:

India's development must go beyond GDP growth. As **Mahatma Gandhi** cautioned, **"There is enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed"**, underscoring the

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importance of ethical and sustainable development. By adopting an **ethical framework** that harmonises **economic progress, social equity, and environmental sustainability**, the country can ensure **inclusive and enduring growth**.

27. "Ethical dilemmas are inevitable in administration, but ethical decision-making is non-negotiable." Explain with reference to moral reasoning and conflict resolution. (150 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the ethical dilemmas and ethical decision-making.
- Explain with reference to moral reasoning and conflict resolution.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Ethical dilemmas are an inherent part of public administration. They arise when a civil servant is confronted with **conflicting duties, competing values, or diverse stakeholder interests**. While such dilemmas are **inevitable**, ethical decision-making remains **non-negotiable** as administrators are entrusted with **public trust, accountability, and fairness**.

Body :

Moral Reasoning in Administrative Decision-Making

- **Moral reasoning** is the process through which administrators evaluate ethical choices and anticipate consequences. It involves **reflective thinking** about what is right, just, and in the public interest.
- **Key approaches include:**
 - ◆ **Deontological Approach:** Decisions are guided by **rules, duties, and legal mandates**. For example, a police officer refusing to yield to political pressure while registering a complaint demonstrates adherence to duty.
 - ◆ **Utilitarian Approach:** Choices aim to **maximize overall public good**. During a flood, allocating relief to the most affected areas first reflects utilitarian reasoning.

- ◆ **Virtue Ethics:** Decisions are informed by **moral virtues** like honesty, empathy, and fairness. For instance, a health officer ensuring equitable vaccine distribution to all sections, regardless of political influence, demonstrates virtue ethics.

- These frameworks help administrators navigate complex scenarios and **justify their decisions ethically**.

Conflict Resolution in Ethical Dilemmas

- Ethical dilemmas often involve **conflicts among stakeholders, laws, and organisational goals**.
- Effective conflict resolution is essential to maintain public trust:
 - ◆ **Transparency:** Open communication about decision-making processes reduces suspicion.
 - Example: Publishing allocation criteria for government subsidies enhances credibility.
 - ◆ **Consultation and Deliberation:** Engaging peers, experts, and ethics committees helps **balance competing interests**.
 - Example: During urban development projects, involving local representatives ensures that the project respects environmental and social concerns.
 - ◆ **Prioritisation of Public Interest:** Ethical decision-making requires placing **societal welfare above personal or political gain**.
 - Example: In handling sensitive health data, officials must balance privacy concerns with the need for public safety.

Conclusion:

Ethical dilemmas are inherent to administration, emerging from the interplay of **political pressures, resource constraints, and societal diversity**. Nevertheless, **ethical decision-making is non-negotiable**, as it ensures **accountability, institutional legitimacy, and the integrity of democratic governance**. By applying **moral reasoning, principled deliberation, and structured conflict resolution**, administrators can navigate competing pressures while upholding **fairness, integrity, and public trust**.

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28. Evaluate the ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies such as AI, Big Data, and Digital Governance. How should ethical frameworks guide their adoption in public administration? (150 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to the emerging technologies.
- Evaluate the ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies.
- Discuss the ethical frameworks that guide their adoption in public administration.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Emerging technologies such as **Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, and Digital Governance** are revolutionising public administration by improving **efficiency, decision-making, and service delivery**. They enable predictive analytics, citizen-centric services, and real-time governance. However, the adoption of these technologies also presents **significant ethical challenges**, including risks of bias, exclusion, privacy violations, and reduced accountability.

Body:

Ethical Challenges of Emerging Technologies

- **Bias and Discrimination:** AI systems and algorithmic decision-making can unintentionally reflect **societal prejudices**, leading to discriminatory outcomes.
 - ◆ For instance, predictive policing algorithms in some countries have disproportionately targeted marginalised communities, reinforcing structural inequalities.
 - ◆ Similarly, welfare allocation using biased data could disadvantage certain social groups.
- **Privacy and Data Protection:** The extensive use of **Big Data** in governance raises concerns over **personal data misuse** and surveillance.
 - ◆ For instance, large-scale digital health records or financial data stored without sufficient safeguards, risking breaches or exploitation.
 - ◆ Ethical deployment requires **consent, confidentiality, and strict data protection measures**.

- **Transparency and Accountability:** Automated decision-making may result in **opaque processes**, making it difficult for citizens or officials to understand why a particular decision was made.
 - ◆ For example, AI-driven benefit disbursement systems may deny services without providing explanations, undermining **accountability and trust** in governance.

- **Digital Divide and Access Inequality:** While digital governance can increase efficiency, its benefits are often **skewed toward urban, tech-savvy populations**, leaving rural and marginalized groups behind.
 - ◆ Mobile and internet penetration gaps exacerbate inequities, potentially creating a new dimension of exclusion in service delivery.

- **Security and Cyber Risks:** Reliance on digital systems exposes governance to **cyberattacks, manipulation, and system failures**, which could compromise sensitive citizen data or disrupt critical public services.

Guiding Ethical Frameworks for Adoption

- **Principles-Based Approach:** Adopt **fairness, accountability, transparency, and inclusivity** as guiding principles.
 - ◆ India's **NITI Aayog AI Ethics Guidelines** emphasize responsible AI deployment aligned with these values.
- **Responsible Innovation:** Encourage **stakeholder participation, risk assessment, and pilot testing** before scaling.
 - ◆ For example, AI applications in agriculture should be tested with local farmers to ensure equitable benefits and contextual relevance.
- **Privacy by Design and Security Measures:** Embed **data protection, consent protocols, and cybersecurity safeguards** at every stage of technology deployment.
 - ◆ Compliance with the **Data Protection Act, 2023** ensures ethical use of citizen data.
- **Regular Audits and Accountability Mechanisms:** Independent audits of AI algorithms, data usage, and digital governance platforms are essential to ensure **ethical compliance and accountability**.

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- **Capacity Building and Awareness:** Training administrators and citizens on **digital literacy, ethical use of AI, and data rights** strengthens responsible adoption and fosters trust in technology-driven governance.

Conclusion:

As John Rawls noted, “**Justice is the first virtue of social institutions,**” emphasising that equitable and principled governance must guide technology adoption. By institutionalising ethical standards, training, and oversight, India can ensure that emerging technologies **serve society equitably and strengthen democratic governance.**

29. “Moral absolutism can lead to rigidity, while moral relativism may justify injustice. A balance between the two is essential in ethical decision-making.” Justify with suitable illustration. (150 words)

Approach:

- Provide a brief introduction to moral absolutism and moral relativism.
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of moral absolutism and moral relativism.
- Highlight the need for a balanced approach in ethical decision-making.
- Justify with suitable illustration.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

Ethical decision-making often lies between two extremes — **moral absolutism** and **moral relativism**. **Moral absolutism** upholds that certain ethical principles (like truth, justice, non-violence) are universal and unchanging, irrespective of context. **Moral relativism**, on the other hand, views morality as dependent on cultural norms, societal values, or specific circumstances. Either taken to an extreme can distort moral reasoning, demanding a **balanced, contextual, and principled approach**.

Body :

Moral Absolutism

- **Strengths:**
 - ◆ Provides **moral clarity** and stability by establishing fixed standards of right and wrong.

- ◆ Promotes **justice and fairness** by treating all individuals equally under ethical norms.
- ◆ Protects **human rights** universally — for example, abolition of slavery or prohibition of torture, regardless of cultural justification.

Limitations:

- ◆ Can lead to **rigidity and insensitivity** when rules are applied blindly, ignoring human suffering or context.
- ◆ Ethical dilemmas in governance often require discretion rather than rigid rule-following.
- ◆ **Example:** A police officer strictly enforcing lockdown rules and penalizing a poor worker seeking food may uphold the law but neglect compassion, thereby failing ethical proportionality.

Moral Relativism

Strengths:

- ◆ Encourages **tolerance and cultural sensitivity** in pluralistic societies like India.
- ◆ Enables **context-based decision-making** where situational realities matter more than rigid codes.
- ◆ Reflects **pragmatism** in administration and conflict resolution.

Limitations:

- ◆ Risks of **moral permissiveness** — what is “right” may vary arbitrarily across contexts.
- ◆ Can be exploited to **justify unethical conduct**, such as corruption or nepotism, in the name of “local practice.”
- ◆ **Example:** A bureaucrat accepting gifts during festivals, claiming it is “customary” reflects moral relativism, justifying ethical compromise.

Need for a Balanced Ethical Approach

- Ethical governance demands that **universal moral values guide actions**, but their application must respect **contextual realities**.
- Public servants face dilemmas where both principles and compassion are at stake — hence, a **middle path** ensures moral integrity without rigidity.

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- This approach echoes **Aristotle's "Doctrine of the Mean"** and **Gandhian ethics**, which emphasise truth and non-violence applied with empathy and situational wisdom.
- In a balanced approach, **ethical decision-making** involves weighing competing values through **reasoned judgment, empathy, and conscience**, ensuring neither moral rigidity nor moral anarchy prevails.
- **Illustrations:**
 - ◆ A district magistrate granting temporary relief to an encroacher after a flood — balancing the rule of law with humanitarian concern.
 - ◆ An army officer protecting civilians during counter-insurgency operations without compromising on duty or national security.
 - ◆ In international relations, adhering to human rights principles while respecting cultural diversity reflects this ethical balance.

Conclusion:

Moral absolutism ensures **ethical consistency** but risks **dogmatism**; moral relativism fosters **adaptability** but risks **injustice**. The true art of ethics lies in harmonizing both — applying **universal moral principles** with **contextual sensitivity**. A balanced moral compass, guided by empathy and reason, allows individuals and administrators to make decisions that are both **principled and humane**, upholding the ethical spirit of governance.

30. What does quotation convey to you in the present context?

"We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet." – Swami Vivekananda. (150 words)

Approach:

- Begin by interpreting the essence of Swami Vivekananda's quote.
- Explain the key components of the quote.
- Relate the quote to the present context.
- Conclude with reflection and vision.

Introduction:

This profound statement by **Swami Vivekananda** captures the true purpose of education — not merely the transmission of knowledge, but the **formation of moral character, mental strength, intellectual growth, and self-reliance**. In the present context, where education is often equated with employability or rote learning, this vision reminds us that education must create **empowered, ethical, and enlightened individuals** who can contribute meaningfully to society.

Body :

● Character Formation – The Moral Foundation

- ◆ Education, in its truest sense, should build **integrity, empathy, and moral courage**. Swami Vivekananda viewed character as the foundation of all progress.
- ◆ A person of character can uphold truth and justice even under pressure.
- ◆ For instance, **Mahatma Gandhi** emphasized "character-building" as the goal of Nai Talim (Basic Education), aiming to develop self-discipline and ethical awareness among learners.
- ◆ In contemporary India, where corruption and moral decline are frequent concerns, integrating **value-based education** into curricula can help nurture honest and responsible citizens.

● Strength of Mind – Resilience and Inner Courage

- ◆ Education must also cultivate **mental strength** — the capacity to endure challenges and act with moral conviction.
- ◆ In public administration, officers often face dilemmas between political pressure and ethical duty. A strong mind enables them to uphold constitutional values despite adversity.
- ◆ For example, **E. Sreedharan**, known as the "Metro Man of India," demonstrated immense moral and mental resilience in completing projects like the Delhi Metro on time, resisting corruption and political interference.
- ◆ Such examples reflect how education that nurtures mental fortitude leads to ethical excellence in public service.

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● Expansion of Intellect – From Information to Wisdom

- ◆ Education should move beyond rote learning to **critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving**.
- ◆ True intellectual development involves curiosity, rational inquiry, and an openness to diverse ideas.
- ◆ For example, **Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's** educational philosophy promoted "learning by doing" to encourage innovation and scientific temper among youth.
- ◆ Today's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) echoes this ideal by promoting multidisciplinary and experiential learning aimed at expanding the intellect.

● Self-Reliance – Standing on One's Own Feet:

- ◆ Swami Vivekananda believed that the highest goal of education is **self-reliance**, both material and moral.
- ◆ An educated person should not merely seek employment but possess the confidence and skills to shape their own destiny.
- ◆ **Skill India Mission, Start-up India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat** embody this vision by encouraging entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency among youth.

Conclusion:

Swami Vivekananda's vision remains deeply relevant today. In an age dominated by competition and materialism, education must strike a balance between **intellectual excellence and ethical consciousness**. True education should produce individuals who are **wise in thought, strong in character, and self-reliant in action**. When education nurtures both the mind and the soul, it becomes the most powerful instrument for individual growth and national progress.

31. "In the theatre of global politics, morality is often the first casualty." Analyse the ethical dilemmas faced by nations when strategic interests conflict with humanitarian responsibilities. Illustrate with recent examples. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by explaining the statement
- Delve into the Conflict- Strategic Interests vs. Humanitarian Responsibilities
- Highlight Key Ethical Dilemmas Faced by Nations
- Give 2 Illustrations from Recent Crises
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

The statement succinctly captures the pervasive tension between **national strategic interests (Realpolitik)** and **universal humanitarian responsibilities (Idealism or ethical principles)**. This conflict presents profound ethical dilemmas for nations, forcing a difficult choice between **self-preservation or strategic advantage** and the **moral imperative to alleviate human suffering**.

Body:

The Conflict-Strategic Interests vs. Humanitarian Responsibilities

Strategic Interests (Realpolitik)	Humanitarian Responsibilities (Idealism)
Focus: National security, economic gain, geopolitical influence, and power maximisation.	Focus: Alleviating suffering, protecting human rights, upholding human dignity, and adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
Logic: Self-interest—actions are taken based on what benefits the state directly (security alliances, resource access, regional stability).	Logic: Moral imperative—the duty to act is universal and unconditional, regardless of direct national benefit or security risk.
Principle: Sovereignty (non-interference in domestic affairs).	Principle: Humanity and Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

When a crisis erupts, the ethical dilemma lies in deciding which duty takes priority: **helping a suffering population (humanitarian)** or **protecting and advancing the nation's strategic goals (Realpolitik)**.

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Key Ethical Dilemmas Faced by Nations

● The Sovereignty vs. Intervention Dilemma

- ◆ **Conflict:** The principle of state sovereignty (non-interference) clashes with the *Responsibility to Protect (R2P)* doctrine, which asserts that sovereignty is conditional upon a state's protection of its own citizens from mass atrocities.
- ◆ **Dilemma:** Should a nation intervene militarily or diplomatically on humanitarian grounds, risking the lives of its soldiers and violating sovereignty, or should it stand by and let atrocities occur to uphold non-interference?
 - Often, the decision is influenced by the intervening state's **strategic interest** in the region (e.g., oil resources or regional rivalries).

● Conditional Aid vs. Impartiality

- ◆ **Conflict:** Humanitarian aid must be neutral and impartial—delivered solely based on need. However, donor nations often tie aid to political conditions, strategic alliances, or demands for governance reforms.
- ◆ **Dilemma:** Should a nation withhold or redirect aid to areas controlled by hostile groups (to advance strategic interests), even if it means abandoning highly vulnerable populations—thus violating the principle of impartiality?

● Counter-Terrorism vs. Humanitarian Access

- ◆ **Conflict:** Counter-terrorism laws often criminalise providing “material support” to designated terrorist organisations. Yet, in many conflict zones, such groups control territories where civilians live.
- ◆ **Dilemma:** Should aid agencies risk legal prosecution by negotiating with armed groups to deliver food and medicine, or comply with counter-terrorism laws, knowing that millions might die from lack of access?

● Arms Sales vs. Human Rights

- ◆ **Conflict:** Nations have a strategic interest in selling arms to boost their economies and strengthen political influence. However, these weapons may later be used to commit human rights violations or wage aggressive wars.
- ◆ **Dilemma:** Should a nation forego significant economic and diplomatic gains by halting arms sales (moral choice), or prioritise profit and influence, effectively accepting complicity in potential future abuses (Realpolitik)?

Illustrations from Recent Crises

● Yemen Crisis (2014–Present):

- ◆ The war in Yemen has created one of the gravest humanitarian crises. Yet, major powers, driven by strategic interests, regional rivalries, and lucrative defence contracts, **continued arms sales and support to coalition partners**.
- Humanitarian imperatives for ceasefire and civilian protection were sidelined—reflecting morality's defeat before Realpolitik.

● Afghanistan Crisis (Post-2021):

- ◆ After the Taliban's takeover, **global powers froze Afghan assets and withheld aid to avoid legitimising the regime**.
- However, this political isolation deepened starvation and economic collapse.
- The ethical dilemma lay between upholding non-recognition and alleviating human suffering, again revealing the tension between strategic caution and humanitarian duty.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, a **principled foreign policy** must recognise that **long-term strategic stability** depends on **respect for human rights, humanitarian relief, and global justice**. When nations understand that ethical conduct and moral restraint serve their enduring interests by preventing extremism, mass migration, and instability, **humanitarian action becomes not a sacrifice of Realpolitik, but its most sustainable expression**.

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32. What does quotation convey to you in the present context?

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." – Edmund Burke (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by briefing about the quote
- Delve into its Core Conveyance in the Present Context and Relevance Across Modern Domains
- Highlight The Present-Day Challenge of "Doing Nothing"
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

The quotation by Edmund Burke underscores the **moral responsibility of individuals and societies to act against injustice, corruption, and wrongdoing**. It conveys that passivity or silence in the face of evil enables its growth. **Evil does not triumph because it is strong**, but because good people choose complacency over courage.

Body:

Core Conveyance in the Present Context

- **The Moral Imperative of Action:** The quote establishes a clear **moral duty** where the absence of a response is itself a choice with tangible negative consequences.
 - ◆ "Doing nothing" is presented not as a neutral state, but as an **act of complicity** that empowers injustice.
- **The Vulnerability of Goodness:** It highlights that goodness, without courage and action, is **ineffective** against determined and organised forces of corruption, extremism, or oppression.
 - ◆ It is a call to move from passive virtue to **active citizenship**.

Relevance Across Modern Domains

- **Political and Civic Life**
 - ◆ **Decline of Democratic Norms:** The quote directly addresses the risk of **democratic decay**.
 - When "**good citizens**" choose not to vote, refrain from holding leaders accountable, or remain silent in the face of executive

overreach, they create a vacuum that can be swiftly filled by authoritarian or illiberal forces.

- ◆ **Political Polarisation:** By remaining inactive, moderate or principled voices allow the most extreme and divisive rhetoric to dominate the public discourse, enabling the triumph of ideological "**evil**" through attrition.

● Social Justice and Human Rights

- ◆ **Systemic Injustice:** In issues like **climate change, racial discrimination, and economic inequality**, the quote challenges the comfortable to act.
 - The persistence of these systemic evils is often sustained not by outright malice from the majority, but by the **indifference** of those unaffected who have the power to influence policy or cultural change.
- ◆ **The Bystander Effect:** On **social media and in real life**, individuals often hesitate to intervene in cases of harassment or injustice, assuming someone else will step up.
 - The quote shatters this dangerous illusion of diffused responsibility.

● Organisational Ethics and Whistleblowing

- ◆ **Corporate Malfeasance:** In the corporate world, massive frauds, environmental damage, or unethical labour practices often flourish because employees, managers, and board members who know the truth **fail to speak out** (whistleblow) for fear of retribution or simply to avoid confrontation.
 - Their inaction guarantees the "**triumph**" of corruption.
- ◆ **Media and Information:** When principled journalists, academics, or educators remain silent for fear of censorship or backlash, they allow the spread of **misinformation and propaganda**, a significant form of modern evil—to take root unchallenged.

The Present-Day Challenge of "Doing Nothing"

In the current context, the challenge for the "**good man**" is multifaceted:

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- **Complexity:** Modern evil is often not a clear-cut villain but a complex web of policies, algorithms, and systemic biases. Action is difficult when the target is unclear.
- **Risk:** Speaking out in the digital age carries the real risk of targeted attacks, online abuse, and professional ruin, making the cost of action significantly higher than simple non-participation.
- **Apathy and Fatigue:** In a 24/7 news cycle, the constant exposure to global crises (wars, famines, natural disasters) leads to **compassion fatigue**, where individuals feel overwhelmed and choose to “do nothing” as a coping mechanism against helplessness.

Conclusion:

Morality is meaningless without moral action. True goodness lies not in passive virtue but in the **courage to confront wrong, even when it is inconvenient.**

Case Study

33. Rohit Kumar, an IPS officer serving as Deputy Inspector General (DIG) in a northern state, has observed growing discontent among police personnel over recent promotion and posting decisions. Several officers belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs) allege that they are routinely sidelined for key operational posts and denied timely promotions, despite meritorious service records. Officers from certain social backgrounds are often given preference for influential postings in urban and sensitive districts, even when more qualified officers are available. An internal complaint by the SC/ST Officers' Association highlights patterns of bias in performance evaluation reports (APARs), where subtle prejudice is reflected in lower gradings. The association petitions Rohit to take action and ensure fair representation. However, when Rohit raises the issue in departmental meetings, senior officers advise him to “avoid stirring caste matters” and maintain institutional unity. Some even warn that pursuing the issue could affect his career progression and invite political backlash.
- The state government, facing public scrutiny after recent media reports on caste-based bias in police postings, issues a statement promising an internal inquiry.

However, there are attempts to downplay the issue as “misunderstandings” rather than systemic discrimination. Meanwhile, affected officers feel demoralised and consider approaching the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

As a senior officer, Rohit is expected to uphold constitutional values of equality and justice while maintaining institutional discipline and administrative efficiency. The situation demands a careful balance between ensuring fairness in personnel management and preserving organizational stability.

Questions:

- What are the key ethical dilemmas faced by Rohit Kumar in this situation?
- Identify and analyse the conflicting values and principles involved in this case.
- Evaluate the possible courses of action available to Rohit and their likely consequences.
- Suggest the most ethical and administratively sound course of action Rohit should take to ensure fairness and institutional integrity. (250 words)

Introduction:

Rohit Kumar, as a senior IPS officer, is confronted with an ethical conflict between upholding constitutional principles of equality and justice on one hand, and maintaining institutional harmony and his own career security on the other. This case presents a classic dilemma of “**conscience versus conformity.**”

A. What are the key ethical dilemmas faced by Rohit Kumar in this situation?

- **Equality vs Organizational Conformity:**
 - ◆ Upholding **constitutional values (Article 14, 16) and ensuring fair treatment for SC/ST officers** may disrupt existing informal power structures.
 - ◆ Choosing between **moral courage to act against bias and maintaining departmental unity.**
- **Integrity vs Career Security:**
 - ◆ Acting on the **discrimination issue may invite political or bureaucratic backlash, affecting his career progression.**
 - ◆ Ethical integrity demands speaking truth to power, but personal consequences create inner conflict.

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- **Justice vs Institutional Loyalty:**
 - ◆ Loyalty to the police organization urges him to preserve its public image and internal cohesion.
 - ◆ However, justice and fairness require exposing and addressing systemic discrimination.
- **Transparency vs Pressure to Conceal:**
 - ◆ Pressure from seniors to “*avoid caste matters*” encourages concealment of truth.
 - ◆ Ethical transparency demands he supports a fair and open inquiry.
- **Empathy for Subordinates vs Obedience to Superiors:**
 - ◆ Empathizing with marginalized officers and ensuring morale and motivation.
 - ◆ At the same time, respecting hierarchical discipline and authority.
- **Short-term Stability vs Long-term Ethical Reform:**
 - ◆ Ignoring the issue may offer short-term peace.
 - ◆ Addressing it ethically ensures long-term institutional credibility and morale.

B. Identify and analyse the conflicting values and principles involved in this case.

Value / Principle	Explanation of Conflict
Constitutional Morality vs Administrative Conformity	The Constitution enshrines equality and social justice, but bureaucratic norms often prioritize obedience and maintaining the “ chain of command. ”
Rule of Law vs Discretionary Authority	Rohit must ensure promotions and postings follow objective, rule-based criteria, yet senior officers exercise significant discretion that can enable bias.
Justice (Substantive) vs Procedural Compliance	Ensuring substantive justice for marginalized officers may require questioning existing evaluation systems, even if they are procedurally “ correct. ”
Impartiality vs Social Sensitivity	A police leader must remain neutral in personnel matters, but neutrality should not become indifference to systemic discrimination.
Objectivity vs Empathy	Administrative objectivity requires decisions based on facts and data, while empathy demands understanding the lived experiences of discrimination faced by colleagues.

C. Evaluate the possible courses of action available to Rohit and their likely consequences.

Option	Description	Likely Consequences
(a) Ignore the issue as advised by seniors	Maintain silence and focus on routine duties.	● Short-term peace and career safety. ● Loss of moral credibility and erosion of trust among subordinates. ● Perpetuation of discrimination and injustice.
(b) Raise the issue internally through formal departmental channels	Document evidence and propose an impartial internal review mechanism.	● Demonstrates procedural integrity. ● May invite resistance from superiors but strengthens institutional fairness. ● Builds long-term morale and trust among personnel.
(c) Support the state government’s inquiry with facts and data	Provide objective inputs to ensure inquiry transparency.	● Enhances accountability and constitutional adherence. ● May face political backlash but reinforces ethical governance.

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(d) Directly approach statutory bodies (e.g., NCSC)	Escalate the issue externally if no internal redress occurs.	● Strong ethical stand but may be viewed as breach of discipline. ● Could politicize the issue, affecting institutional cohesion.
(e) Sensitize senior officers and initiate diversity awareness measures	Promote internal workshops and reforms on fairness and bias.	● Improves organizational ethics and inclusivity. ● Gradual change but sustainable and non-confrontational.

D. Suggest the most ethical and administratively sound course of action Rohit should take to ensure fairness and institutional integrity.

- **Internal Due Process:**
 - ◆ Initiate a fair and data-driven review of APAR gradings, postings, and promotions.
 - ◆ Suggest formation of an impartial committee including SC/ST representatives.
- **Evidence-Based Reporting:**
 - ◆ Prepare a confidential report highlighting systemic patterns, **backed by data—not allegations**.
 - ◆ Present findings to higher authorities with recommendations for corrective policy measures.
- **Engage and Sensitize Seniors:**
 - ◆ Advocate that promoting fairness strengthens institutional legitimacy and public trust.
 - ◆ Conduct sensitization programs on unconscious bias and diversity management.
- **Cooperate with Government Inquiry:**
 - ◆ Provide factual, transparent inputs to ensure credibility of the inquiry.
- **Empathetic Leadership:**
 - ◆ Personally reassure affected officers of fair consideration within procedural limits.

Ethical Justification:

- Upholds **Constitutional Values** – equality, justice, dignity (Articles 14, 16, 46).
- Demonstrates **Integrity, Courage of Conviction, and Accountability**.
- Balances **Ethical Idealism with Administrative Prudence** – ensuring fairness without destabilizing the organization.

Conclusion:

Rohit's most ethical path lies in institutional reform through integrity and transparency rather than confrontation.

By promoting procedural fairness, evidence-based decision-making, and inclusive leadership, he can uphold constitutional morality while preserving the organization's stability and morale, **a model of ethical public administration.**

34. Ravi, an IAS officer, is serving as the District Magistrate in a politically sensitive district. A massive political rally, expected to attract nearly two lakh people, was organised by the ruling party to showcase its strength. Senior leaders were to attend, and the event had been widely publicised. Although Ravi's office had earlier issued advisories on barricading, evacuation routes, deployment of police, and medical preparedness, many instructions were ignored by the organisers, citing budgetary constraints and urgency.

On the day of the rally, the situation turned chaotic. Entry and exit points were overcrowded, there was no proper crowd management, and medical facilities were insufficient. During the rally, a sudden push by people wanting to move closer to the stage created panic, leading to a stampede. Several lives were lost, many were injured, and the incident triggered widespread anger.

Different stakeholders reacted sharply. Families of victims demanded justice, accountability, and immediate compensation. Civil society groups and the media accused the administration of negligence. Opposition parties claimed the government had put lives at risk for political gain. The ruling party, however, pressured Ravi to downplay the incident and present it as an "unavoidable tragedy." Some officials also suggested that highlighting lapses could invite unrest and even threaten Ravi's career.

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Ravi now faces a dilemma. As the administrative head of the district, he is responsible for public safety and upholding the rule of law. At the same time, he faces political pressure, the risk of transfers, and personal threats. His choices will have consequences not just for his career but also for the credibility of governance and the trust of the people.

Questions

1. What are the ethical dilemmas faced by Ravi in this situation?
2. Evaluate the options available to Ravi and the possible consequences of each.
3. Suggest the most appropriate course of action for Ravi in light of constitutional values and principles of good governance.
4. What systemic reforms can be introduced to improve crowd management and ensure accountability in large political and public events in the long run?

(250 words)

Approach:

- Briefly describe the situation to establish context.
- Identify and discuss the ethical dilemmas faced by Ravi in this case.
- Evaluate the options available to him and the possible consequences of each option.
- Suggest the best course of action for Ravi.
- Recommend systemic reforms to improve crowd management and ensure accountability.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Ravi, an IAS officer and District Magistrate, faces a critical situation when a massive political rally of nearly two lakh people turns chaotic, resulting in a stampede. Despite prior advisories on crowd management, barricading, medical preparedness, and evacuation routes, the organisers neglected instructions, citing urgency and budget constraints. The tragedy resulted in loss of lives and public outrage, creating an ethical and administrative dilemma for Ravi, balancing duty, accountability, and political pressure.

Body:

1. Ethical Dilemmas

- **Duty vs Political Pressure:** Ravi must safeguard lives and uphold the law, while the ruling party pressures him to present the incident as an “unavoidable tragedy.”
- **Accountability vs Career Risk:** Reporting lapses may endanger his career and personal safety; concealing facts compromises integrity.
- **Justice for Victims vs Public Order:** Families demand accountability; highlighting lapses could trigger unrest or political backlash.
- **Short-term Pragmatism vs Long-term Governance Ethics:** Suppressing information offers temporary relief but erodes public trust and accountability.

2. Options and Consequences

Option	Action	Consequences
Report honestly	Submit a full report on lapses and failures	Pros: Upholds integrity, public trust, justice. Cons: Political backlash, career risk, threats.
Downplay incident	Conceal or misrepresent facts	Pros: Temporary career protection. Cons: Violates ethics, denies justice, erodes credibility, legal implications.
Balanced approach	File factual internal report, ensure victim relief, and manage public communication	Pros: Maintains professional integrity, reduces immediate political backlash, enables reforms. Cons: Partial criticism, ongoing pressure.

3. Recommended Course of Action

- **Immediate Administrative Measures:**
 - ◆ File a comprehensive report documenting lapses and ignored advisories.
 - ◆ Ensure compensation, medical care, and relief for victims' families.
 - ◆ Coordinate with police and emergency services for post-incident investigation.

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- **Public Communication:**

- ◆ Express **empathy**, acknowledge the **tragedy**, and commit to **preventive measures** without **sensationalism**.

- **Ethical Justification:**

- ◆ Upholds **Article 21 (Right to Life)**, **Article 14 (Equality)**, and **Fundamental Duties (Art. 51A)**.
- ◆ Reinforces **good governance principles: accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and rule of law**.

4. Systemic Reforms for Long-term Improvement

- **Pre-event Approvals:** Mandatory **safety audit** and **crowd management plans**; **penalties** for **organisers** ignoring **advisories**.
- **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** Guidelines for **barricading**, **evacuation**, **medical facilities**, and **police deployment**; **training** for **officials**.
- **Technology Integration:** Use **drones**, **CCTV**, and **crowd-monitoring tools**.
- **Legal and Institutional Framework:** Strengthen **disaster management laws**; **independent oversight committees** for **public events**.
- **Public Awareness:** Educate **citizens** about **safe behaviour** in large gatherings.

Conclusion:

Ravi's responsibility lies in balancing **administrative duty**, **ethical integrity**, and **public safety**. Upholding **transparency**, ensuring **justice for victims**, and committing to **systemic reforms** are essential to maintain **public trust** and the **credibility of governance**. **Ethical courage** and adherence to **constitutional values** must guide **decision-making**, even under **political pressure**.

35. Ashok, an IAS officer posted as the District Magistrate in a riverine district, has been facing mounting challenges due to rampant illegal sand mining along the riverbanks. Despite a ban during the monsoon season and strict environmental regulations, sand extraction continues unabated, driven by a nexus between local contractors, transporters, and influential political figures.

The illegal mining has caused severe environmental degradation, including riverbank erosion, falling groundwater levels, and damage to aquatic ecosystems.

It has also led to frequent road accidents due to the overloading of trucks and the loss of government revenue.

Ashok's administration has conducted several raids, seized vehicles, and filed FIRs, but the operations have met with strong resistance. Local miners, backed by political patrons, have staged protests accusing the administration of "anti-development" actions. Some officers in his team have received threats, and a few have even hinted that confronting the sand mafia could cost them their safety or postings. Meanwhile, honest junior officers look up to Ashok for moral leadership, while local media and environmental activists demand tougher action and transparency.

The state government, citing the importance of construction material for infrastructure projects, has asked Ashok to "avoid confrontation" and maintain law and order. However, environmental damage continues, and the judiciary has recently sought a report on compliance with mining regulations.

Questions:

- What are the ethical dilemmas faced by Ashok in this situation?
- Evaluate the options available to him and their possible consequences.
- Suggest the most appropriate course of action for Ashok based on environmental ethics and administrative accountability.
- Propose long-term systemic reforms to curb illegal sand mining while balancing development and environmental protection. (250 words)

Approach:

- Briefly describe the situation to establish context.
- Identify and discuss the ethical dilemmas faced by Ashok in this case.
- Evaluate the options available to him and the possible consequences of each option.
- Suggest the best course of action for Ashok.
- Propose long-term systemic reforms to curb illegal sand mining while balancing development and environmental protection.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

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Introduction:

Ashok, an IAS officer in a riverine district, faces rampant illegal sand mining fueled by local contractors, transporters, and political patrons. Despite monsoon bans and strict environmental regulations, mining causes riverbank erosion, groundwater depletion, ecological damage, road accidents, and revenue loss. Enforcement efforts face resistance, threats, and political pressure, while judiciary, media, and civil society demand compliance, transparency, and sustainable solutions, creating a complex ethical and administrative dilemma.

Body:**A. Ethical Dilemmas Faced by Ashok**

- **Conflict Between Law Enforcement and Political Pressure:**
 - ◆ Ashok must enforce environmental laws while facing resistance from politically influential actors.
 - ◆ Yielding to pressure risks compromising administrative integrity, while strict enforcement could attract political retaliation.
- **Safety vs. Duty:**
 - ◆ Officers in Ashok's team face threats to personal safety.
 - ◆ Ethical leadership requires protecting his team while ensuring justice, presenting a dilemma between moral responsibility and practical security concerns.
- **Development vs. Environmental Protection:**
 - ◆ The state government emphasizes infrastructure needs, pressuring Ashok to avoid confrontation.
 - ◆ Prioritizing short-term development over environmental sustainability raises questions of intergenerational justice.
- **Transparency vs. Administrative Pragmatism :**
 - ◆ Media and civil society demand transparency, but revealing full enforcement actions may escalate tensions.
 - ◆ Ashok must balance accountability with maintaining law and order.

B. Options Available and Their Consequences

- **Strict Enforcement**
 - ◆ **Actions:** Continue raids, FIRs, and vehicle seizures.
 - ◆ **Consequences:** Upholds the rule of law and environmental protection; may provoke political backlash, threaten officers' safety, and create short-term unrest.
- **Political Compliance**
 - ◆ **Actions:** Reduce enforcement to appease government and local actors.
 - ◆ **Consequences:** Minimizes immediate conflict and maintains "harmony," but undermines legal duty, ecological sustainability, and long-term governance credibility.
- **Mediation and Stakeholder Engagement**
 - ◆ **Actions:** Involve local communities, contractors, and environmental experts to find regulated sand mining solutions.
 - ◆ **Consequences:** May reduce direct confrontation and build consensus; however, risks partial compliance and slower ecological recovery.

C. Recommended Course of Action

- **Balanced Enforcement with Strategic Alliances:** Ashok should adopt a principled yet pragmatic approach: enforce laws strictly while ensuring officer safety, documenting all actions, and using judicial support to legitimise operations.
 - ◆ **Public Engagement:** Issue public advisories, conduct awareness campaigns about environmental consequences, and involve civil society in monitoring to reduce misinformation and build legitimacy.
 - ◆ **Judicial Backing:** Utilise court directives to strengthen enforcement, ensuring political resistance cannot easily obstruct legal obligations.

D. Long-Term Systemic Reforms

- **Digital Monitoring and Regulation:** Implement GPS tracking for sand transport, digital permits, and e-auction systems to curb illegal mining.

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- **Community-Based Resource Management:** Empower local Gram Sabhas and riverine communities to monitor extraction, incentivising sustainable practices.
- **Alternative Materials and Construction Practices:** Promote the use of manufactured sand, recycled aggregates, and eco-friendly construction to reduce demand pressure on natural rivers.
- **Strict Penalties and Anti-Corruption Measures:** Introduce stringent fines, license cancellations, and prosecution for violators, alongside whistleblower protections for officers.
- **Capacity Building:** Train enforcement officers in environmental law, risk management, and stakeholder negotiation to strengthen administrative resilience.

Conclusion:

Ashok's challenge lies at the intersection of **ethics, administration, and environmental stewardship**. By enforcing **laws with transparency**, ensuring **officer safety**, and engaging **stakeholders**, he can address immediate crises while enabling **sustainable governance**. As **Mahatma Gandhi** said, *"The future depends on what you do today."* Ashok's principled action will ensure a **just and sustainable environment** for future generations.

36. Ritika, an IAS officer posted as the Public Information Officer (PIO) in a state department, has been facing mounting challenges due to widespread mismanagement in handling RTI requests. Citizens frequently report delays exceeding statutory limits, incomplete disclosures, and arbitrary denials citing vague exemptions. Several RTI applications relate to public procurement, environmental clearances, and fund utilization, raising concerns about corruption and administrative opacity.

Despite repeated reminders and follow-ups, the backlog of pending RTI cases has grown substantially. Some senior officials in the department discourage timely compliance, fearing that disclosure might expose irregularities and implicate influential contractors or political patrons. A few junior officers have expressed fear that strict adherence to the RTI Act could attract harassment, transfers, or litigation. Meanwhile, civil society organizations and media outlets demand transparency, timely responses, and public accountability.

The state government, concerned about negative publicity and political fallout, has subtly instructed Ritika to "avoid unnecessary disclosure" and focus on maintaining departmental harmony. At the same time, the Central Information Commission and local courts are actively monitoring compliance, with some PILs filed questioning delays and partial disclosures.

Questions:

- What are the ethical dilemmas faced by Ritika in this situation?
- Evaluate the options available to her and their possible consequences.
- Suggest the most appropriate course of action for Ritika based on administrative accountability and citizen-centric governance.
- Propose long-term systemic reforms to improve RTI implementation, reduce backlogs, and protect officials from retaliation while ensuring transparency and participatory governance.

Approach:

- Briefly describe the situation to establish context.
- Identify and discuss the ethical dilemmas faced by Ritika in this case.
- Evaluate the options available to her and the possible consequences of each option.
- Suggest the most appropriate course of action for Ritika based on administrative accountability and citizen-centric governance.
- Propose long-term systemic reforms to improve RTI implementation.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

Ritika, an IAS officer serving as the **Public Information Officer (PIO)**, faces a complex **ethical and administrative crisis**. The department is plagued by **delays, incomplete responses, and arbitrary denials** of RTI requests—many concerning sensitive issues like **procurement, environmental clearances, and fund utilization**. **Senior officials discourage transparency** to shield corrupt practices, while **civil society and judicial bodies** demand accountability. Ritika stands at the crossroads between **professional ethics, legal duty, and political pressure**.

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Body:**A. Ethical Dilemmas Faced by Ritika**

- **Transparency vs Organisational Loyalty:** Revealing sensitive information upholds citizens' **right to know** but may anger superiors and disrupt **departmental harmony**.
- **Rule of Law vs Political Pressure:** The **RTI Act** mandates disclosure within statutory limits, while **political instructions** urge concealment.
- **Integrity vs Self-Interest:** Adhering strictly to RTI norms may invite **harassment, transfers, or career stagnation**.
- **Public Accountability vs Bureaucratic Conformity:** Ethical duty to **citizens** conflicts with the **culture of secrecy** within bureaucracy.
- **Professional Responsibility vs Fear of Reprisal:** Junior officers' reluctance reflects a larger **ethical climate of fear** that Ritika must address responsibly.

B. Evaluation of Options and Possible Consequences

Option 1: Fully comply with the RTI Act and disclose all permissible information

- **Pros:** Upholds **legality, transparency, and public trust**; aligns with **constitutional values and CIC directives**.
- **Cons:** May lead to **backlash, political isolation, or punitive transfers**; could expose **systemic corruption**.

Option 2: Partially disclose information under vague exemptions (as advised by seniors)

- **Pros:** Maintains **departmental harmony and political goodwill**.
- **Cons:** Violates the **RTI Act**, erodes **public trust**, encourages **corruption**, and risks **legal consequences or contempt of CIC orders**.

Option 3: Delay action citing administrative constraints

- **Pros:** Temporarily avoids **confrontation**.
- **Cons:** Contravenes **statutory deadlines**, invites **judicial reprimand**, and reflects **ethical cowardice**.

Option 4: Seek guidance and institutional backing

- **Pros:** Consulting the **State Information Commission, Chief Secretary, or DoPT** strengthens **legitimacy**; fosters **collective accountability**.
- **Cons:** May slow decisions but **protects against arbitrary blame**.

C. Most Appropriate Course of Action

- Ritika should **uphold the spirit and letter of the RTI Act** through:
 - ◆ **Strict compliance** with disclosure norms, ensuring **transparency** without compromising legitimately exempt information.
 - ◆ **Documentation of all communications** with superiors to ensure **procedural integrity and personal protection**.
 - ◆ **Engaging with higher authorities** such as the **Information Commission** for guidance and reporting unethical interference.
 - ◆ **Encouraging subordinates** by fostering an **ethical work culture** based on **openness, fearlessness, and fairness**.
 - ◆ Her actions should reflect values of **integrity, accountability, courage, and commitment to constitutional morality**, reaffirming that a **civil servant's primary loyalty** lies with the **law and citizens**, not transient political interests.

D. Long-Term Systemic Reforms

- **Digital RTI Portals:** End-to-end **online processing** to minimize **discretion and delay**.
- **RTI Capacity Building:** Regular **training** on **legal provisions and ethical conduct** for officers.
- **Whistleblower and PIO Protection:** Institutional **safeguards** against **punitive transfers or harassment**.
- **Performance Metrics:** Include **RTI responsiveness** in **annual performance appraisals**.
- **Proactive Disclosure:** Departments should publish routine data on **procurement, finances, and clearances** under **Section 4** of the RTI Act.
- **Independent Oversight:** Strengthen **State Information Commissions** with adequate **staff and resources**.

Conclusion:

Ritika's dilemma symbolises the **tension between ethics and expediency** in governance. Her **morally courageous adherence** to the **RTI Act** will reinforce **citizens' faith in democracy and legality**. Long-term reforms must **institutionalise transparency, protect honest officers, and ensure that information truly becomes a tool of**

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empowerment, not intimidation. Upholding **ethical governance** is not only her duty but a **cornerstone of participatory democracy**.

37. In a tragic incident, more than twenty children in a state district lost their lives after consuming a widely used cough syrup later found to be adulterated. Dr Ananya, a senior health officer posted in the state's Drug Control Department, has been tasked with investigating the matter and ensuring accountability.

As she delves into records, she uncovers alarming lapses in drug testing protocols, delayed inspections, and collusion between some local distributors and manufacturers. Parents and civil society groups are demanding immediate disclosure of investigation reports, punitive action against responsible parties, and systemic reforms to prevent recurrence.

Meanwhile, the state health department is under immense political pressure to manage public outrage and contain negative media coverage. Some senior officials subtly advise Dr Ananya to "handle the matter quietly" to avoid reputational damage to the government and influential stakeholders, warning that strict enforcement may jeopardise her career.

Junior officers involved in sample testing and reporting express fear of harassment, transfers, or legal consequences if they fully disclose the facts. At the same time, courts have taken suo motu cognisance, and multiple PILs have been filed seeking transparency in the investigation, compensation for affected families, and reforms in drug safety oversight.

Questions:

- What ethical dilemmas confront Dr Ananya in this scenario?
- Evaluate the options available to her and their potential consequences.
- Suggest the most appropriate course of action for Dr Ananya based on balancing administrative responsibility and citizen welfare.
- Propose long-term systemic reforms to strengthen drug safety oversight.

Approach:

- Briefly describe the situation to establish context.
- Identify and discuss the ethical dilemmas faced by Dr Ananya in this scenario.
- Evaluate the options available to her and the possible consequences of each option.
- Suggest the most appropriate course of action for Dr Ananya based on balancing administrative responsibility and citizen welfare.
- Propose long-term systemic reforms to strengthen drug safety oversight.
- Conclude with a suitable way forward.

Introduction:

In this tragic case, over twenty children lost their lives after consuming an adulterated cough syrup. **Dr. Ananya**, a senior health officer in the **State Drug Control Department**, is tasked with investigating the incident. Her inquiry reveals serious lapses—**negligent testing protocols, delayed inspections, and collusion** between distributors and manufacturers. Amid rising public outrage, **political pressure** mounts to suppress the matter, while **junior officers fear reprisals** for speaking out. Courts have intervened suo motu, demanding **transparency and reform** in drug safety oversight.

Body:

A. Ethical Dilemmas Faced by Dr. Ananya

- Integrity vs. Institutional Loyalty:** Whether to uphold her duty to truth and public welfare or comply with higher authorities who want to conceal facts for political reasons.
- Transparency vs. Administrative Pressure:** She must decide between full disclosure of findings and obeying orders to "handle the matter quietly."
- Public Interest vs. Personal Risk:** Taking strict action could protect citizens but may endanger her **career, safety, and professional standing**.
- Accountability vs. Collegial Solidarity:** Investigating and exposing lapses might implicate her colleagues or superiors involved in negligence or corruption.

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- **Ethical Courage vs. Bureaucratic Conformity:** She faces the moral test of demonstrating **courage of conviction** in a system that often rewards silence over truth.

B. Evaluation of Options and Their Consequences

- **Option 1: Suppress or dilute findings under pressure.**
 - ◆ *Pros:* Immediate political appeasement, career safety, and institutional harmony.
 - ◆ *Cons:* Violates integrity, erodes public trust, perpetuates systemic corruption, and denies justice to victims.
- **Option 2: Partially disclose findings while shielding powerful interests.**
 - ◆ *Pros:* Appears balanced and avoids total confrontation.
 - ◆ *Cons:* Compromises ethical responsibility, misleads the public, and invites judicial or media scrutiny later.
- **Option 3: Uphold full transparency and accountability.**
 - ◆ *Pros:* Upholds professional ethics, serves public interest, and aligns with constitutional duty of fairness and justice.
 - ◆ *Cons:* Risks political backlash, administrative isolation, and potential transfer or disciplinary action.

C. Most Appropriate Course of Action

- Dr. Ananya should adopt **Option 3** — **pursue transparent, evidence-based investigation** in line with **Rule of Law and ethical governance**.
 - ◆ She should document all findings meticulously, ensuring a **legally defensible report**.
 - ◆ Engage with **judicial and oversight bodies** (e.g., Lokayukta, Human Rights Commission) to protect the integrity of the investigation.
 - ◆ Maintain professional communication with superiors, emphasizing her **statutory responsibility** under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act**.

- ◆ Provide institutional support to **junior officers**, ensuring whistleblower protection and psychological safety.
- ◆ Balance firmness with procedural propriety to uphold both **administrative responsibility and citizen welfare**.

D. Long-Term Systemic Reforms for Drug Safety Oversight

- **Strengthening Regulatory Infrastructure:** Upgrade state drug laboratories, ensure periodic audits, and adopt WHO-GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) standards.
- **Digital Transparency:** Introduce real-time **drug testing and tracking systems** to monitor supply chains and prevent adulteration.
- **Independent Drug Authority:** Create an autonomous **National Drug Safety and Quality Authority** for coordinated enforcement across states.
- **Whistleblower Protection and Ethics Training:** Institutionalise **ethical capacity-building** and protection mechanisms for officials reporting malpractice.
- **Public Accountability:** Mandate **annual transparency reports** on drug testing, recalls, and enforcement actions.
- **Judicial and Legislative Oversight:** Strengthen penal provisions for **negligent manufacturers and corrupt officials** under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

Conclusion:

Dr. Ananya's ethical obligation extends beyond bureaucratic compliance — it lies in **protecting citizens' right to life and health**. Upholding **transparency, courage, and justice** will not only ensure accountability in this case but also reinforce faith in public institutions. Strengthening **drug regulation, ethical governance, and institutional integrity** remains essential to prevent such tragedies and safeguard public health.



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ESSAY

38. He who has a why to live can bear almost any how. (1200 words)

Introduction:

In the harsh winter of 1944, Viktor Frankl, a young psychiatrist, found himself in a Nazi concentration camp. Surrounded by despair, starvation, and death, he observed that some prisoners **lost hope and succumbed quickly**, while others endured unimaginable hardships. Those who survived often had a **clear reason to live**—a loved one waiting, a mission to fulfill, or a personal goal. This observation reflects Friedrich Nietzsche's assertion: *"He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."* Life's challenges—the "how"—become bearable when guided by a strong purpose—the "why."

Body:

Understanding the Quote

- **"Why to live":** Purpose, meaning, personal values, or responsibilities.
- **"How to live":** Hardships, difficulties, or challenges encountered in life.
- **Core idea:** A sense of purpose equips humans with **resilience and determination** to endure adversity.

Philosophical Perspective

- Nietzsche emphasises that **life is inherently challenging**, and humans need **meaning to endure suffering**.
- Viktor Frankl's survival in concentration camps demonstrates that **those with a reason to live could endure extreme pain and deprivation**.
- Example: Frankl himself survived, motivated by the desire to reunite with his loved ones and to write his psychological treatise on human resilience (*Man's Search for Meaning*).

Historical Examples

- **Mahatma Gandhi:** During multiple imprisonments, Gandhi endured harsh conditions, hunger strikes, and political pressure, guided by his **commitment to truth and non-violence** and the goal of India's independence.

- **Nelson Mandela:** Despite 27 years in prison under inhumane conditions, Mandela remained steadfast because of his **vision of racial equality and freedom for South Africa**.
- **Malala Yousafzai:** Survived a targeted attack on her life and continued advocating for girls' education, motivated by her **belief in the right to education**.

Contemporary Examples

- **Parents** working multiple jobs to provide education and a better future for their children. Their purpose—the welfare of their children—helps them endure exhaustion and financial struggles.
- **Patients with chronic illnesses** persevering through treatments and pain, driven by hope to live or responsibilities toward family.
- **Entrepreneurs and social workers** often face repeated failures, risks, and societal challenges but continue their work due to a **clear mission or vision**.

Psychological and Social Perspective

- Purpose provides **mental strength, resilience, and motivation** to overcome trauma, stress, and adversity.
- Modern psychology supports **goal-setting, meaning-making, and purpose-driven living** as essential for mental well-being.
- Example: People recovering from natural disasters or accidents often survive extreme trauma due to **family bonds or personal goals**.
- Supportive communities amplify the ability to endure hardships, illustrating the importance of **social support alongside personal purpose**.

Counter-Perspective

- Without a "why," even minor challenges may feel overwhelming.
- Resilience also relies on **internal strength, adaptive strategies, and social networks**.

Conclusion

The experiences of Viktor Frankl, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and many ordinary individuals demonstrate

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that a strong **purpose** enables humans to face even the most severe **adversities**. A clear “**why**” strengthens **resilience**, guides **choices**, and inspires **perseverance** in life. As **Ralph Waldo Emerson** wisely said, “*The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.*” In today’s rapidly changing world, discovering one’s **purpose** is essential—not only for personal **growth** but also for contributing meaningfully to **society** and shaping a **better future**.

39. Ambition without wisdom is a tempest, while contentment without effort is a mirage. (1200 words)

Introduction:

In 1914, a young scientist named **Robert Oppenheimer** was driven by his ambition to unlock the secrets of nuclear energy. His brilliance and ambition led to the development of the atomic bomb—a feat of immense scientific achievement but one that unleashed unprecedented destruction. Oppenheimer later reflected on the moral weight of his creation, realizing that **ambition without wisdom can become a tempest**, capable of causing havoc if not guided by ethical judgment. Similarly, people often desire comfort and contentment without effort, only to find it illusory, like a **mirage in the desert**.

Body:

Ambition Without Wisdom

- **Explanation:** Ambition drives progress and innovation, but without **prudence, ethical guidance, and foresight**, it can lead to disastrous consequences.
- **Examples:**
 - ◆ **Historical:** Napoleon Bonaparte’s unbridled ambition led to massive wars, destabilization, and eventual defeat.
 - ◆ **Contemporary:** Business leaders pursuing growth without considering ethical or environmental impact have caused financial and social crises.
- **Lesson:** Ambition must be accompanied by **wisdom, planning, and ethical grounding** to transform energy into constructive outcomes rather than destructive forces.

Contentment Without Effort

- **Explanation:** Contentment without effort is **illusory**; true fulfillment comes from **hard work, perseverance, and personal contribution**.
- **Examples:**
 - ◆ Students expecting academic success without disciplined study often face failure.
 - ◆ Societies that rely solely on inherited privileges or unearned wealth stagnate culturally, economically, and morally.
- **Lesson:** Effort creates a **foundation for lasting contentment**, ensuring that satisfaction is genuine and sustainable.

Balanced Perspective

- Ambition guided by wisdom leads to **sustainable and ethical success**.
- Contentment achieved through effort results in **real satisfaction and self-respect**.
- **Example:**
 - ◆ **Mahatma Gandhi’s** ambition for India’s independence was guided by ethical principles and persistent effort, resulting in profound national and personal fulfilment.
 - ◆ Entrepreneurs like **Ratan Tata** combined ambitious goals with careful planning and relentless effort to achieve meaningful innovation.

Conclusion

Life teaches us that **unchecked ambition or effortless contentment** can mislead individuals and societies. Life demands a **delicate balance between drive, ethical judgment, effort, and satisfaction**. In today’s fast-paced, competitive world, cultivating **wisdom alongside ambition** and earning one’s contentment through **dedicated effort** ensures personal growth, social responsibility, and sustainable success.

As **Aristotle** wisely said, “*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.*” Moving forward, individuals and communities must align their **ambitions with wisdom** and their **contentment with effort**, creating a life of purpose, integrity, and meaningful contribution.

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40. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way. (1200 words)

Introduction:

Life often presents **challenges** that seem **insurmountable**, yet **history** repeatedly shows that these very **obstacles** can become **catalysts** for **progress**. Take **Thomas Edison**, who famously said, "I have not **failed**. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't **work**." His repeated **failures** while inventing the **electric light bulb** did not deter him; instead, they refined his **approach** and ultimately led to one of the most **transformative innovations** in **human history**. Similarly, in **governance**, **social movements**, and **personal lives**, **impediments** often force **creativity**, **resilience**, and **strategic action**, turning what stands in the way into the very **way forward**.

Body:

● Understanding the Concept :

- ◆ Define **impediment**: It could be personal, societal, structural, or technological.
- ◆ Explain **how obstacles teach lessons**: They test patience, force creative thinking, and encourage strategic planning.

● Philosophical roots:

- ◆ **Stoicism**: Marcus Aurelius emphasised using adversity to build strength.
- ◆ **Indian philosophy**: Bhagavad Gita highlights *Karma Yoga*, performing one's duty despite obstacles.
- ◆ **Growth mindset** (Carol Dweck): Failure and resistance are learning opportunities.

● Historical Leaders and Statesmanship:

- ◆ **Mahatma Gandhi**: British repression and imprisonment strengthened India's independence movement.
- ◆ **Abraham Lincoln**: Political setbacks honed his resolve to abolish slavery.

● Science and Innovation:

- ◆ **Thomas Edison**: Thousands of failures before successfully inventing the light bulb.
- ◆ **NASA**: Space mission failures led to learning, innovation, and eventual success in space exploration.

● Social Movements:

- ◆ **Civil Rights Movement (USA)**: Legal obstacles strengthened strategic organisation and advocacy.
- ◆ **India's Green Revolution**: Initial resistance to high-yield crop technology forced meticulous planning, transforming agriculture.

● Entrepreneurship and Personal Growth:

- ◆ Startups overcoming resource or regulatory challenges have often innovated more efficiently.
- ◆ Individual resilience in personal life exemplifies turning obstacles into growth opportunities.

● Mechanisms: How Obstacles Advance Action

- ◆ **Stimulate creative problem-solving**: Scarcity or resistance forces innovation.
- ◆ **Build resilience**: Overcoming challenges strengthens character and determination.
- ◆ **Promote strategic thinking**: Hurdles compel careful planning and optimization.
- ◆ **Reveal hidden opportunities**: What seems like a barrier may open alternative paths.
- ◆ **Encourage collaboration**: Many obstacles require teamwork and collective action.

◆ Examples:

- The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption and healthcare reforms globally.
- The renewable energy sector faced supply chain hurdles but catalysed innovation in solar and green hydrogen.

● Contemporary Relevance

- ◆ **Governance and policy**: Bureaucrats and policymakers facing resource or regulatory obstacles develop innovative strategies.
- ◆ **Education and skill development**: Obstacles in access or infrastructure led to scalable digital learning solutions.
- ◆ **Environment and sustainability**: Challenges in climate policy create opportunities for technological and social innovation.

● Counter-perspective

- ◆ **Acknowledge limitations**: Not all obstacles inherently create opportunities. Some may be insurmountable or destructive.

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- ◆ Requires a proactive mindset, strategy, and persistence to convert obstacles into progress.

Conclusion:

As the philosopher **Friedrich Nietzsche** aptly observed, “That which does not kill us makes us **stronger**,” reminding us that every **obstacle** carries within it the potential for **triumph**, making what initially seems to stand in our way, ultimately the very **pathway forward**. Thus, **individuals, communities, and nations** must cultivate **resilience, adaptability, and strategic thinking**, viewing **obstacles** as catalysts for **innovation and growth**.

41. History began when humans invented gods, and will end when humans become gods. (1200 words)

Introduction:

When the **first spark of fire** illuminated the **dark cave** of a **primitive human**, it was more than a **triumph of survival** — it was the **birth of faith and curiosity**. Awed by **lightning and death**, humans **imagined gods** to explain the **mysteries they could not master**. Millennia later, that same **curiosity** fuels **scientists** who **split atoms, edit genes, and create artificial intelligence** — **wielding powers once reserved for the divine**. Thus, the **human journey** — from **imagining gods to aspiring toward their powers** — traces the **arc of history**, from **wonder and reverence to knowledge and mastery**.

Body:

Humans Invented Gods

- The first part of history is defined by humans **creating gods** — a reflection of both **fear** and **imagination**.
- **Psychological perspective**: Early humans sought explanations for **natural phenomena, death, and disease**. Myths and deities gave shape to the **unknown**.
- **Sociological perspective**: Shared beliefs provided **social cohesion** and **moral order**, laying the foundations for **laws, customs, and community life**.
- **Political dimension**: Leaders often claimed **divine authority** to legitimize power — from **Pharaohs of Egypt** to **medieval kings in India and Europe**.
- **Cultural impact**: Religious narratives inspired art, literature, and monumental architecture, embedding **spirituality and ethics** into everyday life.

- ◆ **Example**: The **Bhakti and Sufi movements** in India exemplify how **faith and devotion** guided moral behavior and societal harmony, emphasizing **love, compassion, and ethical conduct**.

Humans Becoming Gods

- As history progressed, human **curiosity and intellect** evolved into **scientific mastery**, enabling us to **wield god-like powers**.
- **Technological advancements**: Humans now **split atoms, alter genetic codes, and design artificial intelligence**, exercising control over **life, matter, and energy**.
- **Philosophical shift**: Dependence on divine authority gave way to **human agency**, as reason and knowledge became the primary means of **understanding and shaping reality**.
- **Ethical dilemmas**: With **immense power** comes **immense responsibility**. Ethical frameworks struggle to keep pace with **technological innovations**, posing questions about **safety, morality, and the future of life**.
- **Examples**:
 - **CRISPR technology** allows humans to edit genomes, raising ethical debates about “playing God.”
 - **Artificial intelligence** can now replicate cognitive tasks, forcing humanity to reconsider **consciousness, ethics, and decision-making**.
 - **Nuclear energy** demonstrates the dual potential of **creation and destruction**, echoing the god-like power humanity has attained.

Ethical and Existential Reflections

- The journey from **inventing gods to becoming them** is not merely historical but also **moral and existential**.
- **Power vs. wisdom**: Technology enables unprecedented control, but without **ethical guidance**, it risks **catastrophe**.
- **Human identity**: In aspiring to become gods, humanity must ask: What does it mean to remain **humane**? Can **compassion, empathy, and justice** survive the age of mastery?
- **Future trajectory**: History may not end with human omnipotence, but it will transform. **Responsibility**,

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sustainability, and moral prudence will define the next phase of human civilization.

Counterinterview:

- “Becoming gods” need not end history; it could mark a **new phase of evolution** guided by **ethics and wisdom**.
- **Technological power** like AI and genetic engineering can be used for **human welfare**, not domination.
- Focus on **sustainability** ensures mastery over resources without harming the environment.
- **Compassion and moral reasoning** can guide innovation to reduce **inequality, poverty, and suffering**.

Conclusion:

In essence, the story of humanity — from **inventing gods** to **exploring god-like powers** — underscores our enduring **quest for meaning, knowledge, and mastery**. As **Yuval Noah Harari** observes in *Homo Deus*, “Once technology enables us to re-engineer human minds, *Homo sapiens* will disappear, human history will come to an end, and a completely new process will begin, which people like you and I cannot comprehend.” This highlights that as humans acquire **immense power**, the greatest challenge is to **use it wisely and ethically**. True progress lies in **balancing technological prowess with moral responsibility**, ensuring that our **god-like capabilities serve life, society, and the planet**.

42. The individual is not a pre-given entity; he is constituted through power relations. (1200 words)

Introduction:

Imagine a young girl in a small Indian village. From birth, her behaviour, choices, and aspirations are subtly shaped by family norms, caste expectations, school education, and societal rules. Even her self-perception—what she thinks she can achieve—is influenced by these structures. This illustrates that the “individual” is **not born fully formed**, but shaped and constituted by **power relations embedded in society**.

Body:

Explain the Concept

- Elaborate on what it means to be “constituted through power relations.”
- Discuss **Michel Foucault’s Perspective**: Classical liberal thought treats individuals as autonomous entities, yet

modern social and political theory, particularly Michel Foucault, argues that the self is constructed through **networks of power**—discourses, institutions, and social practices.

- ◆ Power is productive, not merely repressive. It shapes identities, norms, and social roles.

Theoretical Anchoring

- **Judith Butler**: Identity, especially gender, is performative and constituted through repeated social norms.
- **Antonio Gramsci**: Cultural hegemony molds consciousness, showing how dominant ideologies shape individual subjectivity.

Power in Social Institutions

- **Family**: The primary site of socialisation, families impose norms regarding behaviour, gender roles, and responsibilities.
 - ◆ For instance, in many patriarchal societies, girls are socialised to prioritise domesticity over career, while boys are encouraged toward leadership and risk-taking.
- **Education System**: Schools produce “docile bodies” through discipline, hierarchical structures, and examinations.
 - ◆ The curriculum determines what knowledge is legitimate, shaping not only intellect but also values and aspirations.
 - ◆ For example, meritocratic systems in elite schools create a sense of self-worth tied to academic success, while marginalized children may internalize exclusion.
- **Religion and Culture**: Religious doctrines and cultural norms prescribe roles and behaviors.
 - ◆ In caste-ridden societies, individuals’ self-perception and career choices can be shaped by centuries-old social hierarchies, demonstrating the subtle, pervasive nature of power in constituting the self.

Power in Political and Economic Structures

- **Governance and Law**: The state exerts power through laws, surveillance, and civic norms. Citizens’ identities

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are shaped through civic responsibilities, rights, and institutionalised regulations.

- ◆ For instance, citizens living under authoritarian regimes may internalise obedience and self-censorship, illustrating how political power shapes individual subjectivity.
- **Economic Systems:** Capitalist economies shape individuals' aspirations and lifestyles.
 - ◆ Consumer culture, advertising, and work hierarchies construct desires and self-concepts.
 - ◆ A young professional may define success entirely through income and material accumulation, reflecting the constitutive power of economic structures.

Power in Contemporary Digital Spaces

- In the 21st century, technology and social media constitute new sites of power. Algorithms, influencer culture, and digital surveillance subtly mold opinions, values, and self-perception.
- Social media not only shapes behavior but also constructs the self as performative, measured through likes, followers, and online validation.
- Here, power is decentralized but immensely productive, shaping individuals globally.

Counter-Perspective

- Some argue that individuals possess **agency and autonomy**, capable of resisting power structures.
- While individuals are shaped by power, **agency exists within constraints**. Historical examples—such as the Indian freedom struggle, civil rights movements in the US, or feminist movements worldwide—illustrate that individuals can resist, negotiate, and transform existing power structures.
- Even in digital spaces, grassroots activism or whistleblowers demonstrate that individuals are not passive recipients but **active participants** in constituting and contesting power.

Conclusion:

The **individual** is neither **autonomous** nor **pre-given**; the **self** emerges through **social, political, cultural, and technological power relations**. While these **structures** shape

beliefs, choices, and aspirations, individuals retain **agency** to **resist** and **transform** them. Societies should promote **critical thinking, inclusivity, and ethical digital literacy**, alongside **participatory institutions**, to empower individuals. Awareness of **power dynamics** enables people to actively **engage** with and **reshape societal structures** rather than be merely constituted by them.

43. Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play. (1200 words)

Introduction:

Imagine a young engineer attempting to build a bridge purely based on personal trial-and-error, without consulting principles of civil engineering. The bridge might collapse, highlighting that **experience without theory is blind**. Conversely, if a scholar spends decades writing treatises on bridge construction without ever observing or applying practical techniques, the knowledge remains **abstract and disconnected**. This illustrates the inseparable link between **theory and experience**, where each complements and validates the other.

Body:

● Experience without Theory:

- ◆ Pure practice without understanding the underlying principles can lead to errors.
- ◆ *Example:* A doctor trying experimental treatments without medical knowledge risks patient health.
- ◆ *Example:* Farmers using traditional methods without understanding soil science may have reduced yield.

● Theory without Experience:

- ◆ Abstract knowledge without practical application remains speculative.
- ◆ *Example:* Economic models predicting rural income patterns may fail if not tested against real-world data.
- ◆ *Example:* Engineers or architects studying design principles without actual construction experience may design impractical structures.

● Integration of Theory and Experience:

- ◆ Theory guides experimentation; experience refines theory.

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- ◆ *Example:* Newton's laws emerged from observation and experimentation.
- ◆ *Example:* Policymakers rely on theoretical frameworks but adjust policies based on field feedback.
- ◆ *Example:* AI algorithms are developed using theoretical models but require real-world data for training and accuracy.

Conclusion:

Neither **theory** nor **experience** alone is sufficient to generate **meaningful knowledge** or **effective action**. **Experience** without **theoretical guidance** can be **misguided**, while **theory** without **practical application** remains **abstract** and **detached** from **reality**. By continuously **testing theory** against **reality** and reflecting on **experience** through **theoretical insights**, individuals and societies can achieve **informed, effective, and sustainable outcomes**.

44. Sustainability is no longer about doing less harm. It's about doing more good. (1200 words)

Introduction:

When **Wangari Maathai** began **planting trees** across **Kenya** in the **1970s**, people mocked her efforts as **insignificant** against the tide of **deforestation**. Yet, decades later, her **Green Belt Movement** restored **millions of trees**, **revived local ecosystems**, and **empowered rural women**. Maathai's work symbolised a deeper truth — **sustainability** is not about merely **preventing harm** but about **healing** and **regenerating** what has already been lost. It is about **creating more good** than the **damage already done**.

Body :

Understanding the Shift in Perspective

- **Traditional view:** Focused on reducing pollution, minimising waste, or conserving energy — reactive and defensive.
- **Modern view:** Emphasises **regenerative practices**, **circular economy**, **green innovation**, and **social empowerment** — proactive and transformative.
- Link to global goals like **UN SDGs**, **Paris Agreement**, and **Agenda 2030**.

Dimensions of "Doing More Good"

● Environmental Dimension:

- ◆ Moving from carbon reduction to **carbon sequestration** (e.g., afforestation, biochar).
- ◆ From minimising waste to **circular economy** models — reuse, recycling, regeneration.
- ◆ Examples: **India's Mission LiFE**, **Swachh Bharat Mission**, and renewable energy expansion.

● Economic Dimension:

- ◆ Promoting **green entrepreneurship**, **sustainable finance**, and **inclusive growth**.
- ◆ Example: **Green hydrogen**, **EV ecosystem**, **solar parks**, and **CSR initiatives** promoting sustainability.

● Social Dimension:

- ◆ Empowering local communities, promoting **education, health, and equity**.
- ◆ Example: **Self-help groups**, **women-led renewable initiatives**, **rural livelihood programs**.
- ◆ Integrating sustainability with **human development**.

Ethical and Philosophical Perspective

- Sustainability as a **moral responsibility** towards future generations (Intergenerational Equity).
- From "Anthropocentric" to "Ecocentric" approach — coexistence with nature.
- Reflecting Gandhian philosophy: *"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed."*

Challenges in Practising Positive Sustainability

- Short-term economic interests vs. long-term ecological gains.
- Policy fragmentation, lack of awareness, and weak enforcement.
- Need for behavioural change and innovative governance models.

The Way Forward

- Promote **regenerative agriculture**, **net-positive architecture**, **green jobs**, and **nature-based solutions**.
- Encourage **public-private partnerships** for sustainability innovation.

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- Foster **education and ethical consciousness** for a sustainability-driven mindset.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, true **sustainability** transcends the idea of damage control — it is a **transformative vision** that seeks to restore balance between human progress and the planet's well-being. It calls for an **ethical shift** from exploitation to **regeneration**, from consumption to **conservation**, and from short-term gains to **intergenerational equity**. As Wangari Maathai's legacy reminds us, building a sustainable future means **doing more good** — nurturing ecosystems, empowering communities, and ensuring that development becomes a force for **renewal and harmony**, not depletion.

45. Mutual assured destruction is a paradox: it guarantees peace by guaranteeing destruction. (1200 words)

Introduction:

Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) emerged during the **Cold War** as a **strategic doctrine** asserting that if two adversaries possess **nuclear weapons** capable of **annihilating each other**, neither would **initiate conflict**. It rests on the **logic of deterrence** — peace maintained **not by moral restraint** or **international law**, but by the **certainty of catastrophic retaliation**.

This **paradox of peace through fear** defines the **ethical, political, and philosophical dilemma** of **modern warfare**: *Can lasting peace arise from the threat of total annihilation?*

Body:

Historical Context

- Originated post-**Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945)**; formalized during **US–Soviet Cold War**.
- Scholars **John von Neumann** and **Thomas Schelling** applied game theory to deterrence.
- **Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)**: Peace preserved by fear of nuclear escalation—symbol of MAD's effectiveness.

Ethical Dimensions

- **Kantian ethics**: Threatening annihilation violates human dignity; ends can't justify immoral means.
- **Just War Theory**: Violates proportionality and discrimination; indiscriminate destruction.

- **Utilitarianism**: Deterrence avoids war but imposes lasting fear and economic waste.
- **Gandhian ethics**: True peace rests on *Ahimsa* and moral disarmament, not coercion.

Theoretical Perspectives

- **Realism (Morgenthau, Waltz)**: States act for survival; nuclear deterrence ensures stability.
- **Liberalism (Rawls, Wilson)**: Peace requires cooperation and justice; MAD reduces morality to calculation.
- **Constructivism (Wendt)**: Deterrence is socially constructed; norms can reshape peace.
- **Feminist ethics (Cohn, Enloe)**: MAD is a patriarchal logic glorifying power over care and empathy.

Practical Illustrations

- **US–USSR**: Avoided direct war but fuelled proxy conflicts and arms races.
- **India–Pakistan**: Post-1998 nuclearization deterred war but allowed limited clashes (Kargil 1999, Balakot 2019).
- **US–North Korea (2017–18)**: Fear of annihilation replaced by diplomacy, showing peace through dialogue.
- **Russia–Ukraine (2022–)**: Nuclear deterrence prevents NATO intervention but enables aggression—moral hazard.

Humanitarian & Environmental Ethics

- MAD ignores the **transgenerational and ecological ethics** of warfare.
- A full-scale nuclear exchange would lead to:
 - ◆ **Nuclear winter**, destroying agriculture and ecosystems.
 - ◆ **Mass civilian casualties** violating international humanitarian law (IHL).
 - ◆ **Intergenerational injustice**, burdening future generations with radioactive legacies.
- Philosopher **Hans Jonas** in *The Imperative of Responsibility* (1979) argued that modern ethics must consider long-term consequences of human action. MAD, by threatening irreversible planetary harm, fails this moral responsibility.

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● Global Treaties & Alternatives

- ◆ **NPT (1968):** Prevents proliferation but creates ethical inequality among nuclear states.
- ◆ **CTBT (1996) and TPNW (2017, ICAN Nobel 2017):** Moral move from deterrence to disarmament.
- ◆ **UN Charter (1945):** Collective security as moral alternative.
- ◆ **Human Security (UNDP 1994):** Redefines peace beyond military deterrence.

● Thinkers and Moral Voices

- ◆ **Einstein:** Warned “Our thinking has not changed with the atom.” Advocated supranational governance.
- ◆ **Bertrand Russell:** Called nuclear deterrence “collective madness.”
- ◆ **Pope Francis (2021):** Declared even nuclear possession immoral.
- ◆ **Amartya Sen:** True peace equals to “presence of justice,” not absence of war.
- ◆ **Nelson Mandela:** “Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.”

● Ethical Path Forward

- ◆ **Gandhian non-violence & moral diplomacy** over fear-based security.
- ◆ **Confidence-building measures (CBMs):** New START (US–Russia), India–China border protocols.
- ◆ **Ethical global leadership** to promote empathy, justice, and human dignity.

Conclusion:

Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) embodies the **ultimate ethical paradox — peace sustained by the perpetual threat of death**. It has **prevented great wars** but at the cost of **moral integrity and global trust**.

True peace cannot be founded on **fear**; it requires **moral imagination, empathy, and justice** — the **courage to disarm both weapons and minds**. As **Albert Schweitzer** said, “*Ethics is reverence for life.*”

Replacing **deterrence with conscience**, and **domination with cooperation**, remains humanity’s only path to a **just and enduring world order**.

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