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**focus**  
RAU'S HOUSE JOURNAL

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EDITION**




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using **SPICE** Approach

**IN DEPTH  
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**LUCID**  
presentation for  
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# PREFACE

**Dear Aspirants,**

In view of the forthcoming **UPSC Civil Services (Main) Examination, 2021** and with respect to the **Essay Paper, Rau's IAS Study Circle** through its **Mains Quality Improvement Program (QIP)-2021** is pleased to present a sincere compilation of most apt UPSC Essay Topics as reference material for gaining insight into important concepts.

The conceptual coverage in the booklet has been presented by analysing recent UPSC trends and pattern. Of late, UPSC has been asking both Philosophical and General Topics. Hence, this booklet is covering **5 major themes:-**

- 1) Philosophical/Ethical;
- 2) Democracy, Polity and Governance;
- 3) Inclusive Economy and Economic Justice;
- 4) Social Issues and Social Justice; and
- 5) Diverse topics comprising of Environment, Science and Technology, Security and International Relations.

The above themes open up all potential areas in which UPSC frame essay topics. All in all, there are around **60 topics** covered in this booklet and these are having **direct relevance with the current and contemporary issues**.

The write-up in the essay topics is not sacrosanct. It will only provide a common overview/insight to the reader as ready reference which can be improved by the reader in her own writing and by using her own natural flair and other suitable additions. The write-ups here are varied in size as we have tried to incorporate important facets which can be utilised by aspirants in creating their own essays on the basis of prescribed word limit.

Kindly go through the **Table of Contents**, followed by the thematic topics for reference and start developing them in your own suitable style.

This Essay QIP Booklet is followed by Essay QIP Classes and Tests.

► **DISCLAIMER:** *As the topics covered below and their content are compilation and collation by various contributors so the opinions expressed are those of the contributors only. On our part, we have tried to neutralise the language and tried to put non offensive opinions so as to prevent any kind of offence to the reader. Seriously, our intention is not to hurt anyone's feelings.*

► **APPEAL TO THE READER:** *In case of any offence felt by any reader then kindly overlook it by taking into consideration 'Liberty of thought and expression' assigned to all of us within reasonable restrictions.*

**Your's Truly**

**Rau's IAS Study Circle**

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# Part-I

# General Inputs

## ► What is an Essay?



- An essay is a "formal, analytical and creative piece of writing, dealing with a single theme".
- It is a written conversation giving a **clear and concise expression to one's own personal ideas or opinions** on a given topic.
- An essay is not a plain collection of facts, events or phenomenon, but an **assessment of points and counterpoints on them with reasoning, causation and way forward**.
- Further, essay is a **comprehensive knowledge and it requires understanding of broad issues**. There is **no single source to master it**. The task of the student is to connect the dots of knowledge from multiple sources and that can be school textbooks, newspapers, guidelines and practice provided by the mentors, audio and visual media, movies, documentaries etc.

## ► Why focus on the Essay Paper?

- The significance of the essay paper for the civil services aspirants can be gauged from the fact that it has been assigned **compulsory status** by the UPSC and **designated as Paper I**.
- From the **selection point of view**, the essay paper of 250 marks consists of enough weightage to determine the final outcome/selection and ranking of the candidates.
- **Average marks** in an essay paper is in the range of 115-125 out of 250 marks (and highest being 176

marks) whereas in General Studies the average range is 95-100 marks.

- **Benchmark of exam preparedness** as it reflects command on General Studies, Current Affairs, Observational, Experiential and related knowledge.
- Provides **opportunity to a student** to explore in-depth, plan and present herself as a well organised and knowledgeable candidate.
- **Reflects analytical and problem solving mindset** on issues of common concern faced by humanity.
- Reflects **policy making approach** of candidates.
- Measure of **Job Fitness**.

## ► What is the common trend of UPSC Essays?

Essay writing is a very important part of the civil services mains exam. UPSC has given this paper immense importance by making it a full paper of 250 marks. In this situation when the aspirants are preparing for the exam then they should understand the parameters that the UPSC has laid for this paper. **According to the UPSC:**

**"Essay: Candidates may be required to write essays on multiple topics. They will be expected to keep closely to the subject of the essay to arrange their ideas in orderly fashion, and to write concisely. Credit will be given for effective and exact expression."**

So, these are the parameters that on which the essay that we write are going to be evaluated. Let's understand them a little more so that we understand how to get maximum marks when we write our essays.

- a) **Essays on multiple topics:** The essay paper has multiple topics which are divided into two sections. You are expected to write two essays, one from each section. While choosing the right essay for yourself, pay attention to the topics on which you have a comprehensive understanding. You should choose topic in which you will be able to express yourself fully and not what you think will fetch more marks as nothing can replace great knowledge and expression.
- b) **Keep closely to the subject:** At times, we have ideas which are very far and wide and the UPSC has clearly

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explained that we need to be stay as close to the topic as possible. One of the reasons for this suggestion may be that the UPSC gives preference to objective parameters when awarding marks to each candidate. To maintain this process as objective as possible, it is needed to stay close to the subject.

**c) Arrange ideas in an orderly fashion:** Flow of thought is a very important feature of the essay expected by the UPSC. As highlighted above, it will help the UPSC to evaluate the essay in an objective fashion. Moreover, flow of thoughts also indicates how you see situations, observe them, develop understanding and based on that make your mind/opinion. These are important qualities that the UPSC is looking in the future civil servants.

**d) Write concisely:** You are expected to write each essay in about 1000-1200 words and hence, brevity is an important feature if you want to showcase comprehensive understanding of the subject/issue. This is something that you need to do so that you may attempt both the essays within the specific timeline of three hours.

**e) Effective and exact expression:** UPSC has highlighted that it will give credit to effective and exact expression. Now effective expression is a combination of all the above stated requirements plus good language, decent grammar and legibility. The way you express makes a lasting impression in the mind of the examiner and if you have done all this in exact expression (expression according to the need of the subject/theme) then the examiner may give you credit for this as well. So, it is a mechanism to get extra marks over the content of the essay.

In the form of topics, UPSC presents a set of problems from different thematic areas to aspirants. The purpose is to identify an aware citizen who knows about the existence of the problem, reasons for its prevalence and also the possible solution for improving the situation.

With civil servants acting as positive catalysts, the overall desire is to create a productive, progressive and safe society. Hence on such consideration, the usual thematic areas on which the topics are asked are given hereunder:

*Development of Society; Actualising Demographic Dividend; Education; Ethics and Behaviour Modification; Inclusive Economy and Livelihoods; Social Justice; Governance topics connecting Political Party & Electoral Reforms, Civil Service, Police, Judiciary, Non-State actors' participation; Corporate Social Responsibility; Role of Media; Security; Environment etc. and their interconnections.*

**Manner of asking the topics:** Of late, the above thematic areas are bifurcated in the form of Philosophical/Ethics and General Topics in the Essay Paper. On this note, refer to the topics of 2020, 2019 and 2018 given below:

## ► 2020

**Section-A: Write any one of the following essay in 1000-1200 words.**

1. Life is long journey between human being and being humane. (#Philosophical)
2. Mindful manifesto is the catalyst to a tranquil self. (#Philosophical)
3. Ships do not sink because of water around them; ships sink because of water that gets into them. (#Philosophical)
4. Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. (#Philosophical)

**Section-B: Write any one of the following essay in 1000-1200 words.**

1. Culture is what we are, civilization is what we have. (#Philosophical)
2. There can be no social justice without economic prosperity but economic prosperity without social justice is meaningless. (# Social Justice # Economic Justice)
3. Patriarchy is the least noticed yet the most significant structure of social inequality. (# Social Justice)
4. Technology as the silent factor in international relations. (# Technology # International Relations)

## ► 2019

**Section-A: Write any one of the following essay in 1000-1200 words.**

1. Wisdom finds truth. (#Philosophical)
2. Values are not what humanity is, but what humanity ought to be. (#Ethics)
3. Best for an individual is not necessarily best for the society. (#Ethics)
4. Courage to accept and dedication to improve are two keys to success. (#Ethics)

**Section-B: Write any one of the following essay in 1000-1200 words.**

1. South Asian societies are woven not around the state, but around their plural cultures and plural identities. (#History and Culture)
2. Neglect of primary health care and education in India are reasons for its backwardness. (#Education #Health)



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- 3. Biased media is a real threat to Indian democracy. (#Media and Governance)
- 4. Rise of Artificial intelligence: the threat of jobless future or better job opportunities through reskilling and upskilling. (#Science and Economy)

► 2018

- Section-A: Write any one of the following essay in 1000-1200 words.**
- 1. Alternative technologies for a climate change resilient India. (# Environment #S&T)
  - 2. A good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge. (#Ethics and Morality)
  - 3. Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere. (# P&G #Social # Economic #Ethics)
  - 4. Management of Indian border dispute- a complex task. (#India and its Neighbourhood)
- Section-B: Write any one of the following essay in 1000-1200 words.**
- 1. Customary morality cannot be a guide to modern life. (# Culture (#Ethics and Morality)
  - 2. The past is a permanent dimension of human consciousness and values. (#History # Ethics)
  - 3. A people that values its privileges above its principles loses both. (# Culture (#Ethics and Morality)
  - 4. Reality does not confirm to the ideal, but confirms it. (#Philosophical)

► How to choose a suitable topic?

**Answer:** This is the first major decision that a candidate faces in the essay paper. The choice is easy if the candidate has excellent command, background and factual recollections on one topic vis-à-vis the remaining options. But it becomes trickier and more daunting if no single topic appears favourable from the outset.

- **Comparative analysis:** The candidate has to make estimations of her knowledge base for different segments and viewpoints of the essay topics in question and finally undertake a rational comparison between the topics to select the one she feels most strongly in command of.
- **Safer bet:** Choosing **regular and non-controversial topic** over the more opinionated/philosophical topic is a safer bet. But such topic will be chosen by many, hence to stand out and to score more, the differentiating factor is the originality in presentation.
- **Three M's:** Correct choice of topic can also be made by using the principle of **three M's: Motive, Method and Message**. These not only define the essay but

also help in achieving the communication goals in the appropriate language and writing style.

- **Philosophical/Opinionated Essays:** In case of opinionated statement based essays for e.g. *Customary morality cannot be a guide to modern life*, the most important aspect is decoding the most apt meaning of the topic, convert the statement into applied writing by choosing most apt examples from the current society to explain it further. In case of any doubt in decoding the meaning of such essays then skip them and move towards more regular and non-controversial topics.

► What should be the structure of an essay?

The structure comprises of **Introduction, Main body** and **Conclusion**. For 1200 words essay, the introduction should be on 100-120 words, main body in 1000 words and conclusion in remaining in 100-120 words.

- **Introduction:** A good essay is one which induces the reader to get immersed and engrossed in reading the entire text. For right inducement, attractive **(Introduction) of the essay** is extremely important. It should be like an attractive movie trailer which gives a hint/glimpse on the things to explore while reading further. So, the best way of introduction is picking a (live example) related with the topic asked. This helps in connecting with the topic instantly and the examiner also knows that the student understands the topic, and also knows what is happening currently with respect to the topic.
- **Main body:** This part should comprise of analysing the factors impacting the topic. The factors can be: - *Historical/cultural, Political/Legal, Economic, Geographical/Environmental, Psychological, Behavioural etc.* So it is expected to decode right factors according to their weightage w.r.t. the topic, analyse the gaps resulting from these factors and then suggesting logical solutions, and the opinions should be backed by authentic sources.
- **Conclusion** should always be optimistic, providing a silver lining and benefiting the entire society.

► How much time should a student allocate in the exam towards essay writing?

**1 Essay in 90 minutes:** In Essay paper, 3 hours are allotted for writing two essays. The equation is 1 Essay in 90 minutes.

**Effective time management:** Because students have got a tendency to write on the topic in which they are most comfortable and they tend to lose their time track

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and breach the limit of 90 minutes and thus they fail to do justice with the second topic, and resultantly they lose marks. The outcome of lack of time management is given below:

- Even the examiner now knows that the aspirant is not a good time manager and thus lacks a key element of job fitness i.e. effective time management.
- Further, it will easily reflect that student had more inclination towards safer topic only from the comfort zone. This will again bring negative impression as it would portray that the student wants to confine herself in the comfort zone and play safe and if moves outside the zone then she is found wanting and perplexed.

### ► How can a student get started in writing an effective essay?

**To get started:** There is a difference between reply and response. Reply is instinctive which is mostly not balanced but response is properly planned balanced reply. So, **UPSC checks planned response** of a student.

To do this, first 10 minutes out of 90 minutes should be utilised in collecting random points with respect to topic, note them on the rough space, and then arrange them in the serial order in the manner they should be aligned in the write up. This will show coherent flow and reflect that the writer believes in proper planning and then responding.

### ► What is the significance of language in essay writing?

- **Simple but effective:** Xth standard English is more than sufficient to put thoughts effectively. Queen's English is not required. Attractiveness of writing is not due to difficult words but it depends on the **art of presentation**.
- **Communication test:** This is not an English test but it is a communication test. Whatever the student is writing should be understood by any reader, and this is a work place requirement. For e.g. everything moves on files in govt. and whatever is noted on file should be understood by subordinates, peers, seniors etc.

### ► What are the features of a good essay?

Foremost, the candidate should keep in his/her mind that the essay will lead the examiner through his/her organized thoughts on a single topic. The essentials of

essay writing would be the format (framework, structure), information (content, substance), language (expression, presentation), and logic (analysis and information).

- **Definite purpose:** An essay must materialise itself as **topic-centred, all pervasive and unified**, developing one theme with a definite purpose.
- **Coherence:** The composition of an essay should be **treated in an orderly manner**. It should follow a certain ordered line of thought pertaining to the topic under treatment and come to a definite conclusion. Before writing an essay on any subject, it is a primary necessity to plan out a coherent line of thought on all relevant aspects of the subject.
- **Brevity and compactness** is the beauty of an essay. The whole exercise of essay writing should be to lay, treat and expound your ideas or opinion on the given subject concisely, clearly and well within the set time limit.
- **Lucidity:** The language and the construction of sentences should be **simple, direct, natural and interactive**. **Clear thinking** is a natural prerequisite for clear writing. Clear understanding of the subject under treatment springs out relevant thoughts which automatically transform themselves to words on paper before you.
- **Originality:** The essay must **bear your personal touch**. It should reflect your personal feelings and opinions on the subject. It should have your individuality in it. As already discussed above, an essay is a written composition giving expression to one's personal ideas or opinions on the subject concerned. So, never be afraid to express your **verifiable views** in your essay.

### ► What is remarkable about candidates scoring 150+ in the Essay Paper?

- The remarkable features of their essays comprise of planned response; easy targeted, reader friendly communication; usage of authentic examples both from the past and current scenario; logical analysis; originality in approach; reflecting the desire to deal with problems; and always ending with silver lining benefitting all.
- In short, able to display their **policy making mindsets**.

## Part-II

# Quotations for Essay Writing

### Quotations on Women

- a. A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman. (By Melinda Gates).
- b. To empower a woman is to empower her children, her family and her community. The smartest investment we can make is in women. Women must have the freedom and the possibility to decide who they are. (By Barbara Bush)
- c. When women thrive all of society benefits and succeeding generations are given a better start in life. (By Kofi Annan)
- d. Wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence but should be treated as honored comrades in common service.
- e. Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity. (By Mahatma Gandhi)
- f. I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved. (By Ambedkar)
- g. Patriarchy is so ingrained in our psyche, that most of us propagate it in small ways even without realizing it.
- h. Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women. (By Maya Angelou)
- i. Life is not a competition between man and woman. It is a collaboration. (By David Fearnhead)
- j. Teach her that the idea of 'gender roles' is absolute nonsense. Do not ever tell her that she should or should not do something because she is a girl. 'Because you are a girl' is never reason for anything. Ever.
- k. Human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights. (By Hillary Clinton)
- l. Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.
- m. By polluting the oceans, not mitigating CO2 emissions and destroying our biodiversity, we are killing our planet. Let us face it, there is not planet B. (by Emmanuel Macron, President of France)
- n. We are the first generation to feel the effect of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it. (By Barack Obama, Former President of USA)
- o. Climate change knows no borders. It will not stop before the Pacific Islands and the whole of the international community here has to shoulder a responsibility to bring about sustainable development. (By Angela Merkel, Former Chancellor of Germany)
- p. The world is not ours to keep. We hold it in trust for future generations by Kofi Annan.
- q. Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." by Mahatma Gandhi.
- r. The future depends on what we do in the present." by Mahatma Gandhi
- s. Thousands have lived without love, not one without water. W. H Auden.
- t. Pure Water is the world's first and foremost medicine.
- u. On climate change, we often don't fully appreciate that it is a problem. We think it is a problem waiting to happen. (By Kofi Annan)
- v. Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth...these are one and the same fight. (By Ban Ki Moon)\

### Quotations on Agriculture

- a. Most things, except agriculture can wait. (By Jawahar Lal Nehru)
- b. If the farmer is rich, then so is the nation.
- c. A farmer is magician who produces money from the mud.
- d. If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go right in the country.

### Quotations on Education

- a. Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family. By Kofi Annan.

### Quotations on Environment and Sustainable Development

- a. We don't have time to sit on our hands as our planet burns. For young people, climate change is bigger than election or re-election. It's life or death.

- 
- b. One you stop learning, you start dying" by Einstein.
  - c. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but make our life in harmony with all existence. Tagore.
  - d. Technology will not replace great teachers but technology in the hands of great teachers can be transformational.
  - e. Don't confuse schooling with education. (By Elon Musk)
  - f. Share your knowledge. It is a way to achieve immortality. (By Dalai Lama)
  - g. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. (By Nelson Mandela)
  - h. If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people. (A Chinese proverb)
  - i. An investment in knowledge pays the best interest. (Benjamin Franklin)
  - j. The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.
  - k. Education is simply the soul of society as it passes from one generation to another.
  - l. Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. (By Kofi Annan)

### Quotations on Health

- a. Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane. (By Martin Luther King Jr.)
- b. He who has health has hope; and he who has hope, has everything. (By Thomas Carlyle)
- c. It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver. (By Mahatma Gandhi)
- d. Health is the greatest of human blessings.
- e. Every human being is the author of his own health or disease. (By Gautama Buddha)

### Quotations on Ideas and Imagination

- a. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited, imagination encircles the world. (By Einstein)
- b. India conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border. (Hu Shih, Former Ambassador of China to USA).

### Quotations on Leadership

- a. I have always believed that on important issues, the leaders must lead. Where the leaders fail to lead, and

## PART-II: QUOTATIONS FOR ESSAY WRITING

- people are really concerned about it, the people will take the lead and make the leaders follow. (By Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General of United Nations)
- b. A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves. (By Lao Tzu)
- c. Where there is no vision, the people perish.
- d. Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others. (By Jack Welch)
- e. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to high sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations. (By Peter Drucker)

### Quotes on Democracy

- a. Man's capacity for justice make democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary. (By Reinhold Niebuhr)
- b. The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all. (By John F Kennedy)
- c. Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others". (By Winston Churchill)
- d. Democracy is not a form of government, but a form of social organization. (By Dr. Ambedkar)
- e. Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people. (By Abraham Lincoln, Former American President)
- f. No famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy. (Amartya Sen)

### Quotations on Happiness

- a. Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony." (By Mahatma Gandhi)
- b. Happiness is not something readymade. It comes from your own actions. (By Dalai Lama)
- c. The goal is not to be better than the other man, but your previous self. (By Dalai Lama)

### Quotations on Patriotism

- a. My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all embracing and I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or exploitation of other nationalities." (By Mahatma Gandhi)
- b. We are Indians, firstly and lastly". (By Ambedkar)
- c. I want all people to be Indian first, Indian last and nothing else but Indians. (By Ambedkar)

### Quotations on India

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- a. India is the one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for all the shows of all the rest of the globe combined. (By Mark Twain)
  - b. In there is one place on the face of this Earth where all the dreams of living men have found a home from the very earliest days when man began the dream of existence, it is India. (By Romain Rolland)
  - c. There is no book in the world, that is so thrilling, stirring and inspiring as the Upanishads. (By Max Muller)
  - d. Perhaps in return for arrogance and spoilation, India will teach us the gentleness of a mind, the quiet content of the uninquisitive soul, and a pacifying love for all the living things. (By Will Durant)
  - e. India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable & most constructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only. (By Mark Twain)

#### Quotations on Peace & Globalisation

- a. Violence in the last refuge of the incompetent.
- b. Peace starts within and radiates out into society.
- c. It has been said that arguing against globalisation is like arguing against the laws of gravity. (By Kofi Annan)

#### Quotations on Love

- a. Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment. (By Mahatma Gandhi)
- b. Love is composed of single soul inhabiting two bodies. (By Aristotle)

#### Quotations on Science and Scientific Temper and Technology:

- a. Cultivation of mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence.
- b. Technology is best when it brings people together.
- c. Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master.
- d. Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have faith in people, that they are basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they will do wonderful things with them." (By Steve Jobs)

#### PART-II: QUOTATIONS FOR ESSAY WRITING

- e. Engineering is the closest thing to magic that exists in the world." (By Elon Musk)
- f. Machine intelligence is the last invention that humanity will ever need to make.
- g. That which can be asserted without evidence, can be dismissed without evidence." (By Christopher Hitchens)
- h. Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." (By Marie Curie)
- i. Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which illuminates the world." (By Louis Pasteur)

#### Quotations on Individual's ability, Hope, Self-improvement and Character

- a. If you believe in living a respectable life, you believe in self-help which is best help. (By Ambedkar)
- b. If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito. (By Dalai Lama)
- c. Character is like a tree and reputation is like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it, the tree is the real thing. (By Abraham Lincoln)
- d. Good character is not formed in a week or a month. It is created little by little, day by day. Protracted and patient effort is needed to develop good character. (By Heraclitus, Ancient Greek Scholar)
- e. There is a higher court than courts of justice, and that is the court of conscience. It supersedes all other courts. (Mahatma Gandhi)

#### Quotes on Character

Character is the quality of being determined and able to deal with difficult situations. It reflects moral excellence and firmness of a person.

- a. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit. (By Aristotle)
- b. Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion. (By Aristotle)
- c. Good moral character is not something that we can achieve on our own. We need a culture that supports the conditions under which self-love and friendship flourish. (By Aristotle)
- d. Courage is the most important of all the virtues because without courage, you cannot practice any other virtue consistently.

#### Quotes on Wisdom

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Wisdom is defined as the ability to make good judgements based on what you have learned from your experience, or the knowledge and understanding that gives you this ability.

- a. We don't receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us. (By Marcel Proust)
- b. Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life. (By Immanuel Kant)

### Quotations on Values, Morals and Ethics

- a. Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value. Einstein.
- b. The mind is everything. What you think you become. (By Buddha)

### Quotations on Kindness, Compassion, Love and Tolerance

- a. Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible. (By Dalai Lama)
- b. Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. If you cannot help them, at least don't hurt them. (By Dalai Lama)
- c. If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. (By Dalai Lama)
- d. In order to have faith in one's own path, we do not have to prove that someone else's path is wrong. (By Paulo Coelho)
- e. I do not like what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it. (By Voltaire) (Also can be used in Free Speech & Liberty)
- f. Anger and intolerance are the enemies of correct understanding. Mahatma Gandhi
- g. The highest result of education is tolerance. (By Helen Keller)
- h. Tolerance becomes a crime when applied to evil.
- i. Tolerance of intolerance is cowardice.

### Quotations on Free Speech, Liberty & Freedom

- a. What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist.
- b. If one is going to err, one should err on the side of liberty and freedom. (By Kofi Annan)

## PART-II: QUOTATIONS FOR ESSAY WRITING

- c. The success of a society is to be evaluated primarily by the freedoms that members of the society enjoy. (By Amartya Sen)

### Quotations of Mahatma Gandhi

- a. An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.
- b. Where there is love, there is life.
- c. Hate the sin, love the sinner.
- d. The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

### Quotations on Simplicity

- a. Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. Leonardo da Vinci.
- b. A complex system that works is invariably found to have evolved from a simple system that worked." Gall's Law.

### Quotations in superstitions, fake news

- a. Beware of false knowledge; it is more dangerous than ignorance.

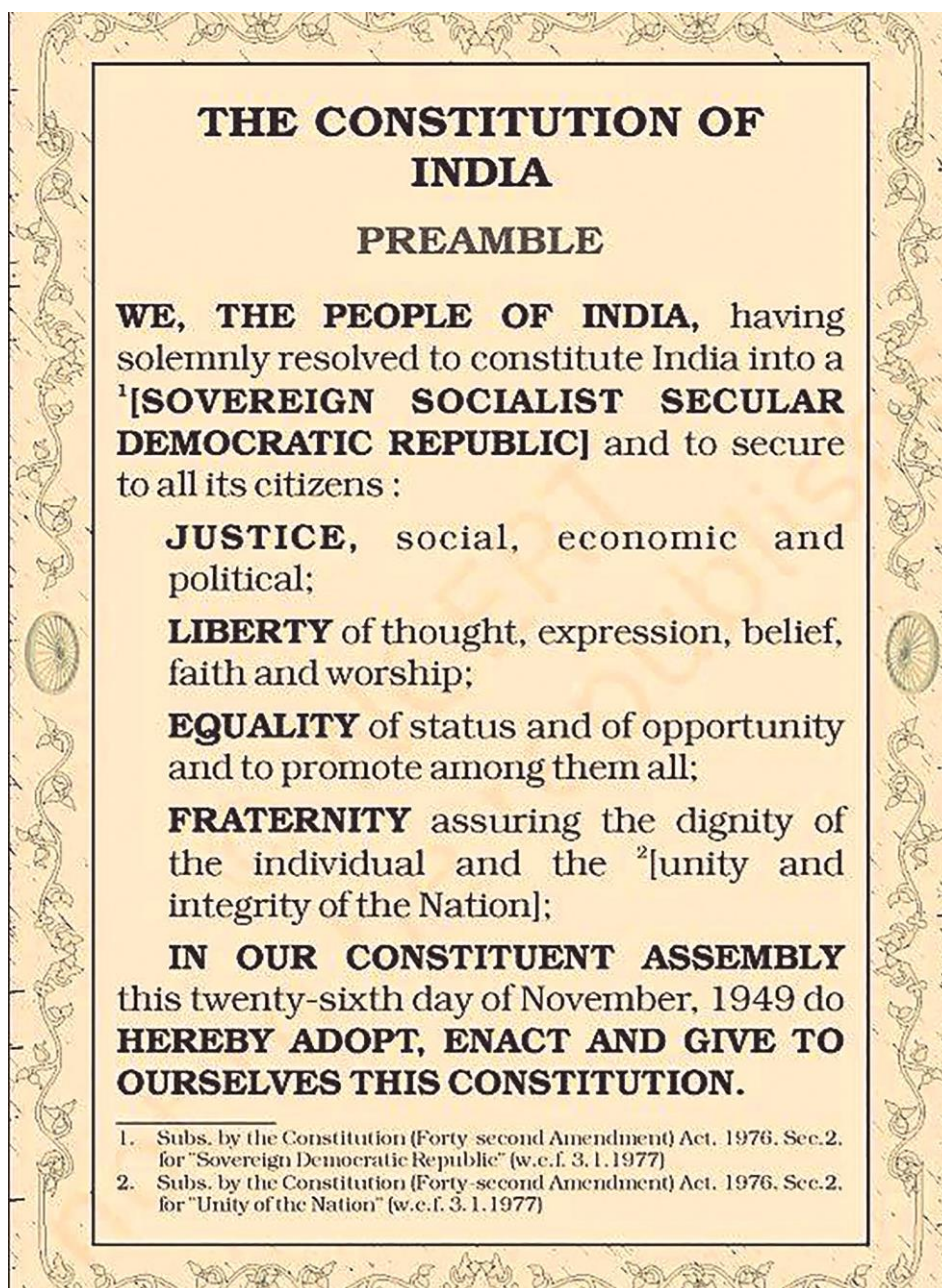
### Quotations on Poverty & Inequality

- a. Poverty is not just a lack of money; it is not having the capability to realize one's full potential as a human being. (By Amartya Sen)
- b. Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. (By Nelson Mandela)
- c. No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. (By Adam Smith)
- d. Poverty is the worst form of violence. (By Mahatma Gandhi)
- e. There are people in the world so hungry that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread. (By Mahatma Gandhi)
- f. Extreme poverty is a threat to human security everywhere. (By Kofi Annan)
- g. Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime. (By Aristotle)
- h. An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics.

## Part-III

## Essay Topics

*All UPSC essay topics are related with the issues and problems faced by the society for which it requires logical solutions, way forward and thus benefiting the entire society. The overall aim is to prepare and develop the society on the basis of vision, goals and constitutional morality reflected in the 'Preamble of the Constitution' as given below:*



# THEME-1

## DIVERSE TOPICS

### ABOUT THE THEME:

UPSC tends to ask topics which are philosophical and ethical. Besides these, it also asks mix nature of topics belonging to different themes like issues of Environment, International relations, Science and Technology, Security etc. Considering the above, the topics in this section have been incorporated to highlight contemporary issues which can be helpful in answering diverse nature of topics.

### ► GLOBAL WARMING: IS IT A RACE AGAINST TIME?

#SCIENCE #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** Since the Paris Climate talks, the world is struggling to abide and make efforts to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 degree Celsius. This is race against time to save our planet because the conditions are deteriorating fast and this will remain huge issue of concern for everyone. Hence the topic of global warming is one of the most important contemporary topics.

**INTRODUCTION:** Coastal cities have inundated, farming regions are parched, ocean currents are disrupted, tropical diseases spreading, glaciers are melting —an artificial greenhouse effect could generate countless tribulations. These are not only expressions but a strong signal to the looming danger of Global warming which will endanger the existence of Humans on the face of earth if not checked on time. Undoubtedly, Global warming is the greatest challenge our planet is facing. It has far-reaching impact on biodiversity and climatic conditions of the planet.

Putting in simple words, Global Warming is the increase of Earth's average surface temperature due to effect of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels or from deforestation, which

trap heat that would otherwise escape from Earth. This is a type of greenhouse effect.

**MAIN BODY:** Global average temperature has risen significantly during the past century and it is still rising. The prevailing scientific view is that most of the temperature increases since mid-20th century has been caused by increases in atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations produced by human activity. Most scientists agree that planet's temperature has risen 0.5 degree Celsius since 1900 and will continue to increase at an increasing rate. As a result, the world is getting warmer. The year 1990 was the hottest year in the last century. The year 1991 was the second warmest year of the past century. The consequences of the rise in temperature is being felt all over the globe the findings of scientific research done in this field reveal that the temperature of the earth is likely to rise from 1.4°C to 5.8°C within a period of 100 years.

Unfortunately, the imbalance which we have created between our life and earth is already showing the signs disasters in the form of flood, cyclones, landslides, tsunami, drought, etc. If the imbalance continues to rise, one day this will pose a question mark on the existence of this planet as stated earlier.

About the causes of Global warming, most climate scientists agree that the main cause of the current global warming trend is human expansion of the "greenhouse



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effect", warming that results when the atmosphere traps heat radiating from Earth towards space.

Certain gases in the atmosphere block heat from escaping. Long-lived gases that remain semi-permanently in the atmosphere and do not respond physically or chemically to changes in temperature are described as "forcing" climate change. Gases, such as water vapour, which respond physically or chemically to changes in temperature are seen as "feedbacks."

Gases that contribute to the greenhouse effect include:

**Water vapour:** The most abundant greenhouse gas, but importantly, it acts as a feedback to the climate. Water vapour increases as the Earth's atmosphere warms, but so does the possibility of clouds and precipitation, making these some of the most important feedback mechanisms to the greenhouse effect. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). A minor but very important component of the atmosphere, **carbon dioxide** is released through natural processes such as respiration and volcano eruptions and through human activities such as deforestation, land use changes, and burning fossil fuels. Humans have increased atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration by a third since the Industrial Revolution began. This is the most important long-lived "forcing" of climate change.

**Methane:** is a hydrocarbon gas produced both through natural sources and human activities, including the decomposition of wastes in landfills, agriculture, and especially rice cultivation, as well as ruminant digestion and manure management associated with domestic livestock. On a molecule-for-molecule basis, methane is a far more active greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, but also one which is much less abundant in the atmosphere.

**Nitrous oxide** is a powerful greenhouse gas produced by soil cultivation practices, especially the use of commercial and organic fertilizers, fossil fuel combustion, nitric acid production, and biomass burning.

Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Synthetic compounds of entirely of industrial origin used in a number of applications, but now largely regulated in production and release to the atmosphere by international agreement for their ability to contribute to destruction of the ozone layer. They are also greenhouse gases.

On Earth, human activities are changing the natural greenhouse. Over the last century the burning of fossil fuels like coal and oil has increased the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). This happens because the coal or oil burning process combines

carbon with oxygen in the air to make CO<sub>2</sub>. To a lesser extent, the clearing of land for agriculture, industry, and other human activities have increased concentrations of greenhouse gases.

Trees play a significant role in the global carbon cycle. They are the largest land-based mechanism for removing carbon dioxide from the air. **Deforestation** is checking these positive processes. It is the second principle cause of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Deforestation is responsible for 25 per cent of all carbon emissions entering the atmosphere, by the burning and cutting of 34 million acres of trees each year. Everyday over 5500 acres of rainforest are destroyed. As a consequence of massive loss of forests, global CO<sub>2</sub> levels rise approximately 0.4 per cent each year, the levels not experienced on this planet for millions of years. As we know the forests are the great absorbers of CO<sub>2</sub>.

There is a close relation between **global warming and population growth**. Today the large population on earth is using the technologies which are destructive for the earth. Approximately, 80 per cent of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> increases are due to man's use of fossil fuels either in the form of coal, gas or oil. A large portion of carbon emission is attributed to the burning of gasoline in internal-combustion engine of vehicles. Vehicles with poor gas mileage contribute the most to global warming. Besides, the sulphur group gas is the most harmful for this. Its contribution is 30 per cent in global warming. This gas is also emitted from the burning of fossil fuels. Increase in global temperatures will cause rise in sea level.

It will lead to melting of glaciers, changes in rainfall patterns, increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather. As per the various survey reports by bodies concerned the rate of melting of glaciers has seen sharp increase in recent times. Even those glaciers are affected from global warming which have been considered permanent. The shrinking of glaciers is going to pose a major problem of drinking water.

The sea levels as a result of **melting of glaciers** have risen from 0.35 mm to 0.4 mm. Scientists have warned in their reports that most of the glaciers will disappear within a period of 15 to 25 years. It will create problems of drinking water and food grains in most of the North American countries. India is not unaffected from it. The Himalayan glaciers have shrunk about 30 per cent after 1970.

The rise in sea levels is a major cause of concern. A large number of cities located in coastal areas will submerge in the sea. Besides, many island countries will ultimately

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## DIVERSE TOPICS

lose their existence and will be washed away from the surface of the earth. The damage of rising sea levels is diverse. Buildings and roads close to the water could be flooded and they could suffer damage from hurricanes and tropical storms. Experts believe that global warming could increase the intensity of hurricanes by over 50 per cent. In addition, as the sea rises, beach erosion takes place, particularly on steep banks.

**Wetlands** are lost as the level rises. Rise in atmospheric temperature will lead to the outbreak of airborne and water-borne diseases. It would also contribute to the rise in death caused by heat. The problem of drought would be frequent. Consequently, malnutrition and starvation will pose serious challenge before humanity. Global warming is a great threat to the flora and fauna of the earth. A large number of species of them may become extinct.

The expanse of desert would increase. Low rainfall and rising temperature could add to the intensity and frequency of dusty storm. This in turn will immensely affect the quality of agricultural land, ultimately causing adverse effect on agricultural produce. It would have far-reaching socio-economic impact. Moreover, when earth as a planet will get warm, the mercury will rise and other effects of rising temperatures which is happening right now are: Melting of Ice worldwide, especially at the Earth's poles. This includes mountain glaciers, ice sheets covering West Antarctica and Greenland, and Arctic sea ice; Gradual Decline in number of animals whose natural habitats are polar or colder regions; Movement of butterflies, foxes, and alpine plants to farther north or to higher, cooler areas; Increase in Precipitation (rain and snowfall) across the globe, on average.

In Indian context, the impact of global warming is a matter of grave concern. As is well known, India is mainly an agricultural country and agriculture here is gamble of the monsoon, e.g. largely depending on rainfall. Though it is to affect the whole country, the worst likely impact would be on central and northern India which is high-yielding parts of the country. These are the regions which produce the largest agricultural yield. The rise in atmospheric temperature and fall in rain would naturally result in decline in crop production thus posing a serious threat to the food security position in India. If the process of global warming continues to increase, resulting climatic disasters would cause a decrease in India's GDP to decline by about 9%, with a decrease by 40% of the production of the major crops. A temperature increase of 2° C in India is projected to displace seven million people, with a submersion of the major cities of India like Mumbai and Chennai.

Moreover, it would have great effect on biodiversity as well.

There is no single solution to global warming, which is primarily a problem of too much heat-trapping carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide in the atmosphere. The technologies and approaches outlined below are all needed to bring down the emissions of these gases by at least 80 percent by mid-century.

**Boosting energy efficiency:** The energy used to power, heat, and cool our homes, businesses, and industries is the single largest contributor to global warming. Energy efficiency technologies allow us to use less energy to get the same— or higher—level of production, service, and comfort. This approach has vast potential to save both energy and money, and can be deployed quickly.

**Greening transportation:** The transportation sector's emissions have increased at a faster rate than any other energy-using sector over the past decade. A variety of solutions are at hand, including improving efficiency in all modes of transport, switching to low-carbon fuels, and reducing vehicle miles travelled through smart growth and more efficient mass transportation systems.

**Revving up renewables:** Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal and bioenergy are available around the world. Multiple studies have shown that renewable energy has the technical potential to meet the vast majority of our energy needs. Renewable technologies can be deployed quickly, are increasingly cost-effective, and create jobs while reducing pollution.

**Phasing out fossil fuel electricity:** Dramatically reducing our use of fossil fuels—especially carbon-intensive coal—is essential to tackle climate change. There are many ways to begin this process. Key action steps include: not building any new coal-burning power plants, initiating a phased shutdown of coal plants starting with the oldest and dirtiest, and capturing and storing carbon emissions from power plants.

**Managing forests and agriculture:** Taken together, tropical deforestation and emissions from agriculture represent nearly 30 percent of the world's heat-trapping emissions. We can fight global warming by reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and by making our food production practices more sustainable.

**Developing and deploying new low-carbon and zero-carbon technologies:** Research into and development of the next generation of low-carbon technologies will be critical to deep mid-century reductions in global emissions. Current research on battery technology, new

## DIVERSE TOPICS

materials for solar cells, harnessing energy from novel sources like bacteria and algae, and other innovative areas could provide important breakthroughs.

**Ensuring sustainable development:** The countries of the world—from the most to the least developed—vary dramatically in their contributions to the problem of climate change and in their responsibilities and capacities to confront it. A successful global compact on climate change must include financial assistance from richer countries to poorer countries to help make the transition to low-carbon development pathways and to help adapt to the impacts of climate change.

**CONCLUSION:** To conclude we can say, global warming is mainly due to the ignorance of the people and the 'don't care attitude' of few. Even at a younger stage, it is wiser to educate the children to be efficient consumers and be responsible users of energy and resources remembering that the global warming is slowly destroying the earth and its natural habitat. People should be reminded that they share the earth and its resources with the other species that keep the ecosystem balanced, if the balance is gone then the life of every single species is threatened and even humans will not be spared from this.

Media can play a role in educating the people of the phenomenon of global warming that has already taken a huge toll. This won't disappear overnight. As we thoughtfully practice ways of preventing the causes that cause global warming one day the earth will be restored.

Planting trees is a very good start that can help dilute the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. A single tree will absorb approximately one ton of carbon dioxide during its lifetime.

## ► BRI: CAN IT BECOME A GATEWAY FOR INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT?

#ECONOMY #INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**Why this topic?** Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted delegates from across the globe in Beijing to discuss infrastructure project Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which began in 2013. India did not participate.

*This requires pondering point on the possibilities which BRI can potentially provide to India could potentially allow India a new track in its own attempt to integrate South Asia.*

**INTRODUCTION:** In ancient times, diligent and courageous people of Eurasia explored and opened up several routes of trade and cultural exchanges that

linked the major civilizations of Asia, Europe and Africa, collectively called the Silk Road by later generations. For thousands of years, the Silk Road Spirit -peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit" - has been passed from generation to generation, promoted the progress of human civilization, and contributed greatly to the prosperity and development of the countries along the Silk Road.

To revive the erstwhile spirit of the old Silk Route, China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) released an expansive blueprint on **"One Belt, One Road (OBOR)" initiative**. This initiative is a Chinese framework for organizing multinational economic development through two component plans, the land-based "Silk Road Economic Belt" (SREB) and ocean-going "Maritime Silk Road" (MSR).

Essentially, the 'belt' includes countries situated on the original Silk Road through Central Asia, West Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The initiative calls for the integration of the region into a cohesive economic area through building infrastructure, increasing cultural exchanges, and broadening trade. Apart from this zone, which is largely analogous to the historical Silk Road, another area that is said to be included in the extension of this 'belt' is South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The **MSR, also known as the "21st Century Maritime Silk Route Economic Belt"** is a complementary initiative aimed at investing and fostering collaboration in Southeast Asia, Oceania, and North Africa, through several contiguous bodies of water – the South China Sea, the South Pacific Ocean, and the wider Indian Ocean area. Post 2016, OBOR came to be known as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

**MAIN BODY:** India's hesitation in embracing the BRI is the projection of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a flagship project. The CPEC is expected to connect Kashgar in China's restive province of Xinjiang with the Gwadar port in the volatile Baluchistan province of Pakistan. It will pass through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan—both Indian territories occupied by Pakistan. This is at the core of India's doubts about China's sincerity in seeking its collaboration. How can this initiative navigate the irreconcilable geometries of South Asia that prevent India from providing full backing to BRI? A formal nod to the project will serve as a de-facto legitimisation to Pakistan's rights on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that is "closely related" to OBOR.

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Further, there are conflicting views in India on whether China's BRI strategy represents a threat or an opportunity. Some view it as a strategy which China will use to encircle India. Some consider it as a great opportunity to attract the much-needed infrastructure finance into India to fill its infrastructure growth and boost growth and employment. And some regard it as a fait accompli in which India must engage to derive as much benefits from it as possible. What is emerging is a competitive yet cooperative approach from both China and India, in the Indian Ocean and in the South China Sea and parts of East Asia.

At the same time, India has begun its own long overdue initiatives in the Indian Ocean to counter the Chinese and ensure that China does not start to dominate the Indian Ocean. India's maritime initiative on the Indian Ocean has been variously presented as **"Project Mausam", and "Spice Route"**. The initiative envisions India as the centre of the "Indian Ocean world," which stretches from Africa in the west to Southeast Asia in the east. Like China's Maritime Silk Road, Project Mausam would boost regional commercial and cultural linkages – but where the MSR would have all roads leading back to China, Project Mausam seeks to return India to its role as the centre of Indian Ocean trade.

Project 'Mausam' focuses on how monsoon as natural phenomenon has shaped interactions between countries and communities connected by the Indian Ocean. Project Mausam, would endeavour to position itself at two levels: at the macro level where it would reconnect and re-establish communications between countries of the Indian Ocean, leading to an enhanced understanding of cultural values and concerns; while at the micro level, the focus would be to understand national cultures in their regional maritime milieu. Thus, Project Mausam is an exciting, multi-disciplinary transnational project that tries to rekindle long lost ties across the Indian Ocean Littoral and forges new avenues of cooperation and exchange between India and states of the Indian Ocean.

The Spice Route initiative works to establish itself as a symbol of peace and camaraderie by bringing places and people of the world closer. The Spice Route initiative intends to follow the route which once existed between the countries and to bring back the cultural rapport which used to exist and become a cultural rendezvous. This thought led the Government of India and the State Government of Kerala joining hands to create the Muziris Heritage Project (MHP). The main goals of the Spice Route Initiative are to: (1) connect all 31 countries of Asia, Far East, Africa and Europe, (2) work for

protection and promotion of heritage cities/sites in Spice Route countries, (3) create 'One Destination' to trigger voyages and excursions for the traveller, and (4) use Spice Route as a platform to work for peace in and around the regions of the route.

One view is that China's actions are not directed at India but is China's response to reduce its vulnerability on oil and trade shipments through the Straits of Malacca. If China's oil supplies are threatened through the Straits of Malacca it needs alternative options, with access to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf. India also needs to overcome infrastructure-related constraints to enhance connectivity for its overseas trade, which contributes substantially to the national economy. The MSR could be an effective maritime supplement to the land-based Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor under active consideration by New Delhi. It could be dovetailed with India's own 'Sagarmala' project, and thereby contribute to the nation's efforts to enhance sea trade connectivity, while also progressively leading to 'port-led development' of the hinterland, and the SEZs.

Further, according to China, BRI initiative can also be linked with India's 'Mausam' and 'Spice Route' projects, thus forming a new starting point and a new bright spot in China-India cooperation. On the surface, the projects do have much in common – both seek to expand regional integration, especially when it comes to trade and commerce. But on a deeper level, both the MSR and Project Mausam are about expanding influence – culturally, economically, and even strategically.

Practically and going by the changing dynamics of the 21st century, China and India must cooperate rather than compete if an Asian century is to be realised. According to Angus Maddison, a British economist, till early 19th century, India and China together constituted almost 50% of the global economy. But by 1950 their share of the global economy had dropped to only around 15%. Since 1980's both economies saw a step increase in their growth rates – more so in the case of China which saw almost 3 decades of spectacular growth rates. India also shed its slow growing so called "Hindu" growth rate and began to grow much faster. If both China and India could continue to grow rapidly they are projected to become more than 50% of the world economy by 2030 – roughly where they were two centuries ago. China and India have much to gain if they cooperate and much to lose if they compete in a manner that pulls each other down.

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**Options for India:** Fundamentally, India needs to resolve for itself whether BRI represents a threat or an opportunity. The answer undoubtedly ticks both boxes. Chinese political expansion and economic ambitions, packaged as BRI, are two sides of the same coin. To be firm while responding to one facet, while making use of the opportunities that become available from the other, will largely depend on the institutional agency and strategic imagination India is able to bring to the table.

**First and foremost,** India needs to match ambition with commensurate augmentation of its capacities that allows it to be a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region. This will require New Delhi to not only overcome its chronic inability to take speedy decisions with respect to defence partnerships and procurement, but will also necessitate a sustained period of predictable economic growth; BRI can assist in the latter.

Therefore, just as U.S. trade and economic architecture underwrote the rise of China, Chinese railways, highways, ports and other capacities can serve as catalysts and platforms for sustained Indian double-digit growth. Simultaneously, India can focus on developing last-mile connectivity in its own backyard linking to the BRI— the slip roads to the highways, the sidetracks to the Iron Silk Roads.

Arguably, BRI offers India another political opportunity. There seems to be a degree of Chinese eagerness to solicit Indian partnership. Can India seek reworking of the CPEC by Beijing in return for its active participation? Furthermore, for the stability of the South Asian arm of BRI, can Beijing be motivated to become a meaningful interlocutor prompting rational behaviour from Islamabad? BRI could potentially allow India a new track to its own attempt to integrate South Asia.

Further, India wants better connectivity with Afghanistan and the rest of Central Asia to its west, and with Myanmar and rest of South East Asia to the east. Both regions suffer from intermittent connectivity due to insurgency, and terrorism has stalled several infrastructure projects undertaken by India in these regions. Any financial and engineering inputs arising out of OBOR will take this regional connectivity forward.

**CONCLUSION:** So, India will soon have to articulate a definite stand on BRI by assessing its security concerns along with the benefits of greater engagement with China. In this regard, a cue can be taken from Japan. China and Japan have various territorial disputes on islands in East China Sea Islands, which prevented Japan from endorsing BRI. Recently, a non-official engagement is promoted by Japan comprising of ruling party

members and head of Japan's Business Federation. This is a pointer that despite current misgivings, Japan could be open to business within the ambit of the BRI. The same non-official path can also be explored by India.

Finally, If BRI does generate substantial socio-economic benefits of infrastructure and connectivity, India will gain from a stable neighbourhood and a prosperous Asia.

## ► MARITIME SECURITY ENSURES ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC SECURITY

#SECURITY #INTERNATIONAL

**Why this topic?** Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean are emerging as the new gateways for India's strategic and economic expansion but this requires huge apparatus of maritime security to safeguard India's interest. This also becomes important for safeguarding our smaller neighbours and strategic partners in Asia, Africa and beyond.

*The focus on maritime issues is evident from the increase in maritime exchanges led by the Indian Navy with countries, such as, Vietnam, Singapore and Japan.*

**INTRODUCTION:** Maritime Security is a very general word, but the exact meaning of the word is very deep and definitely very important for overall security of any nation. Water being one of the 3 major pillars of armed forces. So, let us first understand what do the term "Maritime Security" means? Why it is important for India? And, finally, what has India done to secure it?

'Maritime Security' is amalgamation of two words "maritime" and "security". "Maritime Security" is derived from the Latin word "Maritime" meaning "Related to Sea". Therefore, "maritime security" means security related to sea. But the term "Security" is a deep one. While understanding it, one should ask oneself why does one need security? What are the threats? To what extent should one strive for security? Is it multifaceted or there is only one side? These are few questions that would help us understand the term "Security" in its entirety.

**MAIN BODY:** "Security" is meaningless with a threat or potential threats. Therefore, we should understand all the threats that may arise. Threats can be of damage to economy, defence and integrity, social, terrorism, full-blown war, etc. These are the few dimensions to threat and thus, security should be also multi-dimensional and must cover all these.

Now, we can attempt to understand the term "maritime security". It is securing our (a nation's) seas from threats

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to economy, defence and integrity, social, terrorism, full-blow war etc. But we are still left with the question – Why should a nation care about maritime security? Is it really the important? The answer to this depends from nation to nation.

A nation that does not have any threat from Sea on any dimension should not really bother about maritime security. For example, Mongolia - It is a land locked country, and thus, has no sea – let alone any threat from sea. So, countries like Mongolia should not bother. But, there are also some countries like Australia whose whole boundary is a coast line. Thus, countries like Australia should really seek to ensure maritime security.

Now, if we talk about India, India is somewhere in between the two extremes. We (Indians) have a very long International border on land but at the same time, we also have one of the longest coastlines in the world. Our position is so important in the sea that we are the country to have an ocean named after it. Indian Ocean! Now we have understood the meaning of maritime security, its importance for a nation and its importance for India. But before I get into the steps taken by India to secure its seas, I would like to go into a bit of History.

History, as we know, is written by victors, and victors are never forgetful to mention the reasons why they were always victorious. From the start of civilization, Indus Valley Civilization – sea routes, sea transport and in general “sea” have been important for a civilization. If there were no sea or no safe sea, then Indus Valley Civilization’s trade with west would not have happened or the least be limited. Coming to Medieval India – the great **Chola King Raja Raja Chola I (VI 1000 AD)** was expert in navy. He expanded his kingdom from Madagascar in the west to Indonesia in the west. This would have never happen if he would not have a mighty navy. Thus, “History” is evident that a navy can make a kingdom to an empire or vice-versa. Therefore, for India Navy means a lot and with Navy, comes the maritime security.

India has many maritime threats and in all the dimensions discussed earlier. In today’s world, the cheapest mode of transportation is not railway or road way but water ways. Most of the items are imported or exported travels through a ship. Therefore, maritime security is important for economy. But at the same time there are few threats in Indian Ocean. For example, Somalian Piracy in the west and at the bottle neck of Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Omar. Towards, the south of Indian Ocean we have two bottle-necks – Cape of good-

hope and the Mozambique-Channel. India knows this and has also taken steps to counter them.

India has engaged and secured a strategic alliance on naval cooperation on with Oman in the Duqm – island, with Iran in the Chabahar Port. These two are counter steps taken to control Somalian piracy and secure seas in West Indian Ocean. We are also in talks with France for Comoros Island (middle of Mozambique Channel), with Madagascar, with Mauritius, and with Seychelles – a group of islands towards South – West Indian Ocean. All these are to secure the South Indian Ocean. We have also signed LEMOA agreement with USA for Cooperation in Diego Garcia – an island in the middle of Indian Ocean – a very strategic forward post.

Now, if we assume that we have secured Indian Ocean then it would be a blunder on our past. Why? Because, we have only secured Indian Ocean at a macroscopic level at an International Level – but, not at a regional level. As we might be aware of 26/11 attacks on Mumbai. Post the attacks, we were hit by reality that Navy does not protect the coast line, it only protects the seas. For coastline, we have another branch of paramilitary forces known as “Coast-Guard”. It is the duty of Coast-guards to protect seas that are too-shallow for Navy. And, this is the reason India missed detecting the incoming terrorist from Pakistan. But, India has learnt from the mistakes. India has improved Intelligence Bureau (IB), improved National Security Guards (NSG), improved the Coast Guards, have set up anti-terrorism and counter insurgency schools and the most important identified the mistake.

Now, if we talk about a full-blown war scenario then a term called “**String – of – Pearls**” is common among the elites on Indian Nation Security. “String of Pearls” refers to China’s strategic Points or locations in Indian Ocean and also in Land-border. These are the points where China has a strategic agreement with various nations starting from Myanmar, to Maldives to Pakistan to Djibouti in Red. It has covered India from all sides and poses a serious threat to maritime security interested of India in Indian Ocean.

India has taken steps to counter it. Some of the steps have already been discussed like the strategic agreement with various nations in South, South West and Central Indian Ocean Region. On the top of all these India is also a member of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). These associations help India to collaborate with various littoral states of Indian Ocean and to resolve disputed peacefully.

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With this we can see that India faces many threats in Indian Ocean and it is also clearly visible that India has taken many steps to counter these threats to promote maritime security. But, again we should ask our self "Is this enough?" And, I will tell you that we have over looked a chief issue in our discussion.

Another frontier is "**Indo-Pacific**"; the term has gained currency in recent times, largely due to statements regarding the United States' rebalance to Asia strategy and an acknowledgement of linkage between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. However, as far as India is concerned, this linkage between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific traversing the waters of Southeast Asia is nothing new. In 2004, the Indian Maritime Doctrine alluded to "the shift in global maritime focus from the Atlantic-Pacific combine to the Pacific-Indian". Therefore, beyond the Indian Ocean, the Western Pacific has for some time now been identified as falling within the ambit of India's security interests.

The focus on maritime issues is evident from the increase in maritime exchanges led by the Indian Navy with countries, such as, Vietnam, Singapore and Japan. India's approach to the region is exemplified by its evolving Look East Policy, beginning with economic engagement with Southeast Asia and now expanding to strategic cooperation beyond Southeast Asia. The US' Rebalance to Asia no doubt highlights the importance of the "Indo-Pacific" concept and generates much speculation regarding the interaction between the US, its regional allies, India and China. It has been identified as a realm of great power rivalry by many. However, for India the region's importance is neither a new development nor is it dictated by a shift in the American focus.

To manage both the frontiers, there is huge role of Navy. If we talk about Navy, India though not very far behind other nation, yet, lacks in some advanced technologies know to human kind. They are submarines, and war – ship along with supporting technology of navigation required by both of them. Our Naval fleet has some more problems like dependence on other nations, old and aging fleet and slightly less advanced and less in quantity. We fall behind other nations – mainly China – in these terms. But, as with other issues, we have also taken steps to resolve them.

INS Arihant class submarines is one such step. It is a nuclear submarine indigenously developed by India (DRDO) and is capable of shooting Submarine launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). Advantageously, we are the

only nation outside the elite groups of P5 nations that have this capability and indigenous technology.

Our launches of satellites of "Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System" (IRNSS) is another step towards the same goal. A goal to have independent Navy and for that to have Independent Navigation. With these satellites India has set up a regional navigation system known as Navigation through Indian Constellation (NAVIC). NAVIC will truly make our Navy independent and is of our strategic interest in maritime security.

Thus we can say that we the people of India are moving towards maritime security. Although, we should also note here that all these are step towards maritime security and not the destination itself. These systems have their own limitations like we have to rapidly increase our number of submarines. Our NAVIC is a limited navigation system, limited to Indian region and Indian Ocean Region. Our fleet is still composed of other nation's technologies and is small in size compared to other major power in the world.

**CONCLUSION:** But before the end, I would like to stress on another dimension of maritime security – the social dimension. India is a country of socio – economic inequalities. A majority of fishermen are marginalised and live in poor living condition. They are vulnerable to both poverty and adverse calamities. They are susceptible to Tsunamis, bad catch and poor health. And when people of our coasts are secured then what is meaning of this maritime security. The more the people are marginalised the more they are vulnerable to crime and specifically speaking cross-border crimes. This social vulnerability forces them to allow drug trade in India. India's drugs are imported from various countries via small fishermen (also from land but for current discussion not relevant). This illegal trade is the purse of almost all terror outfits and a major problem in Indian society. If we cannot guarantee the people of coasts – a secure life, a life of dignity, a life of literacy and a life of health then we would fail in maritime security at the deepest level of social security.

Thus, I would say that India has a lot of threats in maritime security and till now India has proved to the world that it is capable of withstanding all the threats that have come to it. India has ensured maritime security and with all the various programmes, technologies, agreements etc. discussed before, India will continue to ensure maritime security. And I would like to conclude with **Sh. Hari Vansh Rai Bachchan's famous lines "Lahero say darkar Kabhi nauka paar nahi hoti, Himmat walon ki kabhi haar nhi hoti"** (No

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ships sails fearing the waves and similarly, no brave person has ever been defeated).

### ► TECHNOLOGY AS SILENT FACTOR IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#SCIENCE #INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**Why this topic?** *In international affairs diplomacy, technology and economics are the most important tools for any nation. Historically, science and technology (S&T) has been one of the main currencies for exchange and dialogue among human societies and sovereign nations. In modern times, it is emerging as an important instrument of techno-economic power that will shape the changing dynamics of international relations and global affairs.*

**INTRODUCTION:** Technological revolution arrived after the arrival of Renaissance in mediaeval Europe. It has been a major turning point in human history. Technology has not just enhanced the living conditions in a limited area but its ripples were felt all around the world. This development brought many like-minded as well as enemy nations to common consensus of mutual relation and collaboration integrated with ideology. The advancement has also led to saying "there are no permanent enemies or friends in international relations but only permanent interest".

We would understand in this essay, how international relations in the world have transformed from one of isolation to one of integration and mutual goodwill. Also, how has been this transformation in international relations been interest based, a major driver of which has been technology and its evolution.

**MAIN BODY:** Technology is derived from the word technique, which means a way to get a particular task accomplished. Thus, technology is a mechanism which transforms theoretical knowledge into workable techniques which are reliable, robust, repeatable and efficient. Technology enhances human productivity and makes tougher tasks easier. This technological revolution started in Britain with the industrial revolution and scientific revolution and has gradually impacted the whole world.

During the early years of 18th century, at the peak of Renaissance, many disciplines like science, economics, etc. flourished, leading to many innovations. These innovations not just affected economy, society but it also has transformed the relations of nations with other nations. The age of imperialism and colonialism could

not have been successful without superior technological capability of the Western European countries. The technological innovation gradually transformed international relations from economics oriented to ideological oriented. We shall look into this transformation of international relations with every new technological paradigm.

#### How international relation began to gain importance and turn interest based?

With the invention of Spinning Jenny, textile industries saw a boon in Britain. This innovation led to increase in consumption of cotton which was imported from America and Asia. This revolution led to increase in production of clothes and thus the size of market fell short to the production.

The new explored lands started to become the new market and source of raw materials for these industries. The economic gains out of the textile innovation helped Britain to invest in developing factory systems in first half of eighteenth century. Gradually, this factory system started to flourish in other European countries as well as the British colonies. This greatly enhanced the power of Britain in the 18th century. Many rival nations realised the superiority of British and made peace with them by entering into matrimonial alliances. Thus, began the new era for European dominance of world economics and politics. But, this dominance of Europe came at the cost of people in Asia and Americas.

The society in Asia started declining due to the end of old feudal lords and rise of new trader and merchant class. The agricultural labour divided between farm labour and industrial worker. But this development did not bring about change in living standard of labourers and workers. The misery of the third estate has been studied and reflected upon by many scholars from sociology, philosophy, etc., giving rise to the ideas of capitalism and Marxism. The world started dividing between capitalist and communist ideas.

The innovations in late eighteenth and first half of nineteenth century were focussed on improving military might and communication revolution.

The Innovation of Telegraph and typewriter changed the way the world communicated. Initially, the use of typewriters had been in the government systems for the purpose of documentation. Posts and letters were the only way to communicate for a country during the times of war and administrative affairs. But soon, posts and letters began to lose their importance and Telegraph became central.



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The telegraph soon became an important mode of communication as normal means such as letters and posts would take too long a time to transmit messages. This improved connectivity and communication among people across different parts of the world. But the telegraph innovation soon had to be supported by robust means of transportation for transporting goods and people.

Mining of iron ore and steel increased for supporting building of railroads and steam engines. These steam engines and railroads played an important role in the system of imperialism. While the early years of 19th century saw steam engine revolutionise steam ships and travel on the sea route, the latter half of nineteenth century saw the steam engine revolutionise travel on land by way of railroads. This transport revolution supported capitalist countries by making it easy and quick to transport raw materials and manufactured goods. This also improved the movement of people and military in and outside countries.

This invention helped Britain and allied partners to fight against rival imperial powers like Russia and Japan. The goal of having an upper edge over rivals led to constant innovations and evolution of arms and ammunitions. The urge to capture more territory led to a military technology revolution in the early twentieth century with the invention of artillery tanks, which played important role during the World War I.

World War I saw widespread loss of life and destruction of property. It was realised that peace was a valuable goal. For the first time an arrangement in the form of League of Nations was established to bring enduring peace after World War I. The League of Nations informed the United Nations which was established after World War II.

Despite the League of Nations working for peace and tranquillity, war returned to Europe and the World soon. The period after World War I saw the rise of dictators and authoritative regimes across Europe. The rise of leaders like Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy and others openly professed racism, bloodshed and war as a means for the political ends. World War 2 was the result of their insatiable urge for power. The war initially confined to Europe became a total war and reached various corners of the world. World War II saw the use of fighter aeroplanes and use of submarines for the first time. These technologies were reasons for early success of Germany under Hitler. However, the American intervention and bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki using the nuclear weapons quickly ended the war.

However, the nuclear bombs killed lakhs of people in these cities and reflected the cruel use of nuclear technology.

### **Bretton Woods's conference and rise of New International Relation**

The period after World War II, saw the need for developing and rebuilding the world. This period saw the formation of new institutions such as Bretton Woods's institutions (IMF, World Bank and GATT) which aimed to create a world order which was rules based orderly and peaceful in the long run. They extended financial assistance to nations and supported rebuilding of their infrastructure. However, despite the USSR and USA fighting the together in the World War II, USA's insecurity against communism led to the onset of Cold War in the world. The world was divided into two blocks. A nuclear armed race started in the world as countries felt that nuclear bombs were essential for guarantee of security.

### **International Treaty and agreement to stop the nuclear race**

Countries one after another began developing their nuclear weapons and testing them. Post nuclear weapon testing by India under 'Operation Smiling Buddha', there was felt the need for "nuclear non-proliferation treaty".

Thus, technology has become the single most important factor in the world affairs. The rise of computers and age of internet has brought world further closer to each other. Computers and Internet based technologies have revolutionised the world by making it possible to communicate between two persons in real time. These technologies have had profound effect from global to individual level, paving way for a flatter planet i.e., globalisation.

At the same time, computers made computations faster and more efficient, they helped design better machines and manufacturing systems. This has given a big boost to automobile industries by introduction of assembly lines for manufacturing, production process, etc. However, these internet-based technologies have given rise to new challenges of cyber-crime, hacking, snooping and other cyber-security issues.

### **Internet and Artificial Intelligence**

The era of robotics with artificial intelligence has been vulnerable to digital attacks. The Budapest convention, Five Eyes Nation, intelligence sharing, etc. had been part of global effort to tackle these issues. The rising threats have made countries Technology based assets at high

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risk of Rival attack costing millions of dollars loss and even may affect the economy.

Biology and biotechnology have been at the frontier of technological advancement in the last century. Genetic engineering of crops like Bt-brinjal, etc. have been effective in addressing problems of pest, disease, etc. and improved crop productivity. They have been crucial in many parts of the world in ensuring food security and addressing malnutrition.

Various interventions in the form better medicines, vaccines and treatment protocols have been developed to counter life threatening diseases improving quality of life of people. Thus, developments in biology and biotechnology have been a boon for humanity.

**CONCLUSION:** Thus, technology has played crucial role in determining the contours of international relations at every point in time. Each new invention and innovations make humanity empowered, leads to ease of living, towards intermixing of varied cultures and evolving a common consensus. It is not the technology as such however the intention with which it is used that leads to challenges for humanity and international relations. For example, nuclear technology can be used for both nuclear weapons and nuclear power. Thus, the need is ethics and ethical management and use of technology.

The focus of international relations has been traditionally on power, narrow national interest rather than benefit of humanity as a whole. Thus, in the new era, the upcoming generation needs to be collaborative and deliver for humanity as a whole.

### ► INNOVATION IS KEY DETERMINANT OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE

#SCIENCE #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** Culture of innovation is the sign of nurturing and investing in the scientific development of the society. It is a sign of progress because innovations reduce human efforts, raise incomes resulting in economic gains and social welfare.

They raise country's ranking in Global Innovation Index, lead towards holistic empowerment of the nation and resulting in emergence as a global power of intellectual capital.

**INTRODUCTION:** The entire human history can be viewed as history of human innovation. The early humans innovated to control fire and invented the wheel. In later times, humans innovated stone tools and

later metallic tools. Thus, the progress of humans as a race is closely linked to the innovations that humans did to make themselves fittest in evolutionary struggle.

Coming to modern age, this age is characterized by innovations of industrial revolution. These innovations has led to tremendous economic growth as well as social welfare.

For instance, economy has transmitted from mainly agricultural nature to mainly industries led by modern technologies in modern age. Further, Social welfare has also increased manifold in modern age vis-à-vis pre-industrial age. In terms of education, we today study scientific education rather than traditional religious education. The same goes with healthcare which shifted from unscientific to scientific nature.

Additionally, social welfare should also be seen in the shift in values that innovation brought. In modern age, we have democratic values which oppose orthodox discriminations.

Thus, we can see that innovation is key determinant of economic growth and social welfare.

**MAIN BODY:** In this essay, we will first explore the meaning of economic growth and social welfare. Then we will understand how innovation leads to economic growth and social welfare. Further, we will analyse the challenges India face in sphere of innovation and how can we overcome those challenges.

#### Explainer: Economic Growth and Social Welfare

Starting with economic growth, it can, in its most rudimentary form, considered as GDP growth (Gross Domestic Product). But for true economic growth, GDP growth needs to be sustained and made more inclusive. In times of climate change and threats it can pose to economy, sustainability is an important aspect.

At the same time, economic growth needs to be inclusive as economy is not sum of incomes of few elites but that of the masses. But how do we ensure that economy becomes inclusive? The answer to this is by ensuring social welfare. Social welfare is improvement in standard of living of the masses. This includes education, health, housing, food, internet etc.

Thus, we can see that economic growth and social welfare in their true form are not mutually exclusive but are interlinked. This aspect is captured by concept of development which can be measured by Human Development Index and Multi-dimensional Poverty Index.

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Now, after understanding economic growth and social welfare. Let us understand how innovation leads to them.

### **Innovation – an expressway for economic growth and social welfare**

Innovation is essentially a process of problem solving in a more efficient manner under the constraints of resource availability. Thus, it is natural for innovation to be the expressway for economic growth and social welfare.

More specifically, innovations like green technology, and circular economy's technology will promote sustainability of economic growth. Examples of innovation in solar energy, wind energy, Biofuels and atomic energy are case in point for green technology. On the other side, recycling innovations and waste to energy technology are examples of innovations leading to circular economy.

Apart from promoting sustainability, innovation in field of social welfare will not just promote social welfare but also promote inclusiveness of economic growth. **For instance**, in education sector, innovations like **Tele-education and Massive open online courses (MOOC)** and other tools of on-line education are promoting accessibility of education to the masses and democratisation of education.

Further, in health sector, innovations have direct bearing on lives saved. Two of the most important innovations in health sector are vaccination that prevent diseases and health insurance which is financial innovation making health care affordable.

The same is the case with food where green revolution has prevented famines in India since 1970s. Thus, we can see that innovation is an expressway to economic growth and social welfare i.e. development of humans.

Now, let us analyse the challenges that India faces in sphere of Innovation.

### **Innovation in India: potholes on express way**

For any vibrant innovation ecosystem, we need 4 things – man power, funds, industry-academia link and patent infrastructure. India faces challenges in all 4 of these categories.

Starting from manpower, India has demographic advantage, however, this advantage is not getting fully utilized. This advantage gets eroded starting from the childhood as 40% Indian children are stunted and 20% wasted. This impares growth of healthy mind. To add to

difficulties to manpower, education in India is characterized by rote learning. ASER report by NGO Pratham points out that around 50% of students don't achieve documentary levels of learning outcomes.

Now coming to funding of innovation, the R & D expenditure of government is <1% of GDP. To increase the scarcity of funds, private sector R & D expenditure is virtually non-existent. Even this meager amount of funds are not getting utilized in best way because of dysfunctioned industry-academia link. To highlight the gravity of situation, research in India is often mocked as resume – research.

Finally, in the patent infrastructure, Indian patent laws are of good quality. However, implementation of these laws is not up to the mark. For instance, it takes 18 months to get a patent in India as compared 1–4 months in Singapore.

Thus, these are the 4 major potholes on innovation expressway and India needs to urgently repair them.

### **Innovation in India: repairing the potholes**

Starting with manpower, to reap the demographic advantage, India needs to provide health care and education to its children. In healthcare, government has various schemes to ensure nourishment of children for example, Prime Minister Matru Jandhan Yojana covers infants less than 6 months old, ICDS and midday meal covers nourishment of children older than 2 years to 14 years. Thus, the gap between 6 months to 2 years needs to be filled as the Kasturirangan Committee pointed out that major mental development happens in 1st 1000 days.

After ensuring proper development of brain, the brain needs to be trained by quality education. There is need to shift towards a curriculum that promotes critical thinking and activity based learning. Also comprehensive continuous examination should be introduced to remove rote learning for exam mentality.

Moving forward, the government should increase budgetary support for R & D to at least 1% of GDP. Also, private sector needs to be motivated to increase its R & D spending. This can be done by providing tax incentives for R & D expenditure. Also, corporates situated in tech parks should be mandated, by law, to invest a threshold of their profits in R & D.

Additionally, to sustain the ecosystem of innovation, profitability of R & D expenditure needs to increase. This will happen when industry – academia link is strong. For

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this, joint research and sponsored research should be promoted.

On top of this, entrepreneurship in universities should be increased so that university students can take R & D from Labs to market.

Finally, patent infrastructure need to be strengthened. This requires reducing Turn around time for patents to less than 4 months from current 18 months. For this to happen, we also need patent drafting professionals which make the process more robust.

Lastly, patent enforcement should be improved. This can happen by have special judges with expertise in patent laws to adjudicate patent infringement cases.

Thus, implementation of these reforms will repair India's innovation expressway which will set India on a path of economic growth and social welfare.

**CONCLUSION:** To conclude, innovation is indeed key determinant of economic growth and social welfare. However, innovation should not be taken for granted as it needs vibrant innovation ecosystem.

**► SOMETIMES IT TAKES A NATURAL DISASTER TO REVEAL A SOCIAL DISASTER**

#DISASTER #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** During disasters and resultant deprivations, the strength of social fabric is also tested. Often this fabric become weak and more fissures emerge between the have and have not's.

The mass reverse migration of the poor from cities to villages due to COVID-19 related lockdown is a testimony to this.

**INTRODUCTION:** Disaster is a phenomenon which leads to a large-scale destruction of life and property. It has a huge impact on the social and economic factors of the country. For instance, the super-cyclone "Amphan" in West Bengal caused havoc and lead to destruction of thousands of crores. Apart from physiographical disaster such as earthquakes, cyclones or heat waves, biological disaster such as viral pandemics have also emerged as a threat to human existence.

The world has witnessed global pandemics such as the Spanish influence in 1918 or the SARS in 2004. Recently, Covid-19 (SARS – Cov2) has brought the entire world to a standstill. It is believed to have emerged in the Wuhan Province of China and then spread across the globe. This has led to the entire world to come in a lockdown,

halting all the economic activities worldwide. This has further lead to widespread unemployment. Thus, this natural disaster has revealed a social disaster which the world is staring at.

**MAIN BODY:** A social disaster can be defined as a situation in which majority of the masses find themselves devoid of any work i.e., unemployment, which further leads to poverty, poor and sub-standard living. The following figure describes social disaster:



Fig: CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOCIAL DISASTER

Further, this social disaster affects various sectors of the society in varying degrees. The most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of the social disaster are:

1. Workers in the informal sector
2. Women
3. Farmers

**Impact on the Workers:** The workers, especially those working in the informal sector find themselves on the receiving end wherever any disaster hits the country. Their vulnerability was exposed in the Covid-19 pandemic. Nor did they only lose their jobs but also found themselves without any means of survival post the lockdown. In the absence of any government help, they were forced to walk-back to their home states. This has led to deaths of some workers.

Moreover, workers in the informal economy have to fight at two fronts whenever any disaster hits them; first, as they are the bread-earners of the house they have to work irrespective of the dangerous conditions prevailing outside. This need to earn exposes them more to the disaster, in this case the Corona – Viruses. On the other end people employed in the formal sector have the facility of work-from-home. This reduces their exposure to such deadly viruses. Moreover, people in informal sector are not covered under any social security measures, hence increasing their vulnerability. All these factors push these workers into a perpetual cycle of poverty.

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**Impact on Women:** The role of the women in the 21st century has changed drastically. Today, women have to fight at two fronts; first they have to manage the household tasks and second they also have to manage their jobs. This increased responsibility has made them more vulnerable to the impacts of disaster. This is because it is the women who face the threat of unemployment the most. Further, in case of poor living conditions it is always the women who go to bed with a hungry stomach. This further leads to conditions such as anaemia or under nourishment.

Further, domestic violence is another impact of a disaster as was evident during the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the imposed lockdown the cases of domestic violence reached its peak during this period as highlighted by an international study.

**Impact on Farmers:** Agriculture is dependent on nature and any calamity by the nature has adverse impact on the agriculture and thereby on the farming community. In 2019, heavy rainfall caused floods in Maharashtra. These floods washed away all the Sharif crops thus causing a huge loss to the farmers. The impact was so severe that the farmers could not even get back the principal amount that they had invested, leave aside the profits.

Such losses push the farming community into a vicious cycle of poverty which often ends with the farmers committing suicide. Furthermore, the lack of penetration of institutional sources of credit in some rural areas makes the farmers vulnerable to the local money lenders. This vulnerability leads to instances such as forced labour which are still prevalent in certain remote areas of India.

All these issues have brought into light the idea of welfare state that the Constitution of India states. 70 years post-independence some sections of the population find themselves the most vulnerable whereas some enjoy the perks of being born into a high class society. The policies and approaches have widened the gap between the haves and the have not's. Further, it seems that the idea of socialism has taken a back-seat and capitalism has been placed in the driver's seat.

Thus, it has become the need of the hour to re-design our policies and construct our framework so that the difficulties of the vulnerable section are addressed.

In pursuit to achieve this, the **first step** can be to have a bottom-up approach of governance. Such an approach shall frame policies by focusing on the needs of vulnerable section rather than addressing the

aspirations of the capitalist class. NITI AAYOG's Aspirational District Programme is an example in this direction. **Second**, there is a dire need to ramp up primary and secondary health and wellness centres and increase their penetration in the remote areas. Further, it has to be ensured that quality medicines are available at affordable costs.

Moreover, India needs to increase its expenditure on health to at least 2.5% of GDP. All these measures will ensure a healthy population and thereby enable India to reap the maximum benefit of its demographic dividend.

**Third step** in this direction is to bring the informal workforce under some social security scheme. According to the Economic Survey 2018-19, almost 90% of the workforce is employed in the informal sector.

**Fourth**, India needs to provide employment to its vast workforce. Currently, unemployment in India stands at 6.1%, which is at a 45 year high. The solution to this issue is setting up of more labour-intensive industries and simultaneously codification of the labour laws.

**Fifth**, there is a dire need for India to diversify its agricultural basket. Such diversification will have a dual benefit; first it will rectify the skewed cropping pattern and thereby ensure income to the farmers and second it will give a boost to the nutritional intake. Also boost must be given to the Model Agricultural producer and Livestock Marketing Act to help farmers better realize the value of their products.

**CONCLUSION:** All these above measures will surely aid in minimizing the gap between the haves and the have not's. Further, it shall decrease the vulnerabilities of the lower sections of the society thereby giving an impetus to the idea of welfarism.

## ► WATER SCARCITY MAY LEAD TO WATER WARS

#ENVIRONMENT #CONSERVATION

**Why this topic?** As per the NITI Aayog report, around 60 crore people in India are facing water scarcity. Even Chennai, a major metropolis is facing the crisis and also the millennium city, Gurgaon. If this continues then it is going to impact the entire country by 2030. So, the need of the hour is wholesome state and non-state actors participation in water conservation.

**INTRODUCTION:** Problems are huge as precious evolutionary living resources, natural infrastructure, are going extinct. While we thoughtlessly build artificial infrastructure, we forget that this kills natural

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infrastructure which took evolution aeons to create and cannot be engineered. We are missing the essential point that this is our lifeline on the planet. Forests, rivers, mountains, aquifers and soil are being lost at an alarming rate. Today, India is in the midst of a suicidal water crisis as urban and rural landscapes go thirsty.

Over the years, we have seen activists, scientists and experts from across India working on bottom-up schemes to revive and rejuvenate lakes, wetlands, streams and other small water bodies. While these movements have brought about a significant change at the local level, the scale of our water problems is much larger.

**MAIN BODY:** Here we have two intractable issues. **First**, cities today are vast agglomerations that continue to spread, with bursting populations of tens of millions. They are huge parasites on water, food, energy and all other resources. High densities of our cities do not allow for water harvesting filling the gap. Until now, invasive schemes like dams to service these large cities and the huge needs of agriculture have caused extreme ecological devastation.

**Second**, in our global market economies, the products and services that are derived from natural infrastructure have often led to the terminal loss of the source itself. The global free market, and with it the scale of human intervention, now exceeds the scale of the planet. These resources (forests, mountains, floodplains and rivers) are often lost to the greed of governments, institutions, corporations and individuals. This is long-term loss for short-term gain. Natural resources are living evolutionary resources that are constantly renewed by natural cycles. Therefore, they provide us perennial value as long as we use them with natural wisdom and not kill them with exploitation — which is the order of the day.

Groundwater plays an important role in our lives and India's economy, but it is disappearing fast. There is mounting evidence that we are extracting more than can be naturally replenished. In the hard-rock aquifers of peninsular India, drilling 800 ft. or deeper is becoming the norm. Groundwater-dependent towns and villages spend an increasing fraction of their budgets chasing the water table. Stories abound of farmers spending their life savings or taking loans to drill a borewell, but failing to find water. If we "run out" of groundwater, millions of people will be left without any means to sustain themselves.

Scientific evidence also points to over-exploitation. The Central Ground Water Board classifies all blocks in India

based on the fraction of recharge that is extracted and trends in long-term groundwater levels. Since 2004, almost a third of blocks have been classified "over-exploited" or "semi-critical". If we understand the problem and if the consequences are so severe, why are we unable to address it? The answer lies partly in politics, partly in the invisible nature of groundwater, and partly in our reliance on simple techno-economic fixes.

**Flawed regulatory structure:** Electricity is supplied to farmers free of cost. This policy made sense when groundwater was abundant in the 1980s. Indeed, it helped millions of farmers escape poverty. But today, where groundwater levels have fallen hundreds of feet below the ground, the subsidy is actually only utilised by the richest farmers who can afford to drill deep. And even so, not all are lucky enough to strike water. Access to groundwater in hard-rock regions has almost become a lottery. Yet in the absence of alternative water sources, charging farmers for electricity is seen as political suicide.

**Groundwater is inherently difficult to monitor and control**, in part because of its invisibility, which also perpetuates the illusion that each well is independent. The myth is enshrined in Indian groundwater law that allows landowners to extract as much as they want. In reality, not only is groundwater within an aquifer interconnected, but aquifers and rivers are also interconnected. So depleting groundwater means drying rivers. Despite this, groundwater and rivers are regulated by different agencies that do not properly account for the linkages between them, often double counting the quantum of the resource.

Much of the current action on the ground is through techno-economic fixes. These have clear benefits in terms of reducing pumping costs and using local aquifers instead of building big, expensive dams. But what they do not do is create "new" water.

Solution can be **floodplain**. Research has shown that floodplains of rivers are exceptional aquifers where any withdrawal is compensated by gravity flow from a large surrounding area and can be used as a source of providing water to cities. Floodplains are formed over millions of years by the flooding of rivers with deposition of sand on riverbanks. Some floodplains, such as those of Himalayan rivers, contain up to 20 times more water than the virgin flow in rivers in a year. Since recharge is by rainfall and during late floods, the water quality is good. If we conserve and use the floodplain, it can be a self-sustaining aquifer wherein every year, the river and

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floodplain are preserved in the same healthy condition as the year before.

The Delhi Palla floodplain project on the Yamuna is an example of this. By utilising 20 sq.km of the river length and running at half its capacity, it provides water to almost a million people daily. Piezometers and a control system have been installed to monitor water levels and other parameters through the year, to ensure sustainable withdrawal. Besides, it provides huge revenue to the Delhi Jal Board.

Preserving the floodplain in a pristine condition is essential for this scheme to work. Land on the floodplains can be leased from farmers in return for a fixed income from the water sold to cities. The farmers can be encouraged to grow orchards/food forests to secure and restore the ecological balance of the river ecosystem.

Currently, mineral water is brought from faraway mountain springs, putting huge pressure on the mountains. It is packaged and consumed in plastic bottles that end up in landfills. Forested hills are a result of evolution over millions of years. They are not polluted and sit on a treasure of **underground aquifers** that contain natural mineral water comparable to that found in a mountain spring. This is because the rain falls on the forest and seeps through the various layers of humus and cracked rock pathways, picking up nutrients and minerals and flows into underground mineral water aquifers.

Research shows that the water in these aquifers is comparable to several international natural spring mineral waters. It also shows that if a scheme of 'conserve and use' is applied correctly, it would allow a forest (like Asola Bhatti in Delhi) to be sustained as a mineral water sanctuary. About 30 sq.km of the forest could then provide enough natural mineral water to 5 million people in the city. The Aravalli forested hills can provide mineral water to all major towns of Rajasthan. This water can substantially improve the health of citizens and preserve forests at the same time. The marvel is that we can provide quality natural mineral water for all from a local forest tract for 20 times less than the market price and yet reap great economic returns.

Such non-invasive, local, large-scale 'conserve and use' projects till now have not been part of our living scheme. They change the relationship between nature, water and cities. They differ in scale from the small, community-driven projects of check dams, water harvesting and lakes and can service large populations. Unlike large-

scale dams, these projects work with nature rather than against it. They can be used around the globe. If we were to recognise the true value of our natural infrastructure and 'conserve and use' our evolutionary resources with the help of science, it would secure the future for humanity and the natural world.

Further, boosting recharge through **rainwater harvesting structures** such as small check dams is a popular measure. Another technological solution is to improve efficiency through subsidised drip irrigation or energy-saving pumps.

**CONCLUSION:** The way forward is **comprehensive water budgeting**, simultaneously in each watershed and the river basin as a whole. Water budgets at the watershed level will inform communities about how much water they have, so it can be equitably shared within communities. Water budgets for the river basin will inform communities how much must be left for downstream users, ensuring that water resources are allocated between communities fairly and transparently.

Given the zero-sum nature of the game and the impossibility of creating "new" water, it is likely that we cannot restore the water balance in severely depleted regions without painful cuts in water use. However, there are some glimmers of hope. Water users everywhere are worried about the disappearing resource and willing to engage. The trick lies in combining technology (low-water-use crops, xeriscaping) and economic incentives that reduce actual water use ("cash-for-blue" schemes) without reducing productivity or quality of life. This needs a strong water governance system based on awareness building, science and a commitment to fairness and sustainability.

### ► CONVERTING WASTE MENACE INTO A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

#ENVIRONMENT #POLLUTION

**Why this topic?** Millions of tonnes of garbage are getting accumulated in every possible open space in and around cities and towns and also in water bodies across India. The launch of Swachh Bharat with ranking of Indian cities has highlighted the importance of waste management but it requires more collaborative and citizen driven initiatives to comprehensively deal with this accumulating monster impacting the quality of life and environment around us.

**INTRODUCTION:** Waste management rules in India are based on the principles of "sustainable development", "precaution" and "polluter pays". These principles mandate municipalities and commercial establishments

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to act in an environmentally accountable and responsible manner—restoring balance, if their actions disrupt it. The increase in waste generation as a by-product of economic development has led to various subordinate legislations for regulating the manner of disposal and dealing with generated waste are made under the umbrella law of Environment Protection Act, 1986 (EPA). Specific forms of waste are the subject matter of separate rules and require separate compliances, mostly in the nature of authorisations, maintenance of records and adequate disposal mechanisms.

With rapid urbanisation, the country is facing massive waste management challenge. Barely a quarter of the 1.43 lakh MT of garbage generated every day in Indian cities gets processed. The remaining three-quarters are dumped in the open. Solid Waste Management (SWM) is one among the basic essential services provided by municipal authorities in the country to keep urban centres clean. However, almost all municipal authorities deposit solid waste at a dump yard within or outside the city haphazardly. Experts believe that India is following a flawed system of waste disposal and management.

Health and safety and environmental risks are a major concern. The workers as well as the waste pickers are not provided with proper health and safety equipment like boots and gloves. The working conditions are unhygienic, the chance of transfer of infection is high and because of this if a worker gets sick he loses his wages. The workers are also not provided with medical insurance. The environmental risk is also high because the landfill sites are not maintained properly and the leachate gets leaked into the underground water.

### **MAIN BODY: Sources and types of solid waste:**

**Residential:**—the residence might be single family or multiple family dwellers the types of waste they produce are paper, food wastes, cardboard, leather, yard wastes, textiles, glass, special wastes, metals, plastics, ashes, wood and household hazardous wastes.

**Industrial:** — industries produce ashes, food wastes, packaging, special wastes, housekeeping wastes, construction and demolition materials and hazardous wastes.

**Commercial & Institutional:** — they produce wood, metals, cardboard, glass, special wastes, Paper, food wastes, hazardous wastes.

**Municipal services:** — landscape and tree trimmings, Street sweepings, general wastes from beaches, parks, and other recreational areas, sludge.

The key to efficient waste management is to ensure proper **segregation of waste at source** and to ensure that the waste goes through different streams of recycling and resource recovery. Then reduced final residue is then deposited scientifically in sanitary landfills. Sanitary landfills are the ultimate means of disposal for unutilised municipal solid waste from waste processing facilities and other types of inorganic waste that cannot be reused or recycled. Major limitation of this method is the costly transportation of MSW to far away landfill sites.

A noteworthy first step was propelling sanitation to the top of the policy agenda under the flagship Swachh Bharat Abhiyan programme. The Clean India Dashboard tracks programme achievements, 24x7. Almost 90 megawatts (MW) of energy is generated from waste-to-energy (WTE) projects. Nevertheless, the disproportionate focus of the programme on toilet construction and eliminating open defecation deflects attention from colossal failures in waste management systems.

There has been technological advancement for processing, treatment and disposal of solid waste. **Energy-from-waste** is a crucial element of SWM because it reduces the volume of waste from disposal also helps in converting the waste into renewable energy and organic manure. Ideally, it falls in the flow chart after segregation, collection, recycling and before getting to the land fill. But many waste to energy plants in India are not operating to their full potential.

Installation of **waste-to-compost and bio-methanation plants** would reduce the load of landfill sites. The biodegradable component of India's solid waste is currently estimated at a little over 50 per cent. Bio-methanation is a solution for processing biodegradable waste which is also remains underexploited. It is believed that if we segregate biodegradable waste from the rest, it could reduce the challenges by half. E-waste components contain toxic materials and are non-biodegradable which present both occupational and environmental health threats including toxic smoke from recycling processes and leaching from e-waste in landfill into local water tables.

The concept of **common waste treatment facility** is being widely promoted and accepted as it uses waste as a resource by either using it as a co-fuel or co-raw material in manufacturing processes. This has led to rise of Public Private Partnership (PPP) models in waste management which has open doors for doing business in waste management.



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Bio-medical waste (management and handling) rules, 1998 prescribe that there should be a **Common Biomedical Waste Treatment Facility (CBWTF)** at every 150 kms in the country. CBWTFs have been set up and are functioning in cities and towns. However, establishment of functional CBWTF throughout the country must be ensured. Integrated common hazardous waste management facilities combine secured landfill facility, solidification/stabilisation and incineration to treat hazardous wastes generated by various industrial units. They contribute about 97.8 per cent of total landfill waste and 88 per cent of total incinerable hazardous waste generated in the country, as per an environment ministry report.

**Focus on 3 R's-Reduce, Reuse, Recycle with collaborative participation of State and Non-state actors:** It is the only way to save the environment from getting deteriorated. We are quickly running out of space and now it is important that all of us learn the three R's of the environment and put it into practice.

Reducing the amount of waste produced is the best way to help the environment. For instance buying products with minimum packaging, borrowing things which we do not use often, starting a compost bin, saving energy and water by turning are ways to reduce. To reduce the environment damage caused by cars, increase use of carpooling with friends, walking, taking the bus, or riding your bike instead of driving are the necessary steps to be taken. Same way salvage does for the environment. It helps to reduce the waste by sorting out articles of use.

Instead of throwing away articles try to find various efficient ways to reuse it. For instance, replacing few things in our day to day life like using cloth sacks in place of plastic bags, re-useable lunch bags without creating waste. Donating old clothes, toys and furniture to the needy and poor. Use writing paper on both sides etc.

The process of changing the waste and non-useable materials into potentially useful materials. It is the key component of modern waste reduction procedure. There are some ISO standards related to recycling such as ISO 15270:2008 for plastics waste and ISO 14001:2004 for environmental management control of recycling practice. Recycling reduces the consumption of raw materials and energy usage. It also reduces air and water pollution by reducing the need of conventional waste disposal. Usage of recycled materials will help the environment to be green again.

**CONCLUSION:** Around 100 cities are set to be developed as smart cities. Civic bodies have to redraw long term vision in solid waste management and rework

their strategies as per changing lifestyles. They should reinvent garbage management in cities so that we can process waste and not landfill it (with adequate provisioning in processing and recycling). To do this, households and institutions must segregate their waste at source so that it could be managed as a resource. The Centre aims to do away with landfill sites in 20 major cities. There is no spare land for dumping garbage; the existing ones are in a critical state. It is reported that almost 80 per cent of the waste at Delhi landfill sites could be recycled provided civic bodies start allowing waste managers to segregate waste at source and recycle it. Compost pits should be constructed in every locality to process organic waste. Community participation has a direct bearing on efficient waste management. Recovery of e-waste is abysmally low; we need to encourage recycling of e-waste on a very large scale level so that problem of e-waste disposal is contained.

## ► CAN TECHNOLOGY REPLACE MANPOWER?

#SCIENCE #LIVELIHOODS

**Why this topic?** *In the era of technology, more and more jobs are taken away by automation and AI. The influx and spread of **technology** has been fast tracked during COVID-19. But these are mostly white collar in nature.*

*Still, there are many labour intensive sectors which absorb our large unskilled to semi-skilled work force. Technology here cannot replace manpower but can become a facilitator for bringing efficiency in production, adding new skills and raising incomes.*

**INTRODUCTION:** Jobs – this is the catchword of today's domestic as well as international politics across the globe. The present scenario of unemployment appears pretty grim, with joblessness touching record levels in many countries, including India. A large part of the problem of unemployment is because of the paradigm shift that we are witnessing in technology. Experts believe that the fourth Industrial Revolution has brought with itself technologies that have total disrupted the manufacturing processes. Today's machines are smarter and efficient than ever and have replaced manufacturing jobs to a large extent – especially in advanced economies of the West and China. A certain backlash against machines replacing humans in jobs has brought forth a natural question – **“Can technology replace Manpower?”**

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In context of answering this question, it would be informative to look at a brief history of technology itself.

One can argue that technology is as old as manpower itself. The highly developed cognitive and analytical capacities of the human brain allowed humans to develop tools and processes which would aid in better survival. Rubbing stones to generate fire, while using wooden logs as wheels were all technologies of the Palaeolithic Age. Microliths were technological innovations of the Neolithic Age. With time, the technologies got more and more complex and functionally efficient. Evolution of agricultural technologies and warfare technologies was the next big step. However, the industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th century is by far the biggest leap in technology that mankind has taken. Lately electricity, computers and most recently Artificial intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain are the new technologies.

**MAIN BODY:** From the above historical description, it is clear that humans evolved technologies for themselves. Technology has always had a functional role. Technology reduced human effort and made tasks more efficient. It left humans more time in leisure, which helped in innovation and creative thinking. This furthered technological development and the cycle kept reinforcing itself. Using technology, man was also able to solve problems and build things which are seemingly beyond the limits of manpower. For example, deep sea mining, crushing of stones, communicating with romance far away – are all beyond man's physical capabilities, but technology makes it all possible. Technology has had an impact not only in the economic sphere, but also in the social, political and cultural spheres. Today's technology allows us to socialize with friends who are in a different city, influence political opinions remotely, and keen about different cultures while sitting in our rooms. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that technology has aided in making our lives easier are the course of history.

When we compare technology with manpower, we see that both are pretty different. Manpower can be divided into two physical and mental. Physical manpower entails doing work with our bodies – like pushing a rock, packaging stuff, assembling parts; while mental manpower involves brain functioning – analysis comprehension, innovation and understanding. It can be observed that for a large part of history, the role of technology was to supplement physical manpower and reduce drudgery – the invention of cars, steam engines, mining equipment, use of electricity for mechanical operations etc. The progress has been such that physical

labour today has lost its value as the same work can be done by a machine efficiently and tirelessly. On the other hand mental labour today holds more relevance than ever, partly because technology of today cannot match levels of human intelligence and partly because today we live in an age of knowledge economy.

The above trends therefore, again point to the relevance of manpower in face of today's advanced technology. It however is important to know that this debate is not a new one. It has existed ever since the spinning Jenny – the first machine of the industrial Revolution, replaced jobs of English workers. Those sceptics of machine power were known as luddites. Similarly, modern thinkers like Gandhi were also not for replacement of manpower by technology. He advocated that every person performed bread-labour and wanted production by the masses, not mass production. In the same way, neo-luddites of today call for banning of new technologies which have led to joblessness.

A historical analysis would suggest that technology cannot replace manpower. At most, it can alter the nature in which manpower is employed, but it cannot certainly replace it. This is because human manpower is too complex to be emulated by a machine precisely. Although technology today performs more tasks of humans than ever, but those are tasks that can be programmed through logic functions. One cannot possibly programme man's natural decision making, cognitive and emotional qualities into a machine. Therefore, technology, while closing some jobs, opens up new ones which are of a different nature. Manpower can never go out of vogue, because it is manpower itself that makes technology, not the other way round. Also, present fears of technology replacing manpower are pretty far-fetched, as more than 70% of the World lives in developing countries where people do not have access to even basic agricultural technologies like farming tools. In the future of technology evolves and becomes smarter, it is bound to have a social, political and economic backlash so as to keep the balance.

**CONCLUSION:** In a world where Amazon uses robots to find inventory, Ford uses robotic arms to manufacture cars, and legal firms use Artificial Intelligence to fight case, apprehensions of technology replacing manpower are valid. However, one must wait and give this disruption some time, as job markets lag when it comes to reacting to disruptions. Technology never was, and can never be a substitute of manpower. Technology is a tool and efforts must be made to set it remain that way. It is because of the combination of manpower and technology that the human race has progressed so

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much. Creative Solutions are the need of the hour so that both are balanced. Technology cannot replace manpower, but supplement it better.

### ► INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ARE ALL ABOUT ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND LOCAL POLITICAL GAINS

#INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**Why this topic?** *In international relations there are neither permanent enemies nor permanent friends. It is mainly the economic, strategic and political landscape that defines the changing nature of relationships across the world.*

*Recently, the example is the Abraham Accord between UAE, Bahrain and Israel.*

**INTRODUCTION:** International relations are based on national interests of a nation which include economic interests and local political gains. No country in the world is self-sufficient to meet every need from the domestic resources. Neither does any country remain isolated from the world today. There comes in the role of international relations and foreign policy. The main objective of the foreign policy of a country is to further its domestic interests.

Foreign Policy of a nation is meticulously designed as an Instrument to further its national interests which include economic interests. Nations engage in trade to meet the needs of the people as well as maintain a favorable balance of payment. When international trade results into unfavorable balance of payments, nations indulge in trade wars by imposing tariffs. US-China trade war is an example of centrality of favorable balance of trade in the international relations. Colonization of India was accompanied by the systematic destruction of Indian handicrafts by the British through one-way free trade and other measures. Favorable balance of trade was a major objective of the colonization of India by the British.

**MAIN BODY:** Nations need energy security as energy is vital for economic development. Ever since oil industry boom in the Middle East, the USA has tried to increase its geopolitical influence in the region. Energy security was at the heart of US intervention in Iraq. India has carefully balanced its relationship with competing powers such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel in the Middle East, primarily influenced by its large dependence on oil and gas from the region.

An economic interest of a nation is dependent on availability of essential raw materials for manufacturing

products for exports and domestic consumption. Countries seek to ensure uninterrupted supplies of raw materials such as iron ore, coal, rare earth metals, etc. China controls nearly 95% of the world's rare-earth metals production. It has used it as a diplomatic lever.

One of the key objectives of international relations among countries is to increase investments. Countries design their foreign policies in a way to attract investments from abroad as well as opportunities for domestic investors abroad. India's foreign policy is formulated with a view to improve foreign direct investments and foreign institutional investments.

Foreign policy is used by leaders for local political gains as well. Boris Johnson's campaign for Brexit made him PM of the UK and brought again to power in recently conducted elections. Donald Trump's campaign to "make America great again" appealed people and brought him to power. His subsequent measures, after coming to power, such as withdrawal from Paris Climate Deal, trade war against China, seeking funds for wall along Mexican border, more stringent visa rules, etc. have all been to fulfill his electoral promises.

Similarly, India's foreign policy with respect to Sri Lanka has always been influenced by the sentiments of Tamil people in India. India has been unable to resolve the issue of Teesta River with Bangladesh. Domestic political compulsions from the state of Bengal have made the Union government hesitant to proceed on the issue. Indian government's decision of not joining Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was influenced by its impact on farmers, which comprises of a large section of voters. Pakistan's Kashmir rhetoric is influenced by its domestic political compulsion, which led it to adopt the policy of fomenting terrorism in India.

International Relations go beyond just economic interests and local political gains. National interests determine foreign policy decisions. There is ideological dimension too in framing a country's foreign policy. International relations in Cold War era were heavily influenced by the conflict between two mutually opposed ideologies of Capitalism and Communism. NAM originated in this context and Indian foreign policy was based on this non-alignment principle.

Another factor which determines international relations among nations is based on battle for supremacy. US Pivot of Asia policy is based on the thought of containing the rising economic and military power of China, which is a threat to the supremacy of USA in the world today. Alignment of different nations to form block is to maintain the balance of power among nations.

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Formation of power blocks among nations to maintain balance of power can be seen during the first and second world wars, cold war period and even in post-cold war international relations among different nations.

Ethical, moral, and legal dimensions also influence in formulation of foreign policy of a nation. International relations are based on the principles such UN Charter, Panchsheel, Right to Protect, etc. Another important issue which influences a country's international relations is its defence. India's relationship with Russia and Israel is built primarily on the India's defence needs. NATO was formed for collective security of the countries following the Capitalist system under the leadership of USA.

Global commons and shared responsibility demand nations to design appropriate foreign policy. Examples include activities of UNFCCC for climate change, Convention on Biological Diversity, UNCLOS, etc.

Technology is an indispensable factor in international trade and relations. India's need for nuclear technology helped strengthen conclude Civil Nuclear Deal with USA and helped strengthen relationship with USA. India collaborates with countries such as USA, Israel, France, Russia, and Ukraine in the field of space.

Diaspora is an influencing factor for international relations among nations in the world. India's policy in the Middle East is also influenced by the presence of large diaspora in the region. Nations use soft power in relations with other countries. Cultural heritage, philosophical ideas such as those of Gandhi, yoga and meditation, films, sports, etc. too are being given increased importance in the power matrix shaping the foreign policy.

In designing foreign policy of a country, it is important to keep in mind its history and legacy. Foreign policy is evolved from history with suitable changes to address the dynamics of the geopolitical reality taking into account the national interest including the economic and strategic interests. Foreign policy of the countries reality cannot be a sudden break from the past. Despite India's increasing closeness with USA, NAM still continues to have a great influence on Indian foreign policy.

Economic interests and domestic political compulsions are important factors determining the foreign policy of a country. However, foreign policy goes beyond these two factors. Ideological leaning, defence needs, commonly accepted international principles and rules, etc. to play a great role in shaping the foreign policy of a country.

**CONCLUSION:** A country's foreign policy is determined by its national interest. National interest of a country

takes into account dynamic internal and external environment, domestic and international political compulsions and other significant inputs. It is a high-level decision-making process involved by the head of the state, ministry of external affairs, career diplomats and other experts. Most important objective is to safeguard the national interest of the nation. In order to define the determinants of national interest of a nation, it is indispensable for the policy makers to factor complex and dynamic domestic and international political milieu. In the context of globalization and transnational activities, nations have to constantly interact with other nations, international organizations and non-state actors bilaterally and multilaterally. Foreign policy of a country is designed taking into account both internal or domestic factors and international determinants. It goes beyond economic interests and local political gains.

### ► CYBER SECURITY AND DATA PROTECTION

#S&T #SECURITY

**Why this topic?** Cyber supremacy has emerged as a new domain of tussle among the global and big powers. Recent examples are US-China and 5G, India-China and banning of apps. Increased surveillance and data theft are the new weapons in the cat and mouse games played against each other. In this context, there is emerging need for cyber security and data protection.

**INTRODUCTION:** In the today's' era of digitalization, when India's digital economy comprises 14-15% of total economy there is an urgent need to protect Data and our Cyber Space.

**Cyber Space is defined as** "A global domain within the information environment consisting of the interdependent network of information technology infrastructures, including the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, and embedded processors and controllers." Cyber security refers to the body of technologies, processes, and practices designed to protect networks, devices, programs, and data from attack, damage, or unauthorized access. Data protection refers to policies and procedures seeking to minimise intrusion into the privacy of an individual caused by collection and usage of their personal data.

Cyber Security system is protecting our cyber space (critical infrastructure) from attack, damage, misuse and economic espionage.

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Nowadays, there is increased networking, increased usage of Digital services (Financial, Health etc.), also cyber Intrusions and Attacks have increased dramatically over the last decade, exposing sensitive personal and business information, disrupting critical operations, and imposing high costs on the economy. Main Cyber Players are Cyber Criminals (seeking commercial gain from hacking banks), Cyber terrorists (with mission to penetrate and attack critical attacks), Cyber Espionage (using stealthy IT malware to penetrate corporate and military data servers) and Cyber hackivists (anonymous groups with political agendas who virally communicate the message for specific campaigns)

**MAIN BODY:** Cyber-attacks have been on a rise in the banking as well as financial services, payments made through various applications, health services, etc. which are all connected to different digital mediums. Also, amidst Covid19, this has been on a further increase. India has witnessed an increasing number of attacks happening with increasing frequency. There has been case of attacks and threats over the platforms such as WhatsApp.

There have been several instances in the governmental as well as non- governmental processes where the possibility of cyber threats and attacks has resulted in digital warfare and the hackers have successfully entered into the systems extracting the information, thereby necessitating the need of cyber security and data protection plans that would prevent any foreign entity's penetration into the system.

Medical details of several Indian patients have been leaked as reported by German cyber security team, with Maharashtra being placed at the top place for being affected by the leaked data. Wannacry ransomware has been one of the major attacks on cyber security across the world.

**Data Leak is a breach of Right to Privacy:** Puttaswamy Judgement of 2017 ensured Right to Privacy as the fundamental right of an individual thereby necessitating the protection of personal data, thus ensuring the digital economy initiatives being employed in interests of the masses for the socio-economic growth by preventing leakage of information at all levels.

Also, Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning have been major concerns in the cyber arena while Internet of Things are not being built with adequate measures being taken to ensure cyber security.

**India's Cyber Space:** As per NITI Aayog report, India ranks 3rd in terms of the highest number of internet

users in the world after USA and China, the number has grown 6-fold between 2012-2017 with a compound annual growth rate of 44%. India secures a spot amongst the top 10 spam-sending countries in the world alongside USA. India was ranked among the top five countries to be affected by cybercrime, according to "Symantec Corp".

**Recent Cyber-attacks in India:** Wannacry Ransomware, Union Bank of India Heist, Data theft at Zomato, Petya Ransomware attack at Mumbai's Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust. Financial Organisations, Healthcare Organisations, Public Sector entities are the frequent victims. National e-Governance is at stake due to unlawful attacks and threats of attacks against computers, networks, and information stored therein when done to intimidate or coerce a government or its people in furtherance of political or social objectives.

A database of around 22 million users of Unacademy with contacts of employees of Wipro, Infosys, Cognizant, Google and its investor Facebook is up for sale on the darkweb, according to US-based security firm Cyble.

**Legislations and Policies: Information Technology Act, 2000:** The Information Technology Act, 2000 intends to give legal recognition to e-commerce and e-governance and facilitate its development as an alternate to paper based traditional methods.

**National Cyber security Policy, 2013:** In light of the growth of IT sector in the country, the National Cyber Security Policy of India 2013 was announced by Indian Government in 2013 yet its actual implementation is still missing. Its important features include building secure and resilient cyber space, creating a secure cyber ecosystem, generating trust in IT transactions, 24 x 7 NATIONAL CRITICAL INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION CENTER (NCIIPC) etc.

**The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 ("PDPB")** was introduced in Lok Sabha. The aim of the bill has been to ensure the protection of the privacy of the individual's data and to setup a data protection authority for the concerned matters.

CERT-IN has played a major role towards responding to the increase in cyber threats across the India. While CERT-IN has been successful in responding to the cyber-attacks and threats, the security checks being conducted by the CERT-IN had not been time efficient and have responded late while the cyber-attack had already taken place.

Data localisation needs to be emphasised upon like it has been employed in other countries like US, China,

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Russia amongst others, since India is not a signatory to the Budapest convention, which is a multilateral convention on the cyber security. Also, there has been a severe shortage of the cyber security expertise and data protection professionals.

The data and cyber security needs are required to be maintained through effective e-commerce policies and plans through mechanisms such as data localisation.

The need of cyber security and data protection ensures the continuity in the operations across all domains while ensuring that critical infrastructure does not collapse under any circumstances. It ensures that adequate balance is being maintained between individual's rights, liberties and privacy. Digital India, Make In India, Smart Cities Mission could successfully be implemented with appropriate amount of data security over the servers.

### **AI and machine learning can boost cyber defences :**

As artificial intelligence and machine learning gathers pace, and starts to impact more and more industries, it is going to play a bigger role in cyber security. Because the battle with cyber criminals moves so quickly, machine learning models that can predict and accurately identify attacks swiftly could be a real boon for InfoSec professionals.

**Handling data breaches gracefully:** It may prove impossible to eradicate data breaches completely, but every organization has the power to lessen the blow by handling the aftermath correctly

**CONCLUSION:** There has been a surge in the demand for India to have comprehensive cyber security guidelines and data protection standards for checking various cyber related vulnerabilities and thus generating efficient responses to the cyber threats.

There needs to be effective coordination between CERT of various countries since it is a global concern and penetration into the system takes place across the boundaries over the cyber web thereby preventing cyber terrorism, radicalisation of individuals over various sites and platforms.

## ► PANDEMIC: A REFLECTION

### *#HEALTH # GOVERNMENT POLICY*

Pandemics are rare events in the history of mankind. Our generation has suffered the wrath of COVID-19 pandemic after almost 100 years (last pandemic was the Spanish Flu of 1920s). Life as we know has changed and evolved. The pandemic has accelerated certain changes.

**1. March of the State continues:** The 21st century was expected to be a crisis for States. There were debates that modern state, a product of modernity, has receded in relevance with calls for **'Withering away of the State'**. However, the pandemic brought State at the centerstage as the chief manager of the crisis. It was State and its capacity which determined if people would survive. Countries with better capacity were able to better handle the pandemic by preventing deaths and ensuring availability of vaccines for its citizens. China was able to control the pandemic, USA, despite being the most powerful country, suffered and this saga was more or less the same for many other developed as well developing countries.

**2. Transition to digital:** The transition to digital was a trend which started even before the pandemic. However, what was on the sidelines and an aspiration became central to continuity of life and enterprise. Many businesses have gone completely digital, and they are continuing to function despite the pandemic. Work from home is now globally accepted. As the schools are closed, digital education has emerged as the only way to educate millions of children across the globe.

**3. In Science we trust:** Science and scientific methods has been central to the COVID response. Scientists especially epidemiologists became household names. Vaccines, which take years to develop, are developed within a year using tools of biotechnology and computing capabilities. The pandemic highlighted the need to invest in scientific and research capabilities even more.

**4. Cooperation solves problems:** Every crisis, howsoever big, can be addressed if stakeholders come forward, rise to the occasion and cooperate. The pandemic and its consequences could have been far worse if this spirit of cooperation was not there. Countries across the globe cooperated to make data, vaccines and medical equipment available to the poorer countries. India's 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative, COVAX initiative, proposal for waiver of patents on COVID-19 vaccines, USA lifting embargo on vaccine inputs, Union governments decision for procuring vaccines for all States and lowering of GST rates for COVID Vaccine and related medication are case in point. Also, millions of ordinary people offered cooperation to fellow citizens by making food available, donating plasma and helping with human care. Many NGOs rose to the occasion. Actor Sonu Sood's efforts will be eulogized for a long time.

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**5. Public service is the highest form of service:** Often in contemporary times, there is a ridicule and dismissive attitude towards public service and bureaucracy. However, the 'steel frame' rose to the occasion and proved its mettle. When everyone was worried about protecting his/her life, the police manned the streets and enforced lockdowns; doctors and medical personnel continued to serve ailing people not worrying about the fact that they too are vulnerable to virus; administration continued to function ensuring help to the needy especially vulnerable by ensuring free food grains under PDS reached the needy. Many Doctors, medical staff, police officers, administration officers (frontline workers) have lost their lives too, but their tireless efforts ensured that the impact of pandemic is reduced to a great extent. Surely, more could have been done and more capacity needs to be developed in the public sector, but it was a crisis, the spirit of selflessness displayed is truly inspiring.

At the same time, the pandemic brought out the **fault lines** of our society, polity and economy out in the open. It became evident that even in times of crisis and human suffering narrow political gains, profiteering and ill intentions continue to cloud decision making. The crisis despite being a medical crisis was also a moral and ethical crisis.

- 1. Lack of investment in public goods** such as healthcare infrastructure specifically the non-availability of medical oxygen left so many gasping for air and many lost their lives. This necessitates the pressing need for a social compact on the need to invest in public goods especially healthcare infrastructure.
- 2. Crisis of Conscience:** Black marketing of drugs and vaccines showed crisis of conscience in the society. The very thought of profiteering out of this misery makes us think how low humanity has stooped to. Moral fabric of the society needs a rebuild and law and order mechanisms need to be strengthened.
- 3. Misery of the unorganised sector** and the migrant labour crisis brought out in the open glaring inequalities in our economic model. Even as stock markets across the globe soared, millions of households were thrown into the folds of poverty. This should make us think about the need for social security and universal basic income.
- 4. Fractured polity** especially the politicking during the times of this crisis reflects how the political class failed to rise to occasion and deal with this crisis on a firm footing. Holding of elections during a pandemic,

center and states fighting and throwing allegations at each other over vaccine availability are glaring proofs that the political class needs to rethink over their priorities.

- 5. Crisis of discipline:** The pandemic could have been easily controlled had people wore masks, washed hands with soaps or sanitizers and maintained social distance. However, the resistance on the part of people to these simple measures was saddening. Despite widespread awareness about these measures, people resisted, thereby, putting at risk their lives and of those around them.
- 6. The need to value nature:** Anthropogenic factors have further worsened the impact of this pandemic. As we fight the present pandemic, we should consciously choose to pay attention to worsening of climate change, degradation of biodiversity and threats that we humans have posed to the Earth. Humanity has only one home i.e., the Earth, and we cannot afford to ruin it.

The second wave of pandemic has ended, and we have lived more than a year under the pandemic. Hopefully, we will learn from our mistakes and rebuild our lives. We should instill compassion towards those who suffered and lost their loved ones.

## ► INDIA & THE OLYMPICS

### #SPORTING CULTURE

As the world continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, Olympic Games in Tokyo seem to have come as the beacon of hope. Olympics are not merely a series of sports competition. The legacy and enduring spirit behind them makes them special.

Roots of Olympics are traced to ancient Greece. The Colosseum in Rome stands as a living testimony of ancient Olympic Games. Towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, **Pierre de Coubertin's** efforts led to the revival of Olympics. He founded the International Olympic Committee in 1894 and gave it the responsibility of organizing the modern Olympics Games every 4 years.

The first modern Olympic Games were held at Athens in 1896. When racism, gender inequality and imperialism were the norm across the world, the Olympic Games presented a new ethic that celebrated diversity, praised effort, gave women a chance to compete alongside men and treated all countries equally.

Olympism the value behind the Olympics seeks to blend sport with culture and education. It seeks to create a way of life based on joy of effort, educational value of

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good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles. Core of Olympism is to encourage effort, preserve human dignity and develop harmony.

### INDIA AND OLYMPICS

Despite being home to the largest youth and second largest population in the world, India's performance at the games has been subpar. It is disappointing that a country that has world class talent in various disciplines has not been able to produce champions in sports. Squad size of India to Olympics has increased in recent editions, however, medals have been elusive.

### REASONS FOR INDIA'S SUBPAR PERFORMANCE AT OLYMPICS:

- a) **Lack of sporting culture:** Culturally, sports are not celebrated in India, parents want kids to focus on studies and see sports as distraction. At the community level, there is not much engagement of local community with sports.
- b) **Lack of focus on sports at grassroots level:** Search of sporting talent should start at school however, there is inadequate focus and emphasis on physical education and sports at school and university level. Schools and colleges lack equipment, infrastructure and guidance for students to excel in sports.
- c) **Difficult to see sports as career:** Sports is not the first choice as a career for most of our sportsmen due to insecurity. Even successful sportsmen are sometimes forced to live a life of penury. Large majority of probables drop out because of high risk, uncertainty and low rewards in sports.
- d) **Lack of investment in sports** as spending from Union & State Governments taken together spend just 2 paisa per capita per day. Investment in sports has been driven primarily by public sector with private participation being very limited and mostly concentrated on cricket. Sports have become technology led. However, India continues to rely on archaic means of training.
- e) **Issues with sports administration:** Allegations of nepotism, fiefdom, lack of professionalism, unaccountability and financial irregularities surround the sports federations. Sports administration is bureaucracy led who have very limited exposure to management of athletes and requirement of sports. Tournaments like National Games are not organised regularly displaying the attention sports gets.

Olympics Task Force constituted by Government has highlighted that India's success in Olympic sports so far

has been delivered despite the system in place and not because of it. They have pointed that there are too many gaps in our sport's administrative structure. There can be no transformational change in Indian sporting results unless there is systemic overhaul to plug these gaps. It has suggested for:

#### a) Developing a national culture of sports

- Schools should be where focus of sports development should start with. Initiatives like mandatory sports hour each day, provision for sports equipment in all schools, sports being part of curriculum and competitions at school level (Khelo India) need to be made.
- District level sports schools should be established in each district of India to nurture grassroot talent.
- Developing world class sports infrastructure in leading universities of the country.
- Special focus should be regional pockets of sporting excellence such as Tribals, North-East for football, and Punjab for Hockey etc.

**b) Professional Sporting Leagues** such as IPL should be encouraged as they give opportunity to domestic sportspersons to compete with best international players, increasing their exposure and tactics.

#### c) Reforms in Sports Administration:

- Redefining the role of Sports Authority of India as the agency responsible for running academies of excellence for elite athletes.
- SAI should focus on development of Sports Science expertise and research.
- SAI should be professionalised by ending government deputations and have financial autonomy.

**d) Focus on coach development** by giving them salaries equivalent to university professors, salary cap for Indian caps should be removed to bring them at par with foreign coaches. A National Coach Development Program should be launched.

**e) Focus on physical literacy** by constituting a National Council for Physical Literacy and Sports. This body would be responsible for sports education and training.

**f) Comprehensive National Sport Repository System** to be developed where everything related to an athlete is available including their performance record, training, funds used, injuries etc.

**g) One state, One sport:** Sports being a State subject under the Constitution, States have to show more intent in promoting and developing sports. Therefore, States can start with choosing one Sport



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## DIVERSE TOPICS

they desire to support and focus on its infrastructure development.

**g) Timely hosting of national games** should be made mandatory every two years will give regular competitive exposure to sportspersons.

**h) Technology infusion in sports** with focus on sports science, nutritional science, training routines and monitoring of sportsmen health and performance by intensive data analysis.

**h) Assured Career for Elite sportspersons:**

- Attractive stipend to take care of nutritional and other needs of sportsmen for elite potential athletes by State and Central Government.
- Currently, there is a provision of sport quota recruitment up to 5%. The word 'up to' should be removed meaning a 5% minimum reservation under sports quota.

Hopefully, with the reforms suggested above India's quest for glory at Olympics get materialised in the coming Olympics.

At the end, we must realise that the message of Olympics is not limited to sportspersons only. 'Faster, Higher, Stronger' – should motivate each one of us to excel in our own lives, be agile and healthy and be strong in all the ways we can yet at the same time being tolerant, compassionate, peaceful and socially and environmentally conscious.

### ► INDIA@75

#INDIA

Freedom and independence are the most significant events in the journey of a nation. After more than 200 years of suffering from colonialism and exploitation, India's "Tryst with Destiny" started on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947, when we gained right to determine our own future.

Many sceptics were not convinced about the future of the new born Indian republic. India's independence was marked by bloody partition. There was widespread poverty, communal tensions were high, fissiparous tendencies were on the rise with a challenge to integrate many princely states, there was lack of consensus on the nature of polity and constitution. Making things difficult was the Cold War between the Capitalist and Communist countries.

As we look back, we have overcome many of these challenges. The unity and integrity of India is not under question today. Despite internal dissensions, we are a much stronger nation where diversities are celebrated. Our constitutional scheme and institutions such as

Supreme Court, Parliament, Election Commission etc. have emerged as the most significant source of unity and democratic functioning. These institutions have developed a new idiom of democracy and judicial values which have been emulated world over. India is the world's largest democracy, which despite its cacophony is functional and effective. India's Supreme Court is considered to be most powerful court in the democratic world with the powers to even overturn Constitutional Amendments. India diligently manoeuvred the challenging international environment first by adhering to Non-aligned foreign policy and later empowering its security by becoming a nuclear power state. India's space program is something which makes us proud.

However, on the development front, our achievements have been mixed. To the credit of our farmers, we are a food surplus nation making famines and dependence of food aid history. India today is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest economy of the world. However, when compared to countries such as China and South Korea, we have been short on what could have been achieved on the economic front. During the initial years, India's economy grew by the modest 'Hindu rate of growth'. Later after the LPG reforms, India's economic growth picked up, however, the gains have not been as expected.

#### Agenda for India of Tomorrow

Today, as we look back at our nation's journey, we should reflect on the India that we aspire for. What sort of life that we aim our citizens to have, what image of India should we build on the international landscape, what contribution should India make to the evolution of mankind? Let us set the agenda for the future of India:

- 1. Maximising freedoms:** India has promised its citizens fundamental rights which are justiciable. As we move forward, we should expand the meanings of freedoms and rights our citizenry enjoys.
  - a. Right against hunger:** It pains that despite being one of the fastest growing large economies in the world, India has largest number of children suffering from malnutrition.
  - b. Right to good health:** The COVID-19 pandemic has brought inclusive accessible healthcare at the centre of public discourse. A healthy India is pre-condition for a developed India.
  - c. Right to universal basic income and social security:** Rising inequality and poverty is something that continues to haunt us. From the experiences of the developed world, we know that even richest societies suffer from inequality. Thus, consistent with Mahatma Gandhi's Talisman of benefitting the last

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## DIVERSE TOPICS

man in the queue, we have to develop policies which benefit the have-nots.

- d. Right to good governance:** India's governance and public delivery systems have to step up to meet the increasing demands from an empowered citizenry. Power asymmetry and corruption in public life need to be addressed urgently. For this, there is a need for bottom-up governance systems which are responsive, transparent, democratic and accessible. Our third tier of governance i.e., the local bodies need to be empowered. Use of e-governance and mobile governance enhanced to make government 24X7 accessible and transparent. Bureaucratic and police reforms as suggested by Second Administrative Reforms Commission need to be carried out.
- 2. Economic pivot of the world:** India will soon have the largest population in the world with a huge demographic dividend which will last till the middle of this century. As the other major economies of the world age, it is time India develops as the economic pivot of the world. India can become the world's manufacturing powerhouse which caters not only to its local demand but also of the world at large. We need to invest in skilling systems for our workforce, make it easier for entrepreneurs to raise capital and do business, integrate actively with global supply chains and make our infrastructure world class and reduce regulatory cholesterol. All of this will demand economic diligence, macro-economic stability and institutions which are independent. Special focus should be given to our agriculture sector where the agenda should be technology led farming focused on value addition, higher share of world's agri-exports and enhanced incomes for farmers.
- 3. Technology led future:** Science and scientific temper are key to the future of any country. Technology is fast evolving today and shaping lives in ways which was unthinkable. Today, developments in information technology allows us to communicate at the click of the mouse. Biotechnology has made new life saving tools accessible necessary for a healthier

population. We should aim at a future where India participates in the development of these technologies and also makes its available to its citizen to make their lives easy and better.

- 4. Champion of environment:** Environment issues and climate change is the most important issue confronting humanity today. Indian ethics has always professed living in harmony with nature. Sustainable and climate neutral growth pathways focusing on renewable energy, conservation of biodiversity and addressing the pollution issue should be way forward. It is our moral obligation to our future generations to give them an environment in which they can flourish.
- 5. Responsible power:** India has always been a responsible player at the international level. Major conflicts at the international level have been due to nations pursuing their narrow national agenda and self-aggrandisement. India, however, has refrained from such power politics. India's message of peace and harmony as an ethic of international relations needs to be mainstreamed. For this, India needs to be a party at the shaping of international discourse.

Sri Aurobindo believed that freedom of India was necessary for the emancipation of the world because India as a civilisational country had solutions to offer for vagaries of the world. We hope that India's growth and development contributes to a better life not just India's citizens but the world at large.

# THEME-2

## **P**HILOSOPHICAL/ ETHICAL TOPICS

*UPSC tends to asks topics which are philosophical and ethical.*

*These are in the form of experiential quotes of philosophers, political and social reformers.*

*There are topics linked with Political, Economic, Social and Environmental Ethics.*

*Individual and collective behaviours and responsibilities.*

### ► **LIFE IS A LONG JOURNEY BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND BEING HUMANE**

*#ETHICS #SOCIETY*

**Why this topic?** Human society's progress can be assessed based on its understanding, nurturing and promoting humane values. This is long and arduous journey but emergence of human values is acme of human civilisation. These values are codified in UN Declaration of Human Rights and also in the Preamble of our Constitution.

**INTRODUCTION:** All of us (Homo Sapiens) are born as human beings. Before assigning any identity like male, female, white, black primarily, we are human beings. On the other hand, **being humane means having a set of humanisation values like empathy, compassion, kindness in oneself.** These values also **include constitutional values** like equality, liberty, fraternity. A human being is born with an empty mind which converts into an open mind which is in harmony with existence after being humane.

An individual born as a human being must strive hard to be humane. Her life is a journey from being human beings to a humane being. Whether it's long or short

journey depends upon the individual. Also, it's not necessary to be compassionate all time. It has some effects on circumstances and past experiences. We can't lead ideal life all time. Let us see how humanity had suffered when it went away from its humane nature.

**MAIN BODY:** To begin with, consider World War II (WWII), the First World War had demonstrated divastating impacts of chemical weapons. Millions lost lives mercilessly. But human beings didn't learn from it. Along with chemical weapons, biological war started. Japan invested heavily in developing biological weapons. A new competition started to create more dangerous bioweapons. Millions of animals lost their lives due to tests being done on them. Had humanity been more humane than, we would have been on a more developed stage of civilisation today. This one example demonstrates why everyone must try to be compassionate.

Secondly, consider the economic sphere. As per the **Credit Suisse report** top, 1% of people holds almost 40% of the global wealth. In developing countries also inequality is increasing at a rapid pace. In India, too, inequality is rising, which affects our developmental aspects. This is a grim situation. Aggravating this situation are Multi-National Companies who evade taxes

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## PHILOSOPHICAL / ETHICAL TOPICS

worth billions of dollars through manipulative practices like round-tripping, treaty shopping. Here selfishness prevails over humane nature. These billions of dollars could have been utilised for welfare programs in developing countries.

Furthermore, consider at the individual level. In Indian society, we see that domestic work is considered to be the duty of women only. This hinders women's participation in the labor force, as is evident from the Periodic Labour force Survey report. If both husband and wife are working, it's the equal responsibility of both of them to do domestic work and raise children. Expecting women to be solely responsible for household chores and at the same time go out and compete professionally isn't a humane attitude. This results in India's low performance on various indicators like Global Hunger Index, Global Environment Index, etc. So we have seen how being inhumane attitude costs us.

Now, let us see examples of humane behaviour which have made this world a better place to live.

To start with, consider the example of the Indian National Movement. It showed how one human being could make a big difference. Indian National Movement under the leadership of M. K. Gandhi was based upon humane values of truth and non-violence.

Had it not been a non-violent movement, we wouldn't have been in a democratic setup today. These values on which we fought for independence played a crucial role in the drafting of the constitution. This led to the adoption of humane values like liberty, equality, fraternity, due to which we are a free society today.

Dr. APJ Kalam is a brilliant example of transformation from human being to being humane. Seeing his career, we can see humane values like compassion, empathy that he possessed. For example, when Dr. Kalam noticed broken pieces of glass were used at the top of the compound wall of the DRDO facility as a banner, he immediately asked to remove them. His motive behind this was to save birds from getting injured.

All these examples that we discussed make us realize the importance of being humane and why everyone must strive to be compassionate.

Let us shift our attention to inculcating humane values in an individual which ultimately will lead to a society with humane values. This will ultimately result in a peaceful world if every country follows it. Let us discuss this in the Indian context.

The essential tool which can transform a human being into a humane person is education. Real education is that which makes our life in harmony with existence. **National Education Policy 2020** will have a crucial role here. The present Indian education system is solely based upon rote learning. Student's cognitive ability, practical knowledge aren't tested. All-time students are in the mode of competition and in fear of lagging behind others. Such students can't possess humane values easily who are only taught about marks and competition at the school level. So, the various facets of NEP 2020, like 6% GDP expenditure on education, less importance to rote learning, introduction to vocational courses, teachers training programs need to be implemented speedily.

Secondly, we must adhere to the principles of 'Certainty of Punishment' and 'Certainty of Praise'. Those individuals in a society whose inhuman behavior is harming our society need to be punished with certainty. And best punishment is awarding (giving) community development work. We can start this at a small level like a traffic signal or railway platform. If we develop our system in such a way that an individual already knows that violation of traffic signal will undoubtedly lead to punishment in the form of managing traffic for next hour, then she wouldn't dare for violation. This will reduce many road accidents. Similarly, there must be certainty of praise for those individuals impacting society in a positive way. This will lead to a cohesive community with humane values.

Last but not the least step is the realization of goals mentioned in the preamble that is political, social, and economic justice along with environmental justice. We have achieved political justice through reservation for weaker sections in central and state legislature. But we are still away from achieving the remaining three, as evident in our global ranking on various indices.

**CONCLUSION:** This is why we initially stated that it's not possible and necessary to be humane all time. We cannot expect humane attitude from a socially backward class oppressed for thousands of years. Also, we cannot expect a single mother of two children, harassed by dowry demands, faced discrimination at various stages of life to be humane. For her and her children's sake, she has to be selfish as per circumstances. Therefore, the state must strive hard to realize these constitutional goals. Without this, we cannot expect all to be humane at all times.

After all things considered, we can certainly say that life is a journey between human beings and being humane.

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## PHILOSOPHICAL / ETHICAL TOPICS

Everyone must try to make this journey short. We also saw how the human nature of humankind had saved the world till now. But we also need to understand we can't expect all to be humane all the time. The state must strive hard to achieve social, economic, political, and environmental justice. Despite this, we must strive hard to fulfill our life by being humane.

### ► INTROSPECTION AND PERSEVERANCE IN HARD WORK ARE KEYS TO SUCCESS

#ETHICS #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** All types of progress- individual, community, society, nation, global depends on introspection and perseverance. In short, it is a manner of SWOT analysis, which regularly guides the right progress if properly channelised and applied. This is again the way to deal with all the problems faced by humanity.

**INTRODUCTION:** Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam was rightly said the people's president. He used to participate in events and communicate with people in general and youngsters in particular. In one such event in Chennai, a small boy asked him in 2002 that how can India become great again, as it used to be in the past? Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam replied that it is the people like you, with ignited minds, who will make the nation great.

Another student asked as to what we should do to make the nation great. Dr. Kalam gave the four-point formula – **First, there should be a great vision. Second, you should continuously acquire knowledge. Third, you should work hard. Fourth, you should display perseverance.** This is the mantra of success, he said.

In this essay, we will try to understand the message of Dr. Kalam, how introspection and perseverance can lead to success. After that, we will apply these abstract ideas to demonstrate the present situation and ultimately how can we make the nation great again.

#### **MAIN BODY: Introspection and Perseverance: A civilizational idea**

Introspection refers to be aware of oneself. It means evaluating oneself and assessing our actions. At the same time, perseverance is our ability to display persistence and handle setbacks.

Since ancient times, India was a land of great scholars and rishis. They became great not because of some supernatural boon but by constant introspection and perseverance in hard work.

A case in point can be **Gautama Buddha**. He had a thoughtful mind since childhood. He left home at the age of 29 and spent the next seven years introspecting and finding the truth. He got many setbacks in the process, but he displayed great perseverance and, at the age of 36, attained success by getting enlightenment.

Similar to Gautam Buddha, **Ashoka**, in the war of Kalinga, introspected that it is wrong to kill so many people for territorial conquest. After the war, he adopted the policy of Dhamma and spread his message by using stone pillars. Despite the enormous moral baggage of the past, he continued to do hard work, which ultimately led to an informed citizenry and good governance (a success for any king).

Moreover, the practice of meditation and the rich text of Aranyaka (books written in the forest) is a clear indication of the importance of constant introspection in living a happy life.

The power of perseverance can be seen in the recurrent incursions and large-scale loot by Turkish invaders. In 1000-1025 A. D., Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India 17 times. Temples were destroyed, treasuries looted, and villages burnt. It was a testing time for India. In 1033 A. D. Sohail Deopasi, a ruler of Bharuch in Central UP defeated a large army led by a nephew of Mahmud. This sent a clear message that India is not weak and can respond. Interestingly, no foreign invasion happened after the battle of Bharuch, and there was a period of peace for the next 150 years.

#### **Introspection and Perseverance - Success stories in recent times**

After getting Independence in 1947 from colonial rule, we have started our collective journey to make the nation great again.

At the time of Independence, India was a developing country characterized by shortages of food, medicine, and other essential things. Five-year Plans gave the vision and committed leadership, along with the people of India, have worked hard despite so many obstacles.

Constant introspection of our weaknesses led to GREEN REVOLUTION, which made India self-sufficient in terms of food grains. Similarly, we have achieved great strides in nuclear technology, space science, and other sectors. This was possible only because we were determined to do hard work despite the constraints of resources.

Building on this tradition, the government of India has brought several economic reforms like GST, IBC, RERA, Jam trinity, MPC, etc. These reforms are a step in the

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direction of India becoming a \$5 trillion economy. These reforms would not have been possible if it were not for proper introspection and perseverance. Inefficient fund delivery led to the introduction of JAM. Shortcomings in SARFAESI Act led to the introduction of IBC etc.

The government of India is working hard to build upon these reforms and amending them wherever required constantly.

After understanding the role of introspection and perseverance in hard work, let us now look into some of the renewed challenges faced by our nation.

### Renewed Challenges – Need for Introspection and Hard work

India needs to enhance its discussions on critical topics if we want to become a great nation. Today majority of our people are young. How to use these people as a demographic dividend by proper skilling and investment in health care? We should work hard on their reforms as there is a limited window of opportunity.

India is a water-scarce nation. This water crisis is going to be aggravated in the coming years. How can we shift to less water-consuming lifestyles? What policies should the government adopt? Can we learn from other similarly situated nations? These are the key questions that need to be introspected.

It is rightly said that success often requires breaking our habits. We need to move from this business as usual attitude. We cannot continue to waste food when there are so many hungry people in our country.

Thus, after acknowledging that many issues need to be resolved, a start can be made by setting up and bringing sensible reforms in our institutions like Election Commission, Judiciary, and Parliament. Strong institutions are not only drivers of economic growth but also protectors of democracy.

**CONCLUSION:** We need constant introspection in every field and learn from others. E.g., we should introspect why we cannot attract businesses that are moving out of China, why we are importing 80% of our toys from China, despite so much potential. Similarly, we should learn from Singapore, which has become a great transshipment hub just less than 30 years of Independence.

No doubt, we have great potential and a rich heritage. If properly utilized, we can dominate the world's landscape. Coherent vision has been set up in the form of New India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat. Now we should build upon this and follow the mantra of success given

by our people's president. We should become the ignited minds and fulfill the trust that has been put upon us by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam by making the nation great again within our lifetime.

### ► VIRTUE IS WISDOM

#ETHICS #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** Display of righteousness is a sign of wisdom. There are many examples nationally and internationally where virtue is the reflection of wisdom. Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Sunderlal Bahuguna, Mother Teresa etc. These are known names but even unknown people who are contributing positively for the welfare of the society are symbols of virtue displaying wisdom.

**INTRODUCTION:** "The fool thinks he is wise but a wise man knows himself to be a fool."- William Shakespeare

Wisdom is not inherent in a person; it is the product of the burgeoning experiences which a human being experiences through his interaction with society. Virtues develop as a result of human being's experiences. These virtues set the path towards the treasures of wisdom.

**William Harvey considers society as 'Sui Generis'.** He brings out the analogy of society as a social organism. Culture is the blood of society. Virtues are shaped by past experiences from one's culture. Virtues develop morals and values which further act as norms in society shaping its folklores and mores.

**"Wisdom can be acquired by right knowledge"- Aristotle**

Aristotle believes that knowledge is the sole harbinger to attend wisdom and he further emphasizes that not just any knowledge but good knowledge is the path bearer to the high morals and virtues. On the other hand, bad knowledge can lead to colossal devastation by infiltrating the virtues of society.

**MAIN BODY: How does virtues shape culture?**

Virtues evolve due to long emphasised socially accepted practices and ethos. These practices and ethos get embedded in the culture of a civilisation over a period of time. Virtues evolve with time and take reformed shapes in different cultures.

The early civilisations such as Indus Valley Civilisation had their own set of practices and norms. Their life was in tandem with nature. Nature was worshipped. Forces of nature were personified into Sun God, Water God,

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Fire God, river God, etc. It was upon their wisdom to not bring any change in the working of forces of nature. With the emergence of new technology such as the discovery of copper and making of plough, these civilisations started to become self-sufficient in their food requirement. Virtues of society transformed from the personification of gods to worshipping the mother earth. Wisdom took a new shape.

Further in the Vedic age, the discovery of iron led to a revolution by the emergence of new technology. Settled agriculture transformed the world from the age of hunter & food gatherers to emergence of settled village. Incipient urbanisation seen with the rise of Janas, Janapadas and later Mahajanpadas saw new ethos and values take shape. Thus, virtues of society are not static and evolve with each step of social evolution.

**"True wisdom lies in the complete knowledge and consciousness of the actions done by a person."- Gautam Buddha**

Buddhism through its 'Astang Marg' had an important role to play in shaping the virtues of the ancient Indian culture. Buddhism talked about right faith and the right knowledge and the middle path with emphasised on harmony. It talked of high morals, practice of nonviolence, and attaining the highest state of mind through Nirvana. Overall, it tried to awaken the consciousness of the society to the highest virtues.

Jainism, on similar lines, talked about right knowledge, right belief, and right conduct. These triratna principles shaped the virtues of society. Virtues of Jainism and Buddhism gave a chance to the oppressed section of the society to have equal status and equal opportunities. Wisdom was the ultimate goal to be achieved by the practice of the virtues. Wisdom was defined as 'self-liberation' from the Evil which reside inside individuals.

Ashoka conquered the length and breadth of India. He soon realised that this urge to conquer land came at great cost. The scenes of death and misery following the Kalinga war made him rethink the values that drove his kingship. There was an awakening of the virtues which lead to self-realisation, and wisdom sprouted from the seed of virtues.

Virtues have a deep impact on the society. Kindness is considered as highest virtue. A kind heart is comparable to none. Similarly, it is said honesty is the best policy. The social structure is dependent on the bedrock of moral ethos. A society where people have sympathy and kindness, chivalry and honesty, is the one on the path towards progress and inclusivity. Wisdom will certainly

prevail over the minds of people. A virtuous society will have less crimes, high social solidarity, feelings of oneness and respect for an individual's choices. These virtues lead the society towards shared values and collective efforts towards a common goal of prosperity and inclusive development.

If virtues are not channelised properly in the heart of people, it could lead to devastating outcomes. Wisdom if lost can cause destruction and wreak havoc. Virtues shape morals which act as conscience keeper of the society. If morals are lost, greed for possession of resources emerges. Society develops competition for capture of power. A power-hungry state rises, authoritarian regions are formed. History is full of instances of how lack of virtue resulted in wars, lust for power and hatred sowed seeds of Nazism and fascism. When virtues are lost, could leaders of society be said to be wise? It rests on the wisdom of society to draw parallels and investigate whether the virtues and ideas laid down by leaders are progressive or not.

With the establishment of United Nations, the importance of virtuous conduct in international relations were emphasised. The consciousness of the world was restored. UN has played a very important role in promoting peace and amity and prevented a World War III. The UN laid emphasis on peace resolution of disputes.

Virtues certainly lead to wisdom. However, virtues evolve with time as society evolves. Thus, there is always a likelihood of clashes of virtue between one culture and another and between one generation and other. The cold war between the erstwhile USSR and United States was the war of ideology. Virtues which are held at high pedestal by each camp were at core of this conflict, with the west promoting ideas of free market and liberty and communist group backing state led economy and equality. During such conflict of virtues, society has to face the consequences. As the world was looking at the Cold War, Non-Alignment presented by India is an example of amicable wisdom.

Marx have laid down the idea that society is divided between 'haves' and 'have nots'. He advocated for a violent revolution of working class for establishment of a utopian world order. His idea of communism is revered by many communists governments world over. Marx talks about the virtues in terms of class consciousness. According to him, society is driven by false class consciousness and the proletariat class are being suppressed and exploited by the bourgeoisie. True awakening of society is yet to happen and false virtues

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are not letting the rise of wisdom. He predicts that a violent revolution will bring class consciousness and setting off right ethos, morals and virtues in the society. According to Marx, true wisdom lies in Communism.

French Revolution ushered the virtues such as **'Equality, Liberty and Fraternity'** which are now eminent part of core principle of Democratic governments. Wisdom is the ultimate objective these States want to achieve through these virtues. The Preamble to the constitution of India also enshrines these ethos and virtues with its ultimate goal is to be a welfare state.

Similarly, the Directive Principles enshrined in our constitution embarks on virtues such as awakening of scientific temper and prompting feeling of common brotherhood. These are meant to inculcate virtues of highest order to awaken the sense of wisdom which should prevail in an ideal society.

Freedom struggle of India at one level is the story of pursuit of virtues by our freedom fighters. Be it principle of Satyagraha, or non-violence of Gandhi or the emphasis on rationality by Rabindranath Tagore, all these are virtues of enduring values. These virtues led to awakening of society and brought Indians under the ambit of common feeling of nationalism. The virtues of equal land rights and Bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhave, the virtue of equal right of education to girls and the rise of Satyashodhak Samaj are some of the examples of the virtues which could lead to progress of society. Virtues are the paths which our constitution makers have embedded in constitution so that society could lead to collective wisdom.

**CONCLUSION:** In the contemporary world, virtues continue to play an important role. In the fourth phase of industrial revolution, virtues have seen a long evolution in the past century. During the rise of Hitler, ideals of Nazism and fascism were there. These toxic ideas were defeated during the World Wars. These wars denied those ideas and new ideas of liberalism and socialism took root in the world. However, with the fall of USSR was blow to socialistic principles world over, with ideals of free enterprise, democracy and liberty accepted across the world. India too post the 1991 post LPG reforms shifted to liberalism. Virtues again turned tide after 2008 financial mortgage crisis, liberalism also vained and virtues from there are shifting into a new World order.

The future course of action will decide the modern virtues, which will head towards the new set of wisdom. However, we have clearly seen on how wisdom is a

product of virtues, shaped around in the fabric of time, error and culture.

### ► BEST FOR AN INDIVIDUAL IS NOT NECESSARILY BEST FOR SOCIETY

#ETHICS #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** *The preamble of the constitution desires for Justice, Liberty, Equality and Liberty for all the citizens of the country. In this desire, there is beckon which is indicating towards the best for the society. This also hints towards collective development and to make India self-reliant (Atmanirbhar) and achieve the leadership position globally.*

*This cannot be achieved if there is individual selfish pursuit of success at the cost of others so the message is that the best for an individual should be in sync with the collective best for the society.*

**INTRODUCTION:** As emperor Ashoka stood on the grounds of Kalinga post the war, he was a victorious man - The emperor of everything the eyes could see; North-South-East-West. Around him lay thousands and thousands of slaughtered men, their wailing families, their orphaned children. The destruction soured his taste of victory and he came at an impasse.

Often in life we as individuals find ourselves standing at similar crossroads where we get choices that we need to make. Some are not good for individuals, some are good while others might turn out to be the best. But is it necessary that choices- Best for an Individual turn out to be the best for the society as well?

Lets explore this in the following paragraphs.

**MAIN BODY:** Historically, the Indian Society promoted **community living**. There were only 'Jana'; no 'Janpads' Problems and meals were shared alike. This ideal society started to change as soon as individualistic thinking entered. In ancient period, the lust for power by a few led to the oppression of the weaker sections and degradation of the society as a whole. Further, the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni, Mohammad Ghazi, Nadir Shah just for the display of their strength destroyed the peace of Indians.

Most significant here is the Battle of Plassey between the Nawab of Bengal and the Britishers, aided by defectors like Mir Jatar. The latter did it for their own economic future; opening roads for a crippled Indian Economy and subjugation of its people for a long time to come. All the thinking for individual best never fared out good for the others.



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Furthermore, politically, India is a democracy that provides for collective decisions and collective answerability. The constitution has provided for equal rights and protection for all – **Art. 15 & 16, Schedule V, Schedule VI, etc.** providing for upliftment of a certain sections of the society which are at a greater disadvantage. But these mechanisms fail when individualistic thinking seeps in. Defections by sitting MLA and MP for self gain topple the elected governments, bringing a state for uncertainty. Forced coalitions just for power often lead to more ideological clashes than work. Corruption by the bureaucrats and politicians may fill their bags with money, but deny the large rural community a speciality hospital.

Globally, we are more integrated today than before. All the economies are interconnected with global manufacturing and supply chains. An effect in one area is felt all over. The cold war between USSR and US divided the whole world into groups. Though directly they did not fight a war, but the quest for upmanship led to proxy wars like one in Vietnam. Similarly, the current US-China issues for super power upmanship has led to sanctions and withdrawing investments – threatening livelihood of the common masses. The abandoned diplomatic talks between India and Pakistan have made multilateral engagement institutions like SAARC defunct. The negative outlook on cross border trade has deeply disturbed the involved traders.

Moreover, the **biggest disaster of this parochial attitude has been on the environment.** Even though the institutions like UNFCCC or UNEP are at work, the denial of the developed nations to cooperate with the developing world hurt the cause. The recent withdrawal of US from the Paris agreement unilaterally may be beneficial for its economy in the short run but harms the future of least developed island nations and coastal cities like Haiti, Cuba, Madagascar. The luxurious lifestyles of the rich 1% leads to more severe heatwaves, droughts, rains whose repercussions are felt most of the poor. The COP25 at Spain ended without concrete steps because the leaders were occupied in getting a fair deal just for themselves.

The partisan thinking prevalent in the society has led to further issues. The corporate want to shirk their corporate social responsibilities to gain extra profits. Hindus and Muslims want to have an upmanship over the others. Karnataka and Goa fight over the waters of Mahadayi river. There are snatchings, robberies, murder, deceit – all for personal gains. All these leads to the degradation of the society – culturally, economically and morally. Parochial individuals lead to segregated

societies. In the long run, its difficult to survive in such a selfish word. Here, the following steps can be taken as a start.

From time immemorial, India has given various philosophies to the world. The philosophy of **Vasudev Kutumbakam** – engraved at the entrance halls of the Parliament. It emphasizes 'the world is one family'. The **'Panchsheel'** signed between India and China repeatedly focused on mutual peace and well being and peaceful existence. India has always thought of the Indian subcontinent as its extended part – supporting its neighbouring countries in disaster and development alike – examples being 'Operation Vanilla' and developing Bangladesh's first nuclear power plant. Such philosophies need to be revived at the World level so that others can watch, learn and adapt them.

We have some great example of personalities who practiced community thinking. Mahatma Gandhi not only taught for himself but for the society as a whole when he faced discrimination. He ran programme for the Dalit upliftment, included women and men arise in the freedom movement – left none behind. Mother Teresa sacrificed a comfortable life to serve in Bengal – dedicating herself to the care of the poor. The peace keeping forces, Doctors without borders – serve in hostile areas like Syria, south Sudan etc. without caring about their lives. Popularising these stories will inspire others to lead similar lives. Moreover, the current heroes like Kailash Satyarthi need to be recognized and rewarded – encouraging others.

There would hardly be any people who are not touched by religion today. Propagating the basic proponents of Mutual coexistence and self giving preached by the religions can be an effective strategy. The Boddhisatvas help others achieve Nirvana, even if their own is delayed. The Prophet did not keep to himself the revelations he received from Gabriel. Jesus got crucified to atone for the sins of the mankind. All these instances can easily be impressed in the minds of the people.

The biggest learning has been the current Covid -19 pandemic. The world right now has integrated its efforts to fight as one unit. A drug research in US or an effective drug in India are instantly exchanged. The police, the paramedic, the scientists, the people volunteering for vaccine trial as well as the recovered patients donating their plasma – are all effective spokes in the wheel of the coronavirus fight. If one dismantles, the system topples. Had these people thought about their own well being before that of the world, there would have been utter chaos.

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**CONCLUSION:** Ultimately, it's we humans who need to realise that one's welfare too, is entwined with those of the others. Thinking for our own good, sidelining the welfare of the society might give lucrative short term gains but will fizzle out in the long run. A polluting industry has to live on the same earth. A CSR shirking company has to coexist and depend on the same society for its perpetuity. Thus, it's we who have to choose now. Do we want what is best for society – Maximum good for maximum people? Or stick to what is good for us as an individual, ultimately leading to no good for any people.

### ► LENDING HANDS TO SOMEONE IS BETTER THAN GIVING A DOLE

#ETHICS #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** In the scenario of COVID-19 and the resultant economic and social deprivation, the focus should be on building the capacities of the people rather than just making them dependent on the doles provided by both the state and non-state actors.

*Yes, doles are required to ward off extreme poverty, hunger and deprivation but doles should pass the baton towards more empowerment of the people in the long run.*

**INTRODUCTION:** It has been nearly 4 months and Balbir, auto-rickshaw driver in Jaipur has not earned anything. The lockdown was imposed due to Covid-19 to protect the lives of people but Balbir feels that he has been pushed to mere existence living without any savings to augment the future. The government does provide food for which he has to stand in long queues, still the quantity is not enough. He feels that the government could have used his services to supply essential commodities thereby helping him to cope up in this hour of crisis. Thousands of workers like Balbir have either lost their job or are on the verge of giving up and staring at an uncertain future. The food provided for free under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana doesn't satisfy their self-confidence which comes from earning and then feeding. Dole doesn't satisfy him.

Dole refers a kind of benefit either monetary or non-monetary paid by the government to the unemployed. While it is given so as to help them in hour of crisis, the background often has a different story to tell. Mostly doles are given by government when it focuses on short term rather than long term solutions for economy.

**MAIN BODY:** Most of the time the state just looks over the inequality aspect and shreds its responsibility. This is because setting the root cause of inequality from where

the need arises to roll out the doles often are time consuming and may even fail. In that case a shadow of doubt will be casted on the government and of course, nobody wants to face failure. Doles also form a part of larger vote bank politics thereby undermining the freedom of choice as the votes are indirectly purchased. The vicious circle of dependence never ends.

Lending a hand on the other side provides an opportunity to create self-reliance. This is based on the basic yet fundamental premise that people will always not be there for you, that is why you need to learn to handle things on your own. Helping people to be self-reliant would have a ripple effect. From the individuals side, there will be a sense of self independence and pride for contributing towards the economy. It will enhance their decision making power of how to earn and on what to spend. This will lead to increase in the productivity in the society thereby leading to improvement in living condition. This will be followed by inclusive development. The community as a whole will benefit from the improved access of products and services. Increase in earning capacity of people will be channelized to improving healthcare and educational outcomes. Crime rates would decline and will help in building a cohesive society. From the political angle, there would be a demand for welfare oriented and accountable leaders. Self-reliant individuals would no longer be lured by doles and this will help in cleansing of politics thereby improving the outcomes.

It is truly said that freedom comes from strength and self-reliance but the breakup of Indian economy where 90% of the workforce is in informal sector and about ¾th of population unskilled, self-reliance would require tackling the problem from grass-root with a multi-faceted approach. It is well known that India is an agrarian economy and still majority of our population lives in villages. It is therefore necessary to diversity the earning from agriculture by skilling farmers in sericulture, apiculture, horticulture, energy generation and conservation, livestock rearing etc. The surplus labour should be utilized effectively in cottage industries and MSMEs for which effective implementation of schemes like stand-up India, Start-Up India, ASPIRE scheme and Make-in-India is required.

Agriculture is a subject in state list and therefore, the state governments while evaluating the ground realities should be effective in implementation. Waiving off farm loans and providing free electricity for irrigation causes more harm than good. These lead to not just wastage of our precious resources but hinder innovation and growth. Furthermore, the majority of semi-skilled and

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unskilled workers can be trained in government facilities to augment our seriously lacking manpower in education-teachers; health care auxiliary workers; nurses, doctors; tourism industry-guides, cab-drivers; hospitality; delivery of government services – by acting as correspondents, carrying out social audit, direct link between implementing authority and target population.

Advantage of demographic dividend can be effectively utilized in construction and manufacturing sector. National Highways in India are only 4% in length and about 80% of the movement happens on them. Workers can be effectively employed in setting up infrastructure → industrial and agricultural corridors, building of highways and roads, social infrastructure (schools, hospitals, training centres), mandis in villages, they can also be used in restoration works. Finances can be effectively pulled in from government's budget commitments, corporate social responsibility expenditure and if need arises by setting up viability Gap funding mechanisms.

Government should be commended for already taking a step in right direction by introducing schemes and programmes. E-governance initiative of government has simplified the procedures for setting up business through Spice + platform under Ministry of Corporate Affairs, further DBT transfers and linking of bank accounts to Aadhaar have helped in more targeted implementation. Van Dhan Yojana by Ministry of Tribal Affairs under nodal agency TRIFED is a novel step in training tribals in better marketing and price discovery of their products. Furthermore, schemes such as Hunar Haats and Seekho aur Kamao are really innovative and helpful. Formation of self-help groups and encouraging them by providing institutional credit has brought thousands of family out of poverty. Since most of the groups are run by women – their growth has led to a gender balanced and inclusive growth.

**CONCLUSION:** Poverty breeds lack of self-reliance. India has been commended all over the world for significantly lowering the poverty and uplifting millions out mere existential living. These steps if implemented in a right direction would be stepping stones to achieve dream of \$5 trillion economy and doubling of farmer's income.

### ► QUICK BUT STEADY WINS THE RACE

#PERSEVERANCE #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** *The world is facing climate challenge. To counter climate change, the countries of the world have to*

*act fast to confine global temperature rise within 2 degrees or possibly to 1.5 degree Celsius. From this example, it is amply clear that it is the quick and steady actions which are going to work and safeguard the planet and humanity.*

*Similarly, quick and steady approaches will help the humanity in overcoming various challenges and safeguarding the future.*

**INTRODUCTION:** The 21st century is the age of the internet, driven by **Industrial Revolution 4.0**. In the story of the rabbit and the tortoise, the rabbit, after gaining a considerable lead, proceeds to rest and allows the tortoise to win due to his complacency.

Today, however, life is fast, and people have big ambitions. Those who are in the lead want to extend it, and those who are behind in the race are running faster than ever before. Sky is the limit today, and nobody can afford a moment to take a pause.

**The age-old proverb – “Slow and steady wins the race” has been modified for the 21st century – “Quick and steady wins the race”.**

In this context, let us analyse whether the phrase still holds true for the world today, or has it lost relevance.

**MAIN BODY: Historical Perspective** – The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in India. The Dutch and the British took more than a century to arrive after them. Despite having such a vast experience of India, how did the Portuguese lose ground in India?

Similarly, after the second Carnatic War, the French were in firm control of Hyderabad and Arcot. But, within a few years, they lost all the advantages to the Britishers. If we analyse carefully, the British supremacy over their fellow Europeans was due to their quick decision-making abilities. The likes of Robert Clive provided the leadership which the others could not muster.

The importance of swift action and foresightedness can be seen throughout history – from Industrial Revolution till WWII, and later during the Cold War.

It thus becomes important to observe how the contemporary world is the outcome of rapid, but careful, decision-making, and quick implementation.

**Contemporary World: Faster than ever before –**

During the 1980s, few professors in an academic institution in USA, were working for a project sanctioned by the US military. They gave birth to the **“World Wide Web”**, which was later declassified, and the internet was born.

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The internet revolution required hardware that people could use to access the vast information on the virtual world. Three men in a garage started a company that built smart hardware solutions. The company was Apple, and it captured the imagination of the time. To run the hardware, many software companies were born which included the likes of Microsoft, Cisco Systems.

Similarly, using all above mentioned technologies, Mark Zuckerberg built Facebook and connected people with each other. It is not difficult to identify the theme. The US raced ahead of the world in terms of technology and maintained and strengthened its position as the world superpower.

Let us look at another case study – China. China's economy was in shatters post failed experiments of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution initiated by Mao Zedong. Deng Xiaoping introduced several changes in the Communist economy of China. He allowed private ownership of land and industries, modernised agriculture, strengthened defence forces and encouraged science and technology. With consistent policies and quick actions, China became the manufacturing hub of the world within two to three decades. The standard of living improved and the faltering economy became one of the largest in the world.

What do we find common in USA and China? Both these revolutions have taken place in the last 30 years, with results being witnessed within a decade of proper implementation. Long-standing vision, quick decision-making, effective implementation, and adequate support are the key ingredients in their success.

Let us now turn our attention towards India. What have been our achievements and efforts in this regard, and where does India stand in a fast-changing and complex world.

### **The story of India –**

India has seen major progress on many indicators, and especially socio-economic ones, in the last few decades. India is among the fastest growing economies in the world, it has pulled a minimum of 273 million people out of poverty since 2005-2015 as per UNDP and the world is looking at India with a sense of hope and opportunities.

However, India has had its share of struggles.

During the 90s, India faced a major economic crisis. With less than a week's import cover left, India had to accept the conditional support of IMF and change its economic structure. In the same decade, India faced political

instability and the world blockade led by the US post the Pokhran tests. India also had to fight a war with its hostile neighbour in probably the most challenging terrain of the world. Despite all the hurdles India sailed through the waves of uncertainty.

With the leadership of PM Narsimha Rao and the ambitious vision of Manmohan Singh, Indian economy transformed from being government dictated to being facilitated and enabled by the government.

Indian democracy proved its mettle time and again during the 90s to always being represented by the popular wishes of the public.

India successfully conducted operation SHAKTI under the able leadership of PM A. B. Vajpayee and APJ Abdul Kalam. India also won the war against Pakistan and till date controls the highest battlefield in the world – the Siachen Glacier.

All these incidents and achievements were possible due to visionary leadership and quick action under immense pressure.

However, instead of learning from its recent past, India has somehow managed to lay behind in many arenas – India was extremely late in adopting 4G and seems to be missing the bus in the race for 5G implementation. Similar issues like the late boom of start-up industry in India, the slow decision-making on future of sick PSUs such as BSNL and Air India and the late adoption of Crypto Currency etc. call for attention.

### **What can be the solution to these challenges? How should India tackle the challenges?**

India: Looking forward to sea of opportunities –

Many problems can be associated to slow decision-making capacity of the political and permanent executive due to risk-averse nature and red-tapeism. The 21st century requires a 21st century bureaucracy – an entrepreneurial bureaucracy. It is also important for the political executives to back the officers in driving the change and create a healthy atmosphere for bureaucracy to make a difference.

India has worked on these aspects in the recent years. The most remarkable being the immediate announcement of Chandrayaan – 2 after heart-breaking fate of Chandrayaan – 1. This decision was fully backed by PM Narendra Modi who congratulated ISRO and Chairman K. Sivan and encouraged them for their endeavours.

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Similarly, the recent strategic disinvestment policy announced in the Budget 2021-22, growth of IT and services sector in India, the rise of urbanisation from 11% in 1901 to estimated 42% in 2021, introduction of PM Jan Dhan Yojana, UPI, Bharat Net and adoption of the progressive National Education Policy 2020 are signs of positive attitude towards firm and quick policy decision-making.

**CONCLUSION:** However, at the same time, it is extremely important to not lose moral values and ethics in the zeal of taking fast decisions and quick implementation.

We have discussed the historical aspect of quick decision-making followed by two recent case studies of US and China. We then moved on to the specific case of India, looking at the challenges and how to tackle the decision-making paralysis.

21st century is often said to be the Asian century dominated by the dragon and the elephant.

While China is on its way to make this a reality, India still has a lot of catching up to do. However, India has shown a lot of courage and determination, especially in the fight against climate change, Covid-19 pandemic where it chose to save lives in the short term and livelihood in the medium term.

The world today recognises the strength of India. With demographic dividend on its side, India will realise the dream of becoming a super-power with quick decision-making and effective implementation.

### ► JOY IS THE SIMPLEST FORM OF GRATITUDE

#ETHICS #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** Prevalence of happiness in the society is the best way of measuring its overall progress. Any political, social, economic empowerment which brings succour elevates the mood and joy of the people individually and collectively.

To spread joy as gratitude, there is collective responsibility of the state and all non-state actors. A small positive contribution through actions of kindness, respect to others, investing in capabilities and raising the sense of worth of people impart joy to all and that is why it becomes the best form of gratitude.

**INTRODUCTION:** A child readily accepts a new toy and expresses her happiness by clapping and laughing. A farmer desperately waiting for rainfall on his parched

land, after a few good showers looks up in the sky with tears in his eyes to thank the almighty. A homeless person accepts a blanket on a chilly winter night and expresses his gratitude by folding hands and a thankful smile. Similarly, dog drinks milk served to him and returns the act of kindness by being loyal and protective for the owner. He is happy to feel belonged and being cared for.

Gratitude is a state of being thankful for what has been bestowed upon us while at the same time being willing to return the act of kindness having given an opportunity to do so. Like in above examples, an individual can be grateful in a hundred ways but the simplest form will be being joyful (happy) about being blessed. It is said that happiness is contagious. A person being in a blissful state of mind is bound to give happiness to others and thereby, the vicious cycle of being grateful can be churned. Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Gautam Buddha to name a few were the ones who harness this power of gratitude.

**MAIN BODY:** Being grateful for what has been bestowed upon us was reflected very evidently by early human civilizations. People of Indus Valley Civilization, were thankful for the abundance of resources at their disposal and therefore the trend is so evident back then as a form of gratitude. The civilization was peaceful and joyful thereby setting example ever after centuries of their existence about how egalitarian society leads to prosperity and longevity for all. Similarly, Aryans were grateful for having discovered fertile pastures after coming from Central Asia, so were Babur and Akbar in India – a land of diversity, love and kindness. Even Buddhism has its teaching reflecting the joy in acceptance when it says a person should practice 'Mudita' (joy over others success); 'Upeksha' (mind at peace); Karuna (Compassion). Gautam Buddha always taught his disciples to happily accept what is being given to them.

But as our society progressed, simple things were replaced by complex things, man grew to be greedier than his need. The definition of joy changed drastically and humans became ungrateful for most of the things. Today, everyone is competing for power be it inside a country or around the world. Politicians inside the country are often happy only after amassing wealth and having great power at their dispersal; paying least regard to the toppling social order inside the country. The great geo-political game running in the world and the race to become a super-power by eliminating and threatening others is now giving joy to the world leaders. Unmindful exploitation of resources specially natural

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resources for economic gains without being grateful in the first place for having them is pushing the entire universe to extinction.

The society that we live in today has more jealousy than joy. The millennium generation getting the advantage of internet are now searching their happiness by measuring the number of likes on a particular post on major social media platforms. Similarly, an entrepreneur today is not happy by influencing a number of lives or by giving hope to the budding talents that dreams can be achieved instead she runs behind the profits and materialistic gains on the balance sheet. This negative competition and the feeling of finding joy only after pushing the other down is being ingrained in the society for too long. No wonder, our colleges produce mere machines than thinking individuals because they have been never appreciated for their uniqueness but instead have been exposed to comparisons. Nobody is given a moment to pause and introspect how far they have come and to express gratitude for the journey that made them today.

Such toxic environment where individuals are perpetually unsatisfied breeds unhappiness and leads to mental health problems. Leaders of such country which are themselves product of this environment turn to extremist methods and often their nationalism does more harm than good. In such a society inequality leads to deterioration of status of women increasing crimes and domestic abuse. Such a country can never progress in this world for they have forgotten to distinguish between how much is too much.

However, it is not at all difficult to inculcate these fundamental emotions to help citizens of a country to be grateful for what they have. The leaders of the country should take the first step in this direction by indulging in less power games and working towards making society more just. Sustainable development goals can be made more applicable here. **Goal 4** – Quality education by teaching students about how small things are those that really matter. Japanese school inculcate value of cleanliness right from the beginning in students. Japanese citizens who went to watch football match stunned the entire world when they cleaned the stands after match. The players did the same when they left their dressing room and accommodation while at the same time leaving a note that they were grateful for the hospitality. In India, Delhi schools are running happiness curriculum to help children find peace and joy and realize that they have been blessed. **Goal 16** – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions can have far reaching effects on humanity. As they would provide the basic

framework for functioning. **Goal 12** – Responsible production and consumption would help us limit our greed.

**CONCLUSION:** We the people of India should be grateful for the preamble that is as given to us by our forefathers. The least we can do is to understand the intricate balance between Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity to bring about unity and live peacefully in this nation. Lastly, we should not forget being happy to be part of World's largest democracy and the most vibrant too.

### ► WISDOM FINDS TRUTH

#ENLIGHTENMENT #SOCIETY

**Why this topic:** *In an era of increasing flux and hatred, the right way of countering misinformation induced biases and discriminations is generating wisdom in the masses. Generating wisdom is a difficult exercise but not an impossible deed. It requires relentless and positive utilisation of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) methods.*

*A society driven by wisdom becomes more democratic, inclusive and participative and thus promotes truth instead of falsehood.*

**INTRODUCTION:** A young environmental activist has awakened the world to the hollow promises on environment protection by World leaders. Greta Thunberg, has reflected exemplary courage and has also fulfilled the responsibility of the young generation to make our leaders accountable for their actions. She has highlighted very basic yet fundamental flaws in policy making. A voice that everyone resonates with, specially the young generation. It is indeed commendable that environmental degradation has become centre of our talks.

Wisdom is a quality of human personality defined as having experience, knowledge and good judgement to take correct actions. More often it is said that wisdom can be acquired through experience but experience by itself does not automatically confer wisdom. It would be appropriate to quote Greta here. Many such examples exist in our past as well like young people Swami Vivekanana, reformist Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Subhash Chandra Bose. All of them had some things in common they were well-read, educated, curious enough to seek answers and bold enough to oppose anything wrong.

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Wisdom is vital because it pierces through the veils of ignorance, confusion and illusion leading to radiant light of truth. Therefore, it is all the more important to make our citizens informed enough so that they can take right decision. The pre-requirement of all this stems down to providing quality education which is holistic in nature. After all **Rabindranath Tagore has said, "The really educated person is that who is free from all biases and possess the ability to distinguish between ethical and unethical conduct"**.

**MAIN BODY:** Looking into the education sector often reveals some glaring structural problems which impact the quality of knowledge that our students carry. Starting from poor quality of teachers and obsolete teaching methods to make education a mere rat race with hyper competition. Enforcement of discipline in strict terms kills the curiosity of a child and the pass – fail system focuses more on marks rather than knowledge. These issues extend from the basic elementary level right up to college where critical and independent thinking has never emerged. Moreover, our graduates project 'herd behavior'.

In order to escape this brain trap and inculcate our young generation with knowledge ultimately leading to wisdom, it is important to make learning joyful and wholesome. Involving students in the decision making process and being sensitive to their needs holds key. Furthermore, India has achieved 95%+ enrolment at elementary level, the focus must shift from quantity to quality. Sports, Art and culture, field work, fields trips will help our students get and retain the information in a more meaningful way.

Sports teaches a person leadership skills which gives a responsibility to promote a coordinating and participating approach leading to instillation of democratic values. Furthermore, winning and losing is part of the game and thereby teaches us to accept things and constantly improve to make things better. It also leads to mutual respect for either side. Another aspect of involving students through art, culture and creating work will break the monotony of mere fact mugging requirement leading to recognition and exercise of freedom of expression. Giving students an opportunity to express themselves will bring out original and independent thinking. It will not only act as a stress-buster but will also help students to adopt soft skills as measures. These can be really effective in countering the suicidal tendencies that students often suffer from.

Further, the students should be given a tint of practical aspect of what they are learning. The value and urge of learning will increase more if they realize how it can be

successfully applied. Field visits and involvement in campaign as part of Summer projects can provide a way out. All these will help students find a balance which is of utmost importance as it will help fight uncertainties. If our students are nurtured this way, our colleges would automatically become hubs of critical thinking leading to innovative ideas and solutions.

Bringing these changes will require more than just political will as structural changes in the education system have to be brought alongwith major infrastructural requirements. But the benefits to society and the nation will outweigh the investment requirements. It will not only nurture a healthy but a cohesive society. It will bring about a just and equitable attitude among all and thereby helping in empowerment of weaker sections.

**CONCLUSION:** Citizens will be logical enough to move away from hate crimes such as lynching, honour killings, terrorism etc. thereby nurturing a healthy society. It will help it controlling youth and juvenile crime, alcoholism and drug abuse. Society will be a safer place for minorities, women and children. All this will ultimately help in nation building by improving national productivity and opening ways for alternative livelihood. India would be able to realize its dream of becoming a major world power by reaping demographic dividend as the society would be confident in risk – taking and realizing returns.

Furthermore, not only internally but we can contribute towards a better world by building better relations with countries. Track II diplomacy would take a centre stage rather than currency wars and battles. It would be better to start with our neighbours as it is rightly said good fences make good neighbours.

Thereby making it clearly visible that knowledge leads to opening up the door of wisdom will help the people realize 'the actual' that is truth. The outcomes will be self-sustaining and deeper.

### ► BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN OTHERS

#ETHICS

**Why this topic?** *Even after more than 150 years of his birth, M.K. Gandhi as a thought and inspiration is now more relevant in guiding the future trajectory of our great nation so as to create a new and better India. His teachings are treasure trove, which should be applied at all levels for achieving positive goals for our mutual benefit and safe co-existence.*

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**INTRODUCTION:** There are a very few people in the world who dared to do what they preached. Gandhi was an epitome of change. He wanted to change the world but before that he changed himself. He changed his attitude towards the world and the world's attitude towards him changed automatically. It was his attitude that transformed him from a young promising lawyer, born in enslaved India to the father of a free nation. He started the journey of his transformation from the Dark Continent of Africa where he confronted the social evil of the apartheid. The plight of the black and coloured people of South Africa filled his heart with a feeling of sympathy for them. His resolution became more solid when he himself had to suffer at the hands of so called whites, for being 'coloured'. He was thrown out of the first class compartment of a train despite having a valid ticket. At that moment he realized how egoistic and hypocrites white people were. He came to know that they considered sharing the compartment with coloured persons as losing their purity.

Gandhi was a man of principles. He had the guts to object against the treatment being given to the coloureds. If it had been any ordinary person, he would have easily surrendered to the situation. But he was not ordinary. He demanded from the government to end the policy of discrimination. His aim was not to force something from outside. He wanted that the 'whites' realise that they were wrong. They must change their attitude towards the coloured. His crusade against the system kept him in South Africa until he unshackled the coloured people from the chains of apartheid system which had bound them for centuries. His ways and attitude inspired the coloured. They woke up from a slumber which had made them drowsy for so long to realize that they were also human beings and it was not their fault that they were coloured. The inspiration helped them to get justice finally. Gandhi taught us that we must not be hypocrites.

**MAIN BODY:** Similarly, we must present ourselves as we are. There is always a scope of improvement in everyone. We must seek to improve upon ourselves. We must present our real self to the world. If we are conscious that we do not possess qualities that we should have then we must first acquire those qualities. Until and unless we don't have them, we would not be able to assess their true worth. We cannot tell the taste of a mango until we have tasted it ourselves. Telling without doing so will be hypocrisy and a lie.

Gandhi did not only preach the principles of truth and non-violence but also presented before us how to make these a part of our lives. He showed the world how we

can practice these principles in real sense. If we go through the life history of Mahatma Gandhi we come across many such incidents, which prove that **whatever he preached were not only sets of words but he also showed them through actions.** Before giving someone some advice he always tested that on his own self. He wanted to see if his advice really worked. Moreover he wanted to make sure that he himself was perfect in that sense. If he wanted some- one to give up eating too much of sweets, he first experimented on himself if he can also quite eating sweets or not. He taught the world that an alcoholic has no moral right of telling anyone to give up drinking. Before changing others one has to change himself. One must rectify his habits before one preaches other. In this sense he meant that teachers must first give up the habit of telling lies before students. The students will never accept his advice of always speaking truth if he himself is a habitual. The same principle works at homes. If we want to teach our children values and morals, we must first live morality.

Gandhi was a great believer of truth and non-violence. He did not believe in the violent ways adopted by some youngsters. He termed them 'some misled youths'. He returned from South Africa aimed an atmosphere of suppression and tyranny by the Britishers. It is not that his blood remained cool and it did not boil like other youngsters of his time. But he did not compromise with his principles. He did not give up his ways of peace and non-violence. He straight away disapproved of the violent ways adopted by revolutionaries who wanted to drive out the Britishers. Gandhi believed that their cause was noble but their means was wrong. He believed that to reach at the destination of freedom, the path of non-violence and truth must be adopted.

These principles became an integral part of his life. Never in his life did he run away from his principles. The instances from his life history prove how he put his principles into reality. He did not compromise even when the movements started by him were at peak. He withdrew his non-co-operation movement when the news broke that at some places had become violent. By doing this he gave an indication how much he believed in his philosophy. It was a step to show his resentment for the violence. It also served as a warning against any such action in future. His principles would have been futile had he not shown his determination and capability of inspiring the masses.

Our history is full of personalities who inspired Gandhi to make this statement. Like Gandhi, those were the persons who changed themselves. They transferred their entire lifestyle and philosophy to be able to preach



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what they wanted to. The great Mauryan king Ashoka, who preached peace and non-violence, was himself a violent emperor. He got the throne of Magadha after killing his own siblings. Later he attacked Kalinga killing thousand's, but he changed himself. He gave up the policy of violent aggression. He was able to convince others only after he personified non-violence. Today he is not known for his large kingdom or for his conquests, but for his love for peace and non-violence. Another example is of Gautama Buddha. He was the founder of a great religion. He quit the luxuries of his palace to become a wanderer. He transformed his life from a prince to a monk. He preached only after he was himself aware of the ultimate truth. His personal example inspired many thousands become his followers. He had to first adopt the values which inspired others to adopt them. Gandhi was also inspired by these historical personalities.

He came to know that changes brought by blood and violence are temporary. People accept these changes under the influence of fear. But changes brought through peaceful ways are permanent. We still remember Ashoka and the Buddha. We still feel the influence of their principles. Their principles are still relevant.

Gandhi preached 'Work is worship'. Today we see the phrase written on the wall of schools and offices. Gandhi showed to the world what the phrase actually meant. He is often seen in pictures sitting behind a spinning wheel. It was not just to impress onlookers, but he, in fact, did his petty works him- self. The inhabitants at his ashram were in the habit of doing their works themselves. They did not hesitate from doing works with their own hands because they were being given live demonstration by the very person that they followed. This not only changed their habits but also they understood the worth of work. This also raised the status of Mahatma Gandhi in their eyes. One of the epitomes of human service was mother Teresa. She led a simple and selfless life which has inspired thousands of philanthropists around the world.

**CONCLUSION:** Gandhi's statement becomes all the more relevant in today's world. We all have our own ideal world inscribed in our minds. We see many things which are of our liking but many are those which we do not like and always wish to change. Not only we but many more like minded people having common ideas wish to see changes in society. But this idealism is mostly restricted to merely 'wishes'. We all remain passive and cynical about changes. We do not want to take initiative. We always hope that someone else would take the first step. It is because for a change to be

effective the person who initiates the process has to bring changes in himself. We are reluctant of bringing changes in ourselves. This is what differentiates an ordinary person from a great soul. Mahatma Gandhi wished that everyone modifies himself to change other. The statement of Gandhi is a source of inspiration for many who want to give a meaning and a right direction to their lives. It encourages us to make our own path. The initiative taken by us distinguishes us from the commoners and helps us make a unique space for ourselves. It can make a leader out of a common man. A leader has the quality of motivating others and an ability to implement the initiatives taken by him appropriately. But nothing comes without a price. Hence changes require determination to change oneself first.

### ► DISCIPLINE MEANS SUCCESS, ANARCHY MEANS RUIN

#### #SELF-DISCIPLINE

**Why this topic?** Discipline remains most important factor for success in all scenario-personal, professional, social, national, international. Discipline ensures that all plans are executed properly and timely. Many successful people attribute their success to discipline. This applies to nation's success for e.g. Germany and Japan. Both rebounded from post-World War II destruction to emerge as hugely successful and developed countries.

**INTRODUCTION:** What is the aspect, which is common amongst all the successful and renowned personalities across the globe? Which virtue do they share? Yes, they lead a very disciplined and organized life. Discipline holds the secret behind their success. In order to make the mind accept the command and obey the orders of high authority, discipline needs to be imparted within us. It is the symbol of civilization, the mark of humanity. Discipline is what a person imposes on himself taking it as his duty to god, to society or to some other institution. It maintains a strict control over an individual's rights and privileges, which if allowed going out of control might result in disorder and chaos in social and political life of a country.

Our life should be punctuated with discipline. The day to day chores, which are carried out by us, depict the level of discipline which we follow. It is a lesson that we can learn from the way the universe runs. Nature herself presents before us this valuable lesson of discipline. The seasons come and go in definite patterns. A slight indiscipline will cause confusions in this well-planned natural system. Similarly, in our society too, discipline is

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the topmost priority, which should be preferred above all other aspects of our personality. The word discipline comes from the word disciple, which means a learner. So discipline means learning to obey rules.

**MAIN BODY:** Discipline is the **quality by which one learns to control one's feelings, emotions and behaviour**. It is the ability for self-control and self-direction. Rules are everywhere. There are rules of nature and rules for human beings. The whole universe is led by rules. Nature cannot diverge from them. The human society is also run by certain rules, some are written while others are unwritten. However, they all need to be followed and obeyed decently. Discipline plays a significant part in our day today life. Discipline enables us to think progressively, act maturely and to take decisions responsibly. It is the backbone of a character and it lays a foundation. It makes us self-propelled, self-controlled and self-guiding persons. It makes us responsible persons and principled individuals ready to tackle critical situations encountered in day to day life.

Discipline is one of the essential qualities required for social living. Without it, life in society becomes chaotic and miserable. Without discipline, there can be no law and order. Without discipline society becomes a devil's paradise, where, 'might determines what is right' and power and riches determine who is right and who is not. Today a quick look around us will show how our society has come into the grips of chaos and confusions everywhere. Lack of discipline in our lives is a primary cause of all these. It is essential for the preservation of social values. However, discipline should be inborn and self-imposed rather than externally imposed. It should be a tenor and mode of life based upon moral basis rather than an external compulsion caused by an unscrupulous and powered hungry authoritarian government. It should be taught by education and enlightenment.

Life without discipline is like a ship without a rudder. To children and young peers the word discipline has an unpleasant sound. They think it means restraint on their movements but they are wrong. Discipline means learning to adapt oneself to the conditions of life. It means Obedience to some rules or laws of the life. In the other words, it means self-control to follow moral laws. The highest form of discipline is self-discipline. No person can have a truly great character unless she able to discipline himself. It does not deprive a person of her liberty, but controls her when she goes beyond her limits. Every civilized society rests on the sound foundation of discipline. Without it, life is irresponsible, u

cheap and meaningless. It costs nothing but gains everything. It is the breath our life.

In the primitive society, every man did, as he liked. The result was chaos and confusion. The civilized man however disciplines his mind and habits in order to live harmoniously in the society. Our mind, like our body needs discipline so that it may not be swayed by passions, prejudices and temptations. A disciplined person disciple is a learner therefore; he acts according to certain prescribed rules. The basis of discipline should therefore be the desire to do one's share of work in making life as easy as possible for the majority. Discipline is an important for collective life as for the individual.

Our society is built upon the principles of mutual help and trust. If every man refuses to subordinate his own interests to the interests of others, the society will tumble down like a house of cards. We need discipline in all spheres of life. It must be enforced early in life so that a child learns it as the fundamental basics of livelihood. A child who is allowed to do, as he likes commits all sorts of folly in later life. However, if he is taught discipline he will a useful member of society. Without discipline, no home can be happy and in peace. Discipline is equally important for every school and college. In matters of administration, discipline is equally important from the head of the government a down to the lowest servant. All persons have to carry out the rules and abide by the orders of the supreme authority. Without discipline, a government cannot function efficiently. Above all discipline is indispensable in the army.

Mahatma Gandhi led a life of discipline, so did Pandit Nehru. The result was that they rose to the heights of glory. Sardar Patel once said, "We do not need an untrained mob, we need a disciplined army of young men and women." We cite many examples of discipline.

**Good citizenship is a matter of discipline.** A disciplined man is an asset for the country and thus turns out to be to a good citizen whereas an undisciplined man is a liability. A balanced man is disciplined in thoughts and actions and possesses a peaceful and calm mind, capable of making accurate decisions. A self-disciplined person should have determination, self-confidence along with faith in his own self. A self-disciplined person is able to make right priorities at the right time handling the situation efficiently and then acts upon them. Even the great Buddha encouraged self-discipline amongst his disciples motivating practice it in every aspect of life. He mentioned it as the ability of man to make the right

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strategy and achieve the desired goal through determination and dedication. Life will be a burden for us if our desires are uncontrolled. A decent social and natural life will come to end if individuals go their own way removing the common interest of the society. The habit of discipline ensures happiness and mental peace. Therefore, for the stability, strength and prosperity of a nation discipline is of great importance. Let each one of us practice discipline in all spheres of life. It makes life worth living. Disciplined men and women alone prosper in life. Great disciplined men are the noblest possessions of a nation and are powerful forces in shaping of national character. Their influences lives even after they pass away and their mark can be seen in the coming generations. They set an example for others and act as an inspiration to others who follow them.

It is in the sense that national integrity can be stated as the reliable and faithful performance of duties and obligations by every section of the people. In a family, members have to work as a solid team under the charge of the head of the family that is the father or the main source of income. Nevertheless, if the sense of discipline is not inculcated into the mind of the members, each going his own way in his own manner, it is difficult to tackle the situations of family life, in our social life we are required to follow certain norms of behaviour and make a balanced adjustment between our rights and duties. Without this, our social life will become a mess and will soon go out of order. Even a small day-to-day thing like walking along the road, boarding a bus, buying a ticket from the counter or getting a work done in government office, citizens must show a sense of discipline.

Discipline is the backbone of political life of a nation. If a political party is torn by internal disputes or differences, or if it suffers from indiscipline, it cannot commend any prestige or following of a common person. If a leader is himself undisciplined, he cannot even dream of becoming a beloved leader of the people. **Discipline and democracy go hand in hand.** Democracy requires a balance between rights and duties, between 'self-regarding actions' and 'other regarding actions'. However, if in a democracy discipline is lacking, it will function like a fast running automobile without brakes often going out of control. It is bound to result in a chaos, and be replaced by a dictatorship or some other mode of unfair ride. Discipline is the pre-requisite for growth and development in any form of economy. The astounding Japanese growth and progress, after the second World war, when their nation was reduced to ashes, has been attributed to the strict discipline which the Japanese people possessed and utilized. Every

profession, every service: politics, industry, economy, government, etc., need discipline. Discipline is often associated with 'men in uniform'. It is the hallmark of soldiers. Discipline in the army calls for strict obedience and humble submission. It calls for duty in the face of adversity and courage in the face of odds.

Discipline is necessary for both a teacher and a student. A teacher is a leader of his student; he must possess and maintain an intellectual and moral discipline of a high order. However, learned and scholarly a teacher may be but if in his personal life he leads a undisciplined life, he will never be able to win and command the long term respect and obedience of his students. Similarly, only a dedicated and disciplined student can carve out a brilliant career for himself and serve the motherland with full dedication and efficiency. Disciplined students are the pillars of a nation's strength and with their of character they can lift a nation to the great height of progress. We must realize that discipline can ensure all-round progress and advancement of country.

For the last few years, India has been a helpless victim of growing indiscipline in all walks of life. Certain political parties and political leaders have been creating indiscipline among the masses in order to gain their ultimate motives by fishing in troubled waters. Unemployment, economic disparities, culture erosion, intellectual lethargy, crisis of character and erroneous conception of liberty are among the chief contributing factors of indiscipline.

**CONCLUSION:** This is one lesson, which has to be inculcated at a very young age. The home is the first institution where the value of discipline can be learnt and the parents are their first guides who shape them. Then it is the responsibility of the teachers to inculcate in them the value of discipline. Applied Moral education should be a mandatory subject in primary and elementary schools in order to teach the child the significance of discipline. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders. Discipline will teach them the virtues of self-control, obedience, the capacity for self-sacrifice and single minded devotion to duty. Even this would guide them on the path of prosperity.

It is clear therefore, that discipline is not merely a good virtue, which adds colour and charm to the personality. It is an essential quality of life required by every one of us. Discipline alone can lead our society forward and make our social, professional and family life, a success. This value is necessary to be inculcated among the youth in order to ensure a safe and successful future of the nation.

## PHILOSOPHICAL / ETHICAL TOPICS

**► NEARLY ALL MEN CAN STAND ADVERSITY, BUT IF YOU WANT TO TEST A MAN'S CHARACTER GIVE HIM POWER**

#ETHICS

**Why this topic?** *Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.*

*With greater power comes greater responsibility.*

*Yes, responsible display of power can make or break the destiny of nation. In today's world, jingoistic tendencies displayed by global leaders need replacement with saner voices of responsibility for peaceful coexistence and development.*

**INTRODUCTION:** All men face adversity in life, but some uses adversity for learning lessons and transforming it into opportunity. Adversity tests one's character. Adversity is a state or instance of serious or continued difficulty or misfortune. There are many kinds of adversity. It might be a debilitating injury or illness; it might be an abusive relationship or it could be crushing poverty. When faced with adversity, the most pressing need is survival and nearly all can stand adversity.

Adversity may make a person stronger, but to test one's character, it is better to give him power. Depending on one's character, power is used, misused and abused. Mahatma Gandhi and Adolf Hitler faced some adversities and rose through the ranks to the helm of politics in their respective countries. However, Gandhi is remembered as a symbol of non-violence, but Hitler is hated as an embodiment of evil responsible for genocide of millions of Jews. The most popular President of the USA, Abraham Lincoln used power for welfare measures including abolishing slavery in the USA. Jacob Zuma, a leader of African National Congress and a prominent face of struggle against the Apartheid Regime was later involved in corruption and nepotism when he became the President of South Africa. Many popular personalities in the world fell victim to the influence of power. **Lord Acton commented aptly, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."**

**MAIN BODY:** However, there is also no dearth of examples where power, prestige and position couldn't shake the sound character of the person. The progress that human civilization today has achieved is due to such founded on the contributions of such people. The veracity of the adage can be verified from History. The challenges posed by the Ottoman Empire to their trade

with the East made the European countries to begin a search for alternative trade routes. However, once they came to control the trade routes, they indulged in cruelties against their competitors, began slave trade and setting up colonies through force and deception. This exposes the weaknesses of the character of European civilization.

Adversity or misfortune make us more mature, and humble in life. When faced with adversity, the most pressing need is of survival. In case of injury, the goal is to heal from the injury or get well as soon as possible. If a person is in prison, the goal is to survive prison. Crushing poverty presents the daily challenge of finding food and keeping oneself out of harm's way. The goal is to survive in adversity and most of the persons are successful in it. On the other hand, power as seducing as it might seem, has succeeded in changing the behaviour of many people. Being in the centre of attention, having everyone asking you for favours, easily makes one become not only corrupted, but also uppish and big-headed. That is why; power is considered a character tester. Following examples show how power has succeeded in changing the behaviour of many people. Fall of Godmen in recent past shows how money, influence and power turned them from Godmen to criminals. India's biggest corporate scam, Satyam showed how Ramalinga Raju, the founder of Satyam Computers indulged in corrupt practices.

Power can be misused for killing animals and spoiling biodiversity and environment. When Eskimos were given guns by Americans, they hunted animals and spoiled the environment and resources available, making their livelihood unsustainable. Today, man with the help of technology has acquired immense control over the nature. However, human greed is responsible for making the life on earth unsustainable causing global warming, climate change, pollution, shortage of potable water, etc.

Unlike adversity, which offers very few options or the only option to Survive-Power offers many options. Those who have power have choices. The more power one has, the greater number of options he has on his disposal. The power may come through large amount of money, a position of authority, or physical strength. With the power comes the freedom to choose options. For example, if the person has power over other people, He can choose to be their ally or if the person has a position of authority, the person can make decisions that help others or hurt others. There are many examples of unshakable character too, who have held the power for

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common good. "People with good intentions make promises, but people with good character keep them."

The Mughal emperor, Akbar lost his father early and had to assume reigns of administration in childhood. Despite wielding enormous power of an emperor, Akbar used his position for welfare of his subjects and maintained religious tolerance. Gautam Buddha was born in a royal family having all comforts, but abandoned it for the search of truth. He spent years to realise the truth. He had so many followers at his command, but never deviated from his aim. He focussed on finding out cause of sorrow in the world and achieved enlightenment. There are exemplary officers who use power for good cause. One IAS officer, U Sagyam, son of a farmer became famous when he decided to be the first IAS officer in Tamil Nadu to upload details of his assets on the district website. As a great civil servant of character, he slept in a graveyard to guard important evidence in a multi-crore quarrying scam in Madurai.

Many use their power to advance their own agenda and fulfil their own selfish ends. They disregard the implied trust that comes with their power. So, they wield it in ways that bring harm to others rather than good. Again, it's their power that reveals their true character. In ways that adversity never does. So, the question arises: how to build such sound characters? People with such sound characters are assets to the society and nation. Such characters are built through moral upbringing at home and adequate weightage to moral education in school curriculum. As Gandhi observed, "Literary education is of no value, if it is not able to build up a sound character." Character building can be done by setting up examples by teachers, political leaders, bureaucrats, journalists, scientists, spiritual leaders, etc. Culture of rewarding such people creates positive influence on others.

**CONCLUSION:** To stand adversity is an innate human trait. It is through this trait that human has transformed himself from the stage of hunter-gatherer to the stage of fourth Industrial Revolution. Only a man of strong character uses power for wider social aims. Lincoln's statement is universally valid for all times to come: Abraham Lincoln, former USA President, made the statement, had tremendous power as president of USA during the civil war, but he used his great power to accomplish good things. His character was revealed from how he used his power for improving the lives of the down trodden at par with other citizens by ensuing fundamental human rights. "Nothing discloses real character like the use of power. It is easy for the weak to be gentle. Most people can bear adversity. But if you

wish to know what a man really is, give him power. This is the supreme test."

### ► THE TRUE MEASURE OF ANY SOCIETY CAN BE FOUND IN HOW IT TREATS ITS MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE

#MORALITY #SOCIETY

**Why this topic?** COVID-19 has increased economic and social deprivation. The need of the hour is to collectively rise to the occasion both by the state and non-state actors to respond in this hour of crisis to help the most vulnerable.

**INTRODUCTION:** Gandhi's above quote identifies how to measure an ideal society. He notices that quality of a society reflects in the welfare of its people. Ideal society is inclusive and takes care of its entire people, the rich and the poor, the privileged and the underprivileged, the helpless and the most vulnerable sections at par with the elite. True measure of any society is non-discrimination on the basis of birth, caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, faith, worship or any physical or psychological challenges. The real test or true measure of a great society is the way it treats its most deprived and vulnerable people. The most vulnerable needs the maximum attention and care, taking into account their specific issues, concerns, and problems and doing the best to help them.

**MAIN BODY:** The most vulnerable people need to be empowered with special measures to enable them to come up in life, meeting their basic human rights, needs and values to participate in all possible activities. Such a society is just, human and humane to everyone, especially the marginalized and the poor. Nelson Mandela was right, "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom." Swami Vivekananda goes a step further: "So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every person a traitor who, having been educated at their expense pays not the least heed to them!" Addressing inequality in all its dimensions is a must. Amartya Sen finds inequality is the root cause of all the problems in the world; "I believe that virtually all the problems in the world come from inequality of one kind or another."

Inequality in society arises because of disparity in material wealth and growth. The material growth

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remains the most widely used criteria of categorizing societies. Societies and countries are categorized into developed and developing, or advanced and backward/primitive based on the stage of their material growth and development. However, even materially most prosperous countries with high per capita income such as USA or Saudi Arabia have dubious records of poor treatment to African origin people and women respectively. In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi suggested that the progress or civilizational growth of a society can truly be measured only in the way it treats its most vulnerable groups such as women, children, minorities, old age people, etc. Unless a society is inclusive enough to take care of such groups, its tall claims of being an advanced sound hollow.

Each society has certain people who on account of their position in the society are liable to be discriminated and hence, more vulnerable than the others. There are examples in almost all societies showing the mistreatment meted out to the vulnerable groups. There are many examples in the world for non-inclusive societies where materially progressive countries treat badly the vulnerable groups. Societies in USA, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and India fall in this category. From the perspective of material achievements, the USA is considered as the most advanced country. Its population constitutes people of European, African as well as Asian origins. However, people of African descent have been historically discriminated in the USA and still continue to be up to some extent. Incidences of African descent people getting shot by racially prejudiced policemen show that the USA continues to be at the centre of racial discrimination in the world. Despite its inclusivity, the USA as a model of a truly progressive society from Gandhi's perspective remains distant.

Oil boom has brought great prosperity to Saudi Arab and other Gulf countries. However, women in these countries have very little freedom to decide their own course of life. The Tamil origin people living in the Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka have been systemically discriminated by the Sinhala majority. This also resulted into a civil war leading to mass murders and rapes. Despite being a leader in terms of Human Development Index in South Asia, its ill-treatment to minorities has brought it a bad name in the global community. India was one of the most prosperous countries in the world during medieval period. Even today, India ranks 7th in terms of GDP in the world. However, historically India's achievements were not without evils. The practice of untouchability was a blot on Indian society. Today, vulnerable groups such as

women, children, physically disabled, old-age people, tribal groups, dalits, etc. continue to be in the greater need of a helping hand. Gandhi's vision of a truly inclusive and progressive India as suggested in the above quote remains a distant dream.

Examples of inclusive societies include Europe and Japan. After the extermination of Jews by Nazis during the World War II, the European society has adopted a more inclusive approach. Populations in countries such as UK, Germany and France are constituted of people of different origins, but they are very well integrated in the European society today. Old age care system is much institutionalized. Government as well non-government institutions are working for a dignified aging process. In contrast, the modern old-age care system in India remains poorly developed.

How can the society be made more inclusive taking care of its most vulnerable sections? What social policy measures should be taken to make a difference in the lives of the poor? First, the society must ensure that there are suitable laws to safeguard people's rights and entitlements especially those who are the underprivileged. Second, right based approach is a new way to ensure that the vulnerable groups get same attention in the society as the empowered ones. For example, rights of vulnerable sections are ensured by Acts such as People with Disabilities Act, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act. Third, societies can set up Institutions and strengthen them. Commissions for Women, children, SCs, STs, Minorities, etc. and National Human Rights Commission are examples. Fourth, there is need for further strengthening these commissions through constitutional and legal amendments. Recently, the Government of India has given constitutional status to NCBC. Fifth way is through inculcation of right values in the society. While laws, rules, regulations and institutions play a role in the betterment of the vulnerable sections, they alone are not good enough. Most importantly, inculcation of progressive and inclusive values in the children right since the early enculturation process, and through schools and colleges only can lay strong foundation for a truly progressive society of tomorrow.

**CONCLUSION:** Since long, different scholars have given their visions about an ideal and progressive society. Gandhi too had envisioned such a society as the one that treats its vulnerable groups well, at par with the empowered ones. Many societies have made attempts to realize this goal by making themselves more inclusive and they have been successful to different extents. However, a truly progressive society as envisioned by

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Gandhi is yet to be realized. By enacting right laws and provisions, creating institutions for vulnerable groups and inculcating progressive and inclusive values in the society, such a dream can be made a reality.

### ► CUSTOMARY MORALITY CANNOT BE A GUIDE TO MODERN LIFE

#MORALITY #SOCIETY

***Why this topic?** In post-independence India, what matters most is the path of constitutional morality as envisioned by the Constitution of India. Constitutional morality speeds up holistic development of society but if the path is constrained by customary morality imposed by patriarchal society than it impedes evolution of society.*

*Inequalities, discriminations and deprivations promoted by customary morality should be negated by strengthening constitutional morality.*

**INTRODUCTION:** The concept of life has always intrigued humans. Even the Rig Veda, considered to be one of the first books written in the **Nasadiya Sukta**. The Nasadiya Sukta is the first section of Rigveda, and contains nothing but questions – questions about the origin of life. The meaning of life, the creator, the purpose of life etc. In the ancient Greek City States, great thinkers like Socrates. Plato and Aristotle also tried to delve upon what constitutes a good life, and how life should be conducted. Subsequently many philosophers also tried to answer these existential questions about life.

**MAIN BODY:** Initially, before the advent of civilisation, human lived in small groups called tribal societies. Gradually with newer discoveries and intentions, humans began setting down in larger societies. There were always a quest for a stable life for humans. This quest, in past, gave birth to religion and customs. They consisted of rules, doctrines and regulations to organize the social order in a particular manner. So as to make life more predictable, orderly and productive. Religion and customs had the concept of morality in them. Morality of a society distinguishes the good from the bad, the right from the wrong and the divine from the evil. Each society developed its own set of customary morals and organised their society accordingly. For example, it was the **Dharamshastra** and **Manusmriti** for India in the 5th-6th century A.D. the **Sharia law** in the Islamic World (8th century AD onwards) and the **law of the Bible** for the Christian World in the Middle Ages.

However, with the passage of time, these customary laws got entrenched and petrified, and failed to evolve with changing circumstances. Many regressive practices took root in these customs, and got the sanctity of religion. For example, it was considered morally right, to practise untouchability, Sati, female infanticide, etc. in Hindu law; to practise stone pelting and chopping off heads of thieves in Sharia law and putting to death anyone who questioned the authority of the Church in Christian Law. There was no scope for humanism and reasoning. Those in positions of power dictated morality as per their convenience to maintain the status quo. The result was immense social inequalities, political instability and a regressive decaying society, especially during the **Dark Age in Europe (500-1200 A.D.)**

A break in this time with the advent of a phenomenon, known as renaissance. It was sort of a rebirth of rationality and reasoning, which was the feature of the Roman & Greek society in the pre-Christian era. Renaissance was speech headed by scientists and thinkers like Machiavelli, Galileo, Newton etc. This was the advent of Modernity. Modernity is characterised by the spirit of humanism and individual liberty. Individual is considered to be an end in itself. Modernity favours rational thinking, and a scientific approach towards solving problem. It advocated separation of the Church from the state, thus confining religion to the private sphere of an individual. With the growth of intentional trade, colonialism and imperialism, these modern ideas gradually proliferated to different parts of the world, including India. In India, great thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Rabindranath Tagore, B. R. Ambedkar, Jawahar Lal Nehru etc. were flag bearers of modern thought.

However, the spread of modern thought and ideas was not without backlash from conservations, who favoured traditions and customary morality to modern, rational thinking. This clash is evident and very much visible in our societies even today in multiple spheres, be it social, political, economic or even intentional.

It is the **social sphere** where the clash between customary morality and modern rationality is most evident. For example, in India, conservatives, consider practices of untouchability, caste disability, female infanticide, Sati, Patriarchy, and many more regressive practices to be morally justified, as it is sanctioned by customary law. However, there is no doubt today that these practises are irrational, regressive, inhuman, degenerate and against individual liberty. This is also vindicated by the Indian Constitution through Right to equality, Article 21 (Right to life), Article 17 (Against

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## PHILOSOPHICAL / ETHICAL TOPICS

untouchability), etc. The Indian constitution even advocates discrimination and use of affirmative action, to undo the historical injustice inflicted upon certain sections of the society due to the so called “customary morality”, and also to enforce the modern ideal of substantive equality.

In the **political sphere**, use of customary morality is the agenda of the ultra-conservatives and the ultra-right wing. Nazism and Fascism are examples of political ideologies that were based on customary morality and false cultural Chauvinism. These ideas took such a toxic form and culminated in heinous, cruel, inhuman and unthinkable acts which led to the holocaust. Even today, these ideas present themselves in some form or the others, and are a great threat to the modern ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity which have been achieved after a long period of struggle. In the Indian context, our constitution and polity provide for various safeguards against the subversion of democracy, and also gives many rights and protections to minorities to safeguard their interests.

If we were to follow customary morality, in the economic sphere, then Vasco de Gama couldn't have crossed to oceans to come to India, or Indians like M.K. Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar, etc. couldn't have gone to England to acquire Western Education. This is because both in Christian and Hindu law, it was forbidden to cross the sea. Such as irrational notion goes against individual freedom and does not foster the spirit of adventure, enterprise and curiosity. Another example could be the clash between the Catholics and the Protestants, where the latter considered work to be worship, and were instrumental in the growth of capitalism. Hence, if it were not for the modern thoughts of innovation and spirit of adventure. The human race could not have progressed economically and there would have been no industrial revolution.

Customary morality cannot be a guide to international relations and foreign policy either. The international order, post WWII, was guided by the spirit of humanism and rationality, with emphasis on the need to report human rights, the will of the people and progressive notions of liberty, equality and fraternity. The birth of the United Nations Organisation is testimony to this. Whenever regressive customary morality has taken primacy, it has only led to chaos and death intentionally. The best example of this is the growth of Fundamentalism internationally. The only thing that this ideology has achieved is the loss of millions of innocent lives in different parts of the world. On the other hand, it is the modern democratic countries based on ideas of

humanism and empathy that come forward to offer humanitarian assistance in face of disasters, both natural and man-made.

**CONCLUSION:** A well-known phrase goes – “**The only thing permanent in this world is change.**” It is a very apt saying, when seen in light of the clash between customary ideas and modern ones. All customary and traditional ideas are not bad or regressive. Rather it is on the foundation of them that we build on new ideas. However, what becomes important is to examine if the morality of the past holds any significance in the modern period, or serve any purpose at all. If not, it is very imperative that they are reformed to suit the times. Evolution is the fundamental law of nature, and it holds well in the spheres of morality as well. Therefore, if we are to take the human race forward, then customary morality cannot be our guide in that journey towards an evolving social consciousness.

### ► LESSONS LEARNT FROM HISTORY MAKE OUR PRESENT AND FUTURE SAFE

#HISTORY #ETHICS

**Why this topic?** *History is the biggest teacher. It has both positive and negative examples.*

*Rational reading of History is a lesson for us as it clearly highlights the goods done in the past which are required to be carried forward and also highlights the negatives which are required to be eliminated from the current society, thus making it better and safe.*

**INTRODUCTION:** History is the key to our present and those who can't learn from the history can never progress. As it's said that “**History repeats itself**”, but the outcome can always be moulded by the teachings of the history. Thus a bright present can enlighten the future to make it safe for the mankind. Humans are the social civilized animals with the ability of processing thoughts. What different would be if we couldn't use our gifts?

As old as the humanity goes, there has been evolution in every field that has touched us. History is the package of time that has wrapped in it many aspects of life that guide the evolution of species.

**MAIN BODY:** In the realm of society, Indus valley civilization can be taken as the best example: -Where the town planning, trade, division of society into lower and upper town yet all equal in residence, the belief in life after death had evolved from the scattered lifestyle of a



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hunter-gatherer and led to kingdoms to flourish. Presently the sectoral town planning, like of Chandigarh, can be seen. Futuristic perspective lies in the building of smart cities which will have all the facilities.

Culture has evolved as an integral part of the society. Dance, music, arts were once the means of connecting to one's supernatural powers evolved and now has become the identity of the traditions. Vedas were not rigid in the beginning, but had some relevance for that time, while some had scientific backing. Understanding the value, as of Yoga has led to a better life, with the classical arts that has been demanding utmost concentration and fitness in the growing pollution and changing lifestyle, has become a style statement and the professional way to earn a livelihood.

Historically, the civilization that lived in sync with their environment has flourished for long. The tribes like Sentinalese of the Nicobar Islands are the second last untouched yet an old tribe, who have worshipped the nature such that the small island is their complete world. The idea of worshipping nature Gods like Agni, Vayu, rendering Dharti as Mata are all the symbols how important the environment is. With recent unplanned sprawl of industrialization, it is high time to protect the environment; else it won't take a long time to perish. It is the environment as a whole which has and will continue to provide for the food, clothing, housing, energy and means for livelihood. This is the basis behind the sustainable development Goals, so as to make the future safe.

The **World War I led to formation of the League of Nations, the failure of which has been the founding strength behind the United Nation Organisation**, the regional cooperation summits and inter-country MoUs

so as to maintain peace and harmony for the future. Thus, evolution of relation has come a long but hard way.

The economy is an offshoot of the political system. From the oppressive monarchy to autocracy to imperialism it has led to the freedom struggles throughout the world to establish democracy. E.g. India, where first the barter system led to coin currency, the token currency replaced it to be maintained against a common standard (US. \$), this has made a global village of opportunities. The various systems like communism, socialism and capitalism have also led to a welfare approach for some. The best combination can only led to a safe future.

Science and Technology has been saving mankind from perils. From inventing fire, wheels, clothing, sustainable energy, housing machinery for all the work, it has been impacting our lives since the beginning. The medicine system has been impacted where the age old traditions of Unani, Ayurveda and Homeopathy, and folk treatments have been treating the incurables for the modern medical science. The Charak Samhita has described such advanced surgical methods. What was fiction for the time are now becoming the reality to improve the lifestyle and living standards.

**CONCLUSION:** Thus, it is not wrong to say that history holds the answers to all our questions for countries to come. It has been adapting and evolving, while some aspects have gone missing in the due course of time. It is for the benefit of the generations to filter out the root causes of disharmony like the caste system and the blind religious beliefs, towards an advanced society in making.

# THEME-3

## **D**EMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### ABOUT THE THEME:

UPSC topics related with Democracy, Polity and Governance are based on the requirement to convert our democracy into a fully functional and vibrant democracy. A vibrant democracy should reflect the vision of the Preamble i.e. Justice, Equality, Liberty and Fraternity. In this regards, the topics in this theme are based on the following thought process:-  
"India has been a democracy for over seven decades. Now, it is the apt time to evaluate the current state of democracy by analysing its performance so far and in this context also evaluate recent and contemporary issues which require deeper analysis to give our nation a hugely efficient democracy in near future".  
Considering the above, the topics in this theme have been incorporated to highlight important issues which can be helpful in understanding the nuances of a vibrant democracy.

### ► **AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT**

#### #SELF-RELIANCE

**Why this topic?** Completed 74 years of independence and with emphasis on creating a new India @ 75 i.e. in the year 2022, it is now the right time to evaluate the performance of our country's progress and lay out a plan for making it more impactful.

**INTRODUCTION:** "You have to dream before your dreams can come true" - Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam

It's self-evident that the above line aptly captures the true essence of performing the act of dreaming and envisioning about one's ambitions. It's a time-tested principle - man started dreaming right from the age he kick-started the civilisation process. Since times immemorial to this date, contexts have changed, but the significance of dreams in every success story hasn't diminished, and that it's testified by the very fact that dreams form a quintessential ingredient of every

fable that talks of people conquering unfathomable heights.

Also it's a fact well established that the goods and dreams of the nation, itself is shaped and carved by the individuals it comprises of: after all, individuals are the basic unit of a society and an aggregation of societies collaborates to be called together as a nation. Undoubtedly, and quite similarly though, India has its own set of aspirations, as diverse and as holistic as its vast geographical presence and myriad cultural colours, as profound as its spiritual richness, as passionate as its population and as great as its historical riches. There are 'visions' and not dreams of creating the foundation of a new India, as dreams might become feeble over time, but its visions that are concertised by the virtue of sheer commitments and efficient, meticulous planning. There are visions of creating a new order, visions of creating 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

**MAIN BODY:** Such were the visions envisaged by the founding fathers of the country, where they clearly laid

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## DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

down ever cherished principles for the future generations to be attained, in order to create the India that stands out from the rest. The holy book of the religion of nationalism, the Constitution of India, itself serves as a torch-bearer for the mandarins and citizens of the country to realize these socio-economic-political aspirations. The **Preamble of the Constitution**, itself, clearly presents the core values of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, in an explicit fashion.

We, The PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN, SOCIALIST, SECULAR, DEMOCRATIC, REPUBLIC and to guarantee to all its citizens.

**Justice**, social, economic and political;

**Liberty** of thought, expression, belief, faith and Worship;

**Equality** of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all;

**Fraternity**, assuring dignity of individuals and unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, this 26th day of November 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT and GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

To decipher the meaning of the highlighted terms of the Preamble, is a no lawyer's paradise only. It has been meant for every citizen of the country. These goals had already been identified by our forefathers, who shaped the destiny of the country. To continue being a sovereign and a truly independent nation, promoting welfare measures for the masses, paying equal respect and tolerance for a mutual and harmonious co-existence of all religions, valuing democracy to its core and recognising the powers of the citizens in forming the government – are some of the fundamental and rock-hard aspiration of India as a country.

Citizens have always been the 'MAGNA CARTA' of India's aspiration. Thus, guaranteeing precious political virtues as inalienable as justice, liberty, equality, fundamental rights and promotion of fraternity, has been given a top-notch priority to the Dream-List of the Country.

However, linking the dots with prudence and pragmatism, it's high-time that India looks forward to revolutionise its existing approaches and targets, in all spheres and realms. We are in the 21st century, one of the radical periods of all times, witnessing fast-paced growth and a huge bag filled with challenges and opportunities alike. It is in these circumstances that we have to establish India as a world leader; and thus, it's in this context that it's imperative to revise our goals, which

requires sheer resoluteness and a firm vision in our hearts and mind.

From a social angle, we need to **cater to the masses**. Critiques say over population is a humongous challenge for the country, but optimists declare the same as a prospective opportunity. Thus, with such a mammoth population, it's urgent to plan and implement strategies that works the best towards this direction and plays an integral role in maximising the potential of our human capital, which stands under-utilised till date. This requires a robust growth in the social infrastructure set up, mechanisms to ensure a well-educated and a healthy life to all. Improvisations in availability, accessibility and feasibility of health care facilities and educational services form the core of the same. Allied factors as clean drinking water and a sound situation of sanitation, also plays a critical role. The government's plan of National Health Protection Scheme and the flagship programmes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, are adequate steps in the same direction. It's prudent to recognise the fact that health and education are the basic prerequisites for development of the human capabilities and enlarging their progress – hence, needless to mention, these areas will always be prioritised over the rest.

Talking about social setups and access to resources, one of the key beneficiaries that needs urgent attention, but unfortunately, faces utter neglect – are the WOMEN, the FEMALE FORCE. Though we have been successful in accelerating our growth rates, we have still not managed to cope up with our parochial outlook and let women go out of their traditional roles, thus limiting their exposure to and participation in the development and decision making process. Achieving greater gender equity and restoring gender imbalances, with an equal emphasis on providing equitable opportunities to women, ensuring their security stands as an unquestionable target to be achieved by India, in the coming direction.

As we kick-start our voyage towards becoming an influential global force, it's high time that we gradually move from traditional 'Roti, Kapda, Makaan, Paani, Bijli' rhetoric. As a nation that intends to develop as a global power, we need to empower the citizens, both economically and socially. We need to move from '**SUSTENANCE TO SUSTAINABILITY**'. Our economic agenda must be in consonance with our geo-political ambitions, and thus needs to reflect the same commitment. There has to be a gradual transition from India being an agrarian economy to an industrial power, a thriving centre for employment opportunities, a hub for entrepreneurship, innovation and intellect, an

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## DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

economy synergising sustainability with efficiency in the most optimum fashion, A country committing to Zero Defect (Professional Competency Efficiency) + Zero Effect (Environment Sustainability).

Coming back to the real world, there is an urgent need to fill the chasm between the primary and the secondary sectors for preventing escalation in the existing 'BHARAT-INDIA' divide. In such context, agrarian reforms are requiring dynamic immediacy. Saying adherence to our former PM, Lal Bahadur Shastri, wherein he saluted the hardships of the farmers by winning 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan' we need to introduce sustainable agricultural reforms that ensure food security along with securing the producer efficiently. Also, it's the need of hour to link science with agriculture and thus focussing on aggravating the potential of the production process as well as doubling the farmer's income.

**Economy has to be revitalised with technology** and the e-conversion of existing economic schemes and provisions, will certainly yield a positive impact on the country as a whole. Pressing for greater digitalisation and cashless transactions, is a suitable measure to check leakages and discrepancies in the process, thus saving the drainage of millions of resources from the national exchequer. Strengthening of banking system by introducing various measures as recapitalisation, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, DBT (Direct Banking Transfers) to farmer is a satisfactory action towards the same. Ultimately, all of it has to be equitable in nature, thus increasing the necessity of emphasizing upon 'Financial Inclusion' as a critical element in the entire process of economic rejuvenation.

Entering the global leadership can't be attained without achieving strides in the realm of **scientific innovation and technology**. Technological upgradation, sustainable automation and Research and Development in Science and Allied fields have to be some of the key indicators to track India's progress in the field. It's crucial to link science with the masses in order to get the best out of it. Scientific intervention in medicines for finding cure of deadly health problems and technological betterment in areas of disaster forecasting, telecommunications etc., require sustained actions. Also, the emphasis will be on 'Maximum innovation with minimum destruction', thereby making unconventional energy usage important for development. It's a need to shift from gaining 'Nuclear Capabilities to Human Capabilities' with Science, so as to establish an ideal society that uses its technology as a tool for human betterment and progress.

**Curbing corruption, enhancing accountability and transparency, promoting female participation** in politics and decision-making, checking red-tapeism, fastening speedy judicial system and an efficient policing mechanism are some of the existing goals in our list that need immediate attention and action for the development of the public-political order in the country.

Standing at the threshold of being 'DEVELOPED' from a 'DEVELOPING' nation, it becomes imperative to contextualise our visions for NEW INDIA, from the perspective of the international angle. Strategic leadership and strengthening of diplomatic ties with game changer nations, has to have a definite place in our list. This has to be done for seeking international cooperation and attempting to be an influential force in terms of tackling global issues as terrorism, cybercrimes, climate change and health epidemics. This would also mean a firm step towards attempting to attain a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, and thus attaining a permanent membership and legitimate authority and responsibility to shape the new international order.

However, aspirations are to be seen with open eyes. It has to be different from fantasies, and grounded in the idea of reality. It has to be supported by actions and truly unshakable determination to achieve the same.

Our ancient scriptures also reiterate the same: *(It takes sweat and actions to realise aspirations and not merely dreams, just like the way a sleeping lion can't get a deer right away near him, only because he dreams it.)*

Ours', being a nation, guided by our rich, enlightening past, it becomes essential on our part to lay down clear plans to fulfil our vision and turn it into reality. This will require tapping the potentialities of the youth and channelising it towards constructive forces and a resolute commitment by all people, from all strata of the society. We need to evolve a coherent and firm partnership among all stakeholders to accelerate our development pace. Narrow prejudices need to be kept aside before national interest.

**CONCLUSION:** Finally, '**Nation first, Self-Last**' has to be the over-arching principle and ever-green mantra before kick-starting this mammoth exercise. There has to be a leap, a giant leap to acquire 'AATMANIRBHAR' status. We, as Indians, need to dream of such visions that don't let us sleep and rest, we need to be awake to set an example for the world to follow, we, as Indians need to prove our mettle.

## DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

As earlier at the cusp of independence, while the world was sleeping, our forefathers were awake at the stroke of the midnight hour on 15th August, 1947 to make a 'Tryst with Destiny'. A similar episode has to repeat itself where we, as 135 crore Indians, make a 'tryst with Excellence' where we stand unified as a global democratic leader, achieving incomparable strides through our massive human potential, coupled with cultural and social solidarity of thought to attain the status of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

### ► 75TH YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE: ACHIEVEMENTS AND TASKS AHEAD

#DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

**Why this topic?** Completed 74 years of independence and with emphasis on creating a new India @ 75 i.e. in the year 2022, it is now the right time to evaluate the performance of democracy so far and lay out a plan for making it more impactful.

**INTRODUCTION:** India has been a democracy for over seven decades. In this time, we have a mixed report card of remarkable successes but have also been under par in certain ways. While economic growth has been rapid over recent decades (*not taking into account the COVID-19 disruption*); this has not translated into greater welfare for the majority of the Indian population. Despite being severely critical of its politicians, the electorate however remains enthusiastic in its political participation, especially at elections.

In 1947, when India gained her independence from colonial rule, the **choice of parliamentary democracy** and a **universal franchise** for such a poor, vast and largely illiterate nation was considered as a right way forward. Nevertheless, the first general election was held with great vigour, enthusiasm and success in 1952. In the meantime, a Constitution reflecting the political and ideological goals of the new nation had been adopted. Enshrined within it were the principles of the **separation of powers**, a universal **Indian citizen with constitutional rights, equality before the law**, the **separation of civil and military powers**, and the **necessity for political competition**. So according to the democratic checklist of institutional arrangements, India's democratic system is in a reasonable shape.

Yet, we have slipped 10 places to 51st position in the 2019 Democracy Index's global ranking of Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). The index is based on five categories -- electoral process and pluralism; the

functioning of government; political participation; political culture; and civil liberties.

**MAIN BODY:** But what of India's record on democratic ideas more broadly: the participation of citizens, rule of law, and the responsibility of the state in ensuring basic freedoms, material security and education? It is evident that India's heterodox policy of a mixed economy of planned economic development and liberalization has put it at the high table of emergent powers in the world, but the positive effects of this are yet to reach the majority of Indians, in particular the poorest citizens. Many of those in power have severely abused their position, transgressing trust and probity, as scandals of corruption, bribes and kickbacks are revealed daily. This has been acutely felt, for instance, in the state's policy on India's natural resources, which has consistently ignored the rights of indigenous populations whose lands contain these resources in deference to corporate interests who seek to exploit them commercially. This neglect, on the back of an abysmal human development record among the same populations, has led to violent insurgency movements in some districts, whose ideologues disavow the democratic state and its institutions.

The state in turn has not held back in its violent suppression of these movements. Elsewhere too, India's civil society remains vigorous as ecological, feminist, religious and justice-based social movements continually challenge the status quo. The national body politic has developed a vast repertoire of protest and persuasion, drawn on the techniques developed during the anti-colonial struggles and those from the twenty-first century, to bring pressure on governments to be responsive to popular demands. These movements at once utilize and challenge the freedoms and liberties afforded by democracy.

At the heart of India's democratic system have been the **regular elections** that now see the participation of over a hundred political parties and the largest electorate in the world. Even more surprisingly, the most enthusiastic voters in Indian elections are not the well-educated urban middle classes but those who are the poorest, most discriminated against, and least educated, mainly living in villages and small towns. Turnout rates at elections in these areas can be well over 80 percent. Further, more local the election, the higher the turnout and this again bucks global trends. Contrary to what many predicted in 1947, poverty and illiteracy have not hampered the functioning of Indian democracy.

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## DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Why do large parts of the country's electorate cast their votes enthusiastically (and support a democratic mode of government over any other), despite the sustained failure of the Indian state to improve the living standards of its poorest citizens? Is it because the poor are ignorant and don't know what they are doing? Are they gullible and vulnerable to vote buying and empty campaign promises? Or to bullying and violence?

One important factor in the faith that people have in elections is the performance of the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**. Set up in 1950 to manage and conduct elections, unlike many of its counterparts in other democracies, the ECI is a genuinely autonomous and constitutional body, which through its seventy-year old life has evolved into a responsive and efficient public body. Only the Supreme Court of India shares this level of popular respect. The voting process, the successful adoption of electronic voting machines, the maintenance of electoral registers, and the security provided to voters and political actors, and the standards of probity among the two million election officials who conduct the elections have all emerged as enviably efficient features in a country where much else goes wrong. So, the Indian electorate trusts the Election Commission of India and the elections it runs. But when questioned about the politicians that those elections empower, the popular responses were a lot more critical.

Indian politicians' behaviour and public standing have seen a long steady decline compared to the cohort of educated, idealistic and conscientious politicians who brokered national independence and authored the constitution. Political parties are increasingly dominated by kin and nepotistic networks and have blocked the rise of new talent, and in too many cases the sins of greed and avarice appear to have displaced any desire to serve the public good.

In the last couple of decades, the political landscape has been shaken up by the emergence of lower caste parties that have made their challenge to the long standing social and political hegemony of the upper caste parties the cornerstone of their political activity. While not yet fully national parties, they now dominate important regions. Often commanding the loyalty of millions who place their faith in leaders who are 'one of them', the leaders of these parties have successfully challenged the patrician and insulated worlds of traditional politicians.

These redefined political styles play out in the Indian Parliament, which has emerged as an arena for loud, gestural statements alongside debate and deliberation. In recent years, it has become routine for Parliamentary

proceedings to be frequently disrupted by members aiming to capture the attention of a hungry media that relishes the transgression of parliamentary norms. In turn, the airtime gained by politicians has proved to be an invaluable tool to reach out to their mass followings.

The role of the Member of Parliament has become less that of legislator and more that of extractor of State resources for their constituencies, as a result of which personal corruption has seen unprecedented levels. But Parliament also remains a place where the great questions of unity and diversity, freedom and equality discussed at independence continue to be vigorously contested and updated by interest groups, determined variously by political ideology, religion and caste. As a result, more than 100 amendments of the Constitution have been passed by the national parliament to accommodate the changing realities of the political landscape.

Perhaps the most significant of these amendments was the 73rd, which made statutory provision for Panchayat Raj as a third level of elected administration in villages, below the national and state levels. As a result, representative democracy could now operate at the local level and help empower new actors to take on the responsibility of governance.

Ordinary citizens on the other hand, who turnout in large numbers at elections, see the role that politicians play in Parliament and elsewhere as only one aspect of India's democracy. While they are clear eyed about the venality of politicians, they point to the importance of their own role in the success of the workings of the democratic system. They emphasize that it is their individual vote that adds to the final result and it is their choice of candidates that determines the nature of government.

'The vote is our weapon' is a statement that is often used to explain this sense of empowerment. A majority of the electorate believes in the efficacy of multiparty democracy and regularly held elections, because it is through these institutions that governments can be forced to respond to popular pressures and punished for a bad performance. The examples of incumbent governments losing power after one term (a frequent occurrence in India) or of governments being rewarded with re-election were proof of this. 'Without us, the system is nothing' was how voters put it to emphasize the role of the ordinary voter.

Indian democracy can thus be described as made up of two spheres of politics - the **'demonic' (politicians and high politics)** and the **'demotic' (the electorate)**, with

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the electorate seeing its own politics as the purer in intention and action. Demotic politics is based on hope of a better future, the need for participatory citizenship and a sense of duty, and a celebration of universal franchise. And it is for these reasons that Indians across the country emphasize the importance of exercising this right assiduously, if only to remind those in power of their ultimate dependence on their votes.

Further, the right to vote is also seen as a foundational right of each citizen that makes possible the demand for other basic rights – to food, education and security. Thus Indian voters see their electoral participation as fundamental to their other engagements with the state, and their presence on the voting list a rare official acknowledgement of their existence. People thus frequently use the word ‘duty’ while describing the importance of voting and engaging with the system. A typical formulation states: ‘it is my right to vote and it is my duty to exercise this right. If I don’t discharge this duty, it is meaningless to have this right’. Further, there is a shared sense that it is important for each individual to exercise this right, rather than defer the responsibility to others.

But popular understandings of democracy also recognize that while elections are a necessary element of democracy, they are not a sufficient condition. To this end, the act of voting is seen to be the necessary first step in putting forward future demands and holding democratically elected governments to account. But political participation in non-electoral spaces is considered equally important, if more difficult to achieve. This understanding lies at the heart of a popular notion of participatory citizenship in the Indian electorate.

Elections in India are a big festival and it is at this time that the two political domains of the demonic/demotic that remain largely separate for the most part are forced to collide and confront each other. It is during election campaigns that the politicians have to account for their neglect of their constituencies and beg a second chance. During long and exhausting election campaigns in large and diverse constituencies the laundered clothes of rich politicians are sullied by dusty road journeys, their arrogant heads have to be bent entering modest huts of the poor, and their hands have to be folded in a plea for votes. It is no wonder that elections in India have a carnival air as people delight in this levelling effect of campaigns, as the ordinary voter suddenly becomes the object of attention of the powerful.

But the voter also feels some pressure to play her own role in making the correct choice, which is always open to the influence of a caste group, kin or community. At the most fundamental level, there is tremendous pressure to not waste a vote. One of the ways in which this pressure is created is by a simple procedure carried out by the ECI. In any Indian election, each voter has their left index finger marked by a short vertical line in indelible black ink just before they approach the electronic voting machine. While this procedure is carried out to ward off repeat voting, it has also had the unintended consequence of making it impossible to lie about whether one had voted. It therefore generates tremendous peer pressure among people to go and take the trouble to vote, for not to do so causes the discomfort of constant questions and suspicions about one’s motivations for abstaining.

The importance of not losing face in front of others, whether they are kin or party workers, is thus an important motivation for voting and results in high turnout rates. A further motivation for voting is the actual visceral experience of doing so. The culture of a polling station fosters an order, disciplined queues, respect for the ordinary person of whatever social background, efficiency of process and trust in the system – all of which can be a rare in Indian public life. As people arrive to vote, they have to queue in the order in which they arrive and no preferences are made on the basis of wealth, status or any other social marker. For those who are routinely discriminated against on the basis of caste, colour, class and religion in everyday life, this extraordinary glimpse of egalitarianism is valued. Further, people often pointed out that the knowledge that each vote is of equal to any other heightens its importance even more. By turning up to vote, by queuing patiently at polling stations, by punishing arrogance and complacency in their choice of leader, they thereby consider themselves as participating in the most basic act of democracy that enshrines political equality and popular sovereignty.

**CONCLUSION:** India’s record on democracy can thus be fairly summarized as reasonably consistent. Her institutions have been mostly robust though they have also increasingly come under threat by personal greed and the collusion of powerful actors who seek to undermine the principles and robustness of these institutions. Yet, at the same time, in the wider society, ideas about democratic participation, the role of the electorate and the importance of a shared duty of citizenship are also vigorously articulated. In the end, it will be the challenges posed by demotic politics of hope,

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mobilization, participation and justice that will need to overcome the demonic world of greed and power.

India's experiments of democracy have taught the world a number of lessons: the successful workings of coalition governments, the unpredictability of voter behaviour, the importance of an autonomous and responsive electoral commission, and above all the possibility of political sophistication among the poorest people. It remains to be seen whether India can redistribute the fruits of its economic growth to the wider society and thereby serve as a unique model among the rising powers of combining economic democracy with a robust political one.

### ► DEMOCRACY IS NOT JUST A QUESTION OF HAVING A VOTE

#DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

**Why this topic?** Usually people think that democracy is all about voting in elections and thus getting an elected government. But democracy has broad dimensions i.e. Govt. of the people, by the people and for the people. Elections are equivalent to just a recruitment examination but the actual work starts only after the selection. Similarly, in a democracy the real success of the democracy is measured on the basis of delivery of work for the people post elections.

**INTRODUCTION:** The objective of democracy is putting in place a government to govern after the elections. Conducting elections is inevitable for exercising universal adult suffrage in a democracy, but it is only a means to an end, but not an end in itself. Democracy loses its substantial energy in party politicking, leadership tussles, elections and power games. Democracy is a form of government in which people exercise the decision-making power either directly or through their representatives. In a representative form of the government, the rulers are elected by the people. Thus, free and fair elections form the bedrock of any vibrant democracy. The government formed must function in accordance with the commonly agreed principles of governance by the people in the form of the constitution. It is elected to implement the objectives such as justice, equality, liberty and fraternity outlined in the Preamble to the constitution as well as Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP). **As John Kay explains, "The people who own the country ought to govern it."**

**Fernando Cardoso** is right: **"Democracy is not just a question of having a vote. It consists of**

**strengthening each citizen's possibility and capacity to participate in the deliberations involved in life in society."** Indian masses have reposed their faith in elections as a mode of choosing their rulers and find wider social acceptance in the political culture of India.

**MAIN BODY:** The constitution of India provides the direction to the elected government in the form of the Preamble to the constitution and DPSPs. DPSPs outline the goals set by the constituent assembly for future governments and aspirations of the people that the elected governments should work for. Today, the important issues of governance include a range of subjects such as realising economic growth potential of 8% and above for the country, modernising agriculture and making it a profitable and desirable profession, making India a manufacturing hub, realising service sector growth potential and making India a knowledge economy, arresting the problem of mounting unemployment and harnessing the demographic dividend, providing robust infrastructure, inclusive growth, access to universal health and education and addressing malnutrition, gender equality and issues of vulnerable groups. Governance must put in place proper legal, judicial and police reforms, Civil Services Reforms. The government must undertake balanced regional development, especially for Northeast region.

Too much focus on elections as symbol of democracy is doing disservice to the entire range and concept of democracy. Corrupt electoral practices become the fountainhead of all evils in the governance and administration. It has created a system where everyone from a voter to those holding the ministerial positions poses himself/herself as a victim of corruption. The cycle of corruption starts from bribing voters in different forms and ultimately ends in the poor governance and delivery of services affecting the voters itself. Freebies are announced without taking into due consideration their impact on financial management. Politics has become highly competitive. Winning elections by announcing freebies is preferred over sound fiscal management. Winning ability in elections is often not based on good leadership. Many criminals who break laws contest elections and become law makers. The combinations of money and muscle power, along with social acceptance enable candidates with criminal backgrounds high winning ability.

**Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR)** statistics show that due to weaknesses of criminal justice system and putting aside of ideals by the political parties, a high percentage of representatives in India have criminal cases pending against them. They further undermine the



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law and order machinery and ultimately governance suffers. First Past The Post (FPTP) system fails in giving due representation to minority voices, which get muzzled. Issues of sections such as women, children, tribal, physically disabled or old people get low priority. It is one of the fallouts of the FPTP. Governance issues related to them get neglected as they are considered less important from electoral perspective.

**Gandhi visualized, "I understand democracy as something that gives the weak the same chance as the strong."** Formulation of policies and laws must be the prime concern of the people's representatives. However, focus gets shifted to waive agriculture loans and free power for irrigation, etc., rather than improving productivity and sustainable agriculture. The core development issues are neglected. Policies related to Uniform Civil Code, etc. take precedence over socio-economic development and welfare measures.

The issue is how to reduce the centrality of the elections and bring governance to the forefront in Indian democracy. Auditing of the election promises of political parties must be built into the political culture. Political parties and leaders must be made accountable. Rational Media has a great role to play. People friendly media platforms can be used for political debates on citizen centric governance. Civil society organizations can perform the auditing to put a rigorous accountability framework and analysis of political parties work before the people. Cleansing the electoral funding is a must. State funding of elections, as suggested by the Indrajit Gupta committee report, must be implemented. Political parties must be put under RTI. Reducing frequency of elections to 2-3 during the cycle of five years can be tried. Further, statutory backing to Model code of conduct can play a significant role. Disqualification of MLAs and MPs, and debarring of candidates from contesting in elections against whom charges of serious criminal offences have been framed must be implemented. Empowering election commission is a must to make it fully independent and immune from political pressure and biases. There must be introduction of a collegium system for the appointment of CEC and other election commissioners. Making its expenditure charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India. Same protection must be provided to other election commissioners as given to CEC.

**CONCLUSION:** Most modern democracies are based on representative form of the government. Elections play an indispensable part in a representative democracy. However, elections are just a tool to achieve the wider aim of good governance and realizing the aspirations of

the people. The power, prestige and money associated with political offices have made elections the prime focus of democracy. Capturing political power has become the central concern. The centrality of governance in democracy can be restored through long-pending electoral reforms and putting the electoral promises of the political parties from past election to a rigorous test before next elections. Only then the democracy will become "the government of the people, by the people and for the people," instead of a government by the politicians, of the politicians and for the politicians.

### ► COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM: MYTH OR REALITY

#### #CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS

**Why this topic?** NITI Aayog has been constituted to actualize the important goal of cooperative federalism and enable good governance in India. On the premise that strong States make a strong nation, NITI Aayog acts as the quintessential platform for the Government of India by bringing States together as 'Team India' to work towards the national development agenda.

**INTRODUCTION:** Conditions of India at the time of independence in 1947 were the guiding factor behind the shape and design of Indian constitution. One of the biggest element of Indian constitution was to make India a cooperative federal state. In contrast to unitary state, India, being extremely diverse country not just geographically but also culturally, chose federal model. But, India was not exactly one identity at the time of independence. It suffered from separatism, regional inequalities and most importantly inadequate nation building. Thus, rather than adopting US-type dual federalism, India adopter centrally tilting cooperative federalism.

However, we should realize that our forefathers, being humans, took their decision with colonial experience in their mind. Therefore, rather than stability, India preferred representiveness and accountability. Thus, despite being federal state, India adopted Parliament system.

Thus, Party Politics of India is able to distort Indian federalism. For example, Article 356 misuse and activism by Governor only happens in states where opposition party is ruling. Moreover, inter state issues like inter state water issues gets political hype only when different political parties are ruling in different states.

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Therefore, a rational conclusion is that cooperative federalism in India as envisioned by constitution remains a myth. However, this essay will focus on how to make cooperative federalism a reality in India. But, first let us look at the depth of distortion that party politics bring in federalism of India.

### **MAIN BODY: Tribhang of Indian Federalism:**

As explained before, Indian federalism gets distorted by political party system of India. This distortion is most noticeable in political sphere but as politics is Athashastra, the distorting effect is also felt in economic sphere.

Starting with political sphere, the distorting causes crisis of nation building. Regional political parties make sure that regional identity remains strong. However, national political parties try to focus on unity in uniformity. This tension leads to nation building crisis.

Moreover, the distortion distorts the constitutional post of governor. He was made head of the state to emphasise on unity of India and he was made only a nominal head to make Indian unity compatible with diversity. However, in practice Governor is agent of political ruling at center. Thus, in states where opposition party is ruling, becomes very activist. For example, Lt. Governor and Administrator of Delhi and Pondicherry are very active. Plus, during the time of political instability in states like Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Karnataka, Governor's activism is tilted towards centre.

Further, the distortion has made mockery of Article 356. As per Architect of Constitution, **B. R. Ambedkar Article 356 was to be a dead letter**. Yet, political history of India speaks loudly that Article 356 only barks at opposition ruled states.

Moving on, in economic sphere, central government through Finance Commission and Planning Commission (now not existant) was expected to reduce developmental imbalance in India. Instead of this, economic policies of center has always benifited states where its party rules. This becomes evident by looking at North-South imbalance in distribution of tax revenue. Also, the neglect of North East States has to, a lot of extent, do with low seat share of North East in Parliament.

Thus, Cooperative Federalism in India is definitely a myth. However, it can become a reality if India is willing to take difficult but doable reforms.

**Making Cooperative Federalism a Reality:** To highlight the crux of the matter, we should remember M. N. Venkat Challyiah Commissions observation that no political reforms will be successful if political party are not reformed. Therefore, the first step to make cooperative federalism a reality is to make **Indian Political Parties democratic**. Only when party leaders are elected by party members, then the state leaders will actually become free from remote control of national leaders. This freedom will provide foundation to cooperative federalism where states will gain significant autonomy from center.

However, still centre retains governor-route to mingle with state's decision making. Therefore, logical next step should be to **reform post of governor**. On this **Sarkaria Commission** has suggested to retain all provisions of governor in the constitution as they currently are. However, Sarkaria Commission has suggested methods to realise constitutional morality of Governor. The Commission suggests to codify conventions regarding governor's appointment, removal and functioning.

For example, the code should provide for consultation with Chief Minister while appointing Governor. Further, the code should direct that Governor should be non-political person and outsider of the state he is going to be nominated.

Moving on to the **Third step**, we need to ensure that dispute resolution between federal units happen with the spirit of cooperative federalism. This requires consultation on regular basis for resolving day to day federal issues. For this, institution of Zonal Councils should be revived.

However, the real disputes between federal units are on major policy issue. Honoring the foresight of constitutional makers, we can use **Article 263 inter-state councils** to get consensus among federal units so that policy reflects cooperative federalism. The example of GST council and 101st Constitutional Amendment Act is a case in point.

Further, for dealing with inter-state river water disputes, we need to promote bottom-up political negotiations rather than top-down tribunal arbitration. The recent amendment to inter-state water disputes Act is welcomed on this ground. Therefore, the political will for implementing it is need of hour.

**Lastly**, as politics is arthashastra, institution of Finance Commission needs reforms similar to the reforms that made Planning Commission into Niti Aayog. Therefore,

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Team India is also needed to decide on the members and terms of reference of Finance Commission.

**CONCLUSION:** Thus, we can ensure that polity of India reflects cooperative federalism. But, how will the status-quo change? Why people benefiting from the status quo agree to change it? The answer to this is simple "No! they will not agree to change." Thus, we the people of India needs to force change. Therefore, the civil society needs to come out and go to people's room and educate them on the benefits of cooperative federalism. Citizens need to be educated that their problems are divided between different federal units and therefore, only cooperative federalism could provide them meaningful resolution.

Thus, the making of cooperative federalism as real fact in Indian political system is going to be protracted conflict. But, the democracy of India can ensure everyone that if the people of India have made up their mind to live in harmonious political system, then no one can stop the change.

Therefore, remember Gandhi "Be the change you want to see" and go out, join civil society, contribute and make history.

### ► DECENTRALISATION OF POWER AND IMPORTANCE OF PANCHAYATS

#PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

**Why this topic?** *The establishment of Panchayati Raj institutions(PRI) is going to complete three decades, so the time is ripe to evaluate their performance so far and identify course correction required for more devolution of democracy, increased participation of people for an aware and empowered citizenry.*

**INTRODUCTION:** The essence of democracy is decentralisation of power and allowing governance to reach the grass roots for the welfare of people. Local government elected by the people thus imbibes democratic functioning of the society involving residents of the area. The concept of local government has been in India ever since the dawn of civilisation in various forms including that of Sabhas and Samitis at the village level. It was in the **year 1882 when Lord Ripon** issued a resolution on **Local Self Government**. Objections were raised by the bureaucracy of those days against any extension of the powers of local bodies and giving them a democratic character. It was a comprehensive resolution which dealt with administrative areas, the constitution of local bodies, their functions, finances and

powers. This was an important landmark in the evolution of local self- government in India. This led to the strengthening of local institution over a period of time leading to its incorporation in **PART IV** of the Indian Constitution.

**MAIN BODY:** **Article 40** of the Constitution provides for organisation of village panchayats and also endows them with such powers and authority to enable them to function as units of self-government. But Article 40 being part of **Directive Principles of State Policy** could not be judicially imposed. Consequently, Government of India constituted various committees for the proper functioning and devolution power at the ground level. The government accepted the recommendations of **Balwant Rai Mehta Committee** which proposed to set up a three tier structure of panchayats in India having **Gram Panchayats** at the village level, **Panchayat Samiti** at the block level and **Zilla Parishad** at the district level. It was also considered that there is an imperative need to enshrine in the Constitution certain basic and essential features of Panchayati Raj Institutions to impart strength, certainty and continuity to it. Thus, accordingly the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 and Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1992 were enacted by the government.

**PART IX and IXA** were added to the Constitution after the amendment. It provides for constitution of **Panchayat** at the village, intermediate and district level; **Gram Sabha** at the village level consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls of the village; **Reservation of seats** for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, women; constitution of **Finance Commission** to review financial position of Panchayats and make suitable recommendations for devolution of funds to panchayats; elections to be conducted for panchayats by State Election Commission.

**PART IXA** provides for the constitution and composition of **Municipalities; Ward Committees**; power to impose tax by municipalities; **Finance Commission** to review financial position of municipalities and allocate taxes; election to municipalities; **District Planning Committee** and **Metropolitan planning Committee**.

On the basis of above, the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been in existence for a long time, the participation of people at the grass root level has become more of a bureaucratic and mechanical exercise. There have been various instances in the past where approval from Gram Sabha has been either forced or forged for acquisition of land for various commercial purposes including mining.

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Even the local bureaucracy has not helped much in nurturing the institution to grow and sustain at ground level. Merely by making panchayats a part of the Constitution will not solve the case of grass root democracy unless its limbs are empowered. Thus, the core issues of local self- governance involve the '**principle of subsidiarity**' which means that what can best be done at the lower levels of government should not be centralised at higher levels; a clear delineation of functions entrusted to the local bodies; effective devolution of financial powers and functions and convergence of services for the citizens as well as citizens centric governance structures.

**The Second Administrative Reform Commission (2nd ARC)** on '**Local Governance**' has suggested various measures to address these core issues. For example:-

Constitutional status to panchayats and municipalities aimed at a fundamental shift in the nature of governance. However, experience of the past suggests that creating structures of elected local governments and ensuring regular elections do not necessarily guarantee effective local empowerment. While Panchayats, Nagarpalikas and Municipalities have come into existence and elections are being held, this has not always translated into real decentralisation of power because the Constitution left the issue of degree of empowerment and devolution to the State Legislature. State Governments and their bureaucracy are not always in favour to effectively empower local governments because they view it as diminishing of their power and hold. Even mandatory provisions like the constitution of District Planning Committees and Metropolitan Planning Committees have been ignored in many States. Thus, compulsory empowerment of panchayats and municipalities by the state having a dedicated bureaucracy at ground level is necessary for effective local empowerment.

Under **Article 243G**, while framing laws on Panchayats, State Legislatures should endow these institutions 'with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government'. Thus, Panchayats are 'governments at their own level' and have autonomous jurisdiction of their own. However, the problem arises when we find government functioning at various levels thereby creating overlapping jurisdiction and autonomy. In such a case, autonomy of one may rub against autonomy of another in similar jurisdictions. Thus, providing autonomy to panchayats will also mean withdrawal of certain activities or functions from the State Government and transferring them to local bodies. This will give

panchayats a true independent and autonomous identity independent from the state government to perform their power and functions.

Powers to panchayats and municipalities have been provided to enable them to function as institutions of self- governance under **Article 243 (G) and 243(W)** respectively. For this, they may also be empowered to prepare local plans for economic development and social justice and to implement schemes and perform functions including those listed in the **Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules**. However, the past experience suggests that progress of devolution of powers and responsibilities to local governments at various levels have been poor and uneven. The implementation space at local levels is thus occupied by a multiplicity of governmental agencies leading to confusion, unnecessary duplication and wastage of funds. Thus, there should be clear delineation of functions for each level of local government. It has to be done continuously by restructuring organisations and framing subject-matter laws so as to avoid overlapping of functions. 2<sup>nd</sup> ARC has suggested adding subjects on education, public health including community health centres/area hospitals, traffic management and civic policing activities, urban environment management and heritage and land management including registration in the 12th Schedule.

The local bodies rely heavily on their respective state governments for **financial inflows**. The major sources of income for local governments like property tax are not properly collected due to lack of a proper mechanism of levying and collection of such tax. This makes the coffers of local bodies extremely inadequate to meet their operational needs. Responsibility to provide civic amenities falls short of expectation due to inadequacy of funds. Thus, the local governments have to stay at the mercy of their state government for allocation of funds through grants to meet their needs including salary of the staff. In this respect, **Article 243H and 243X** make it obligatory for the state government to authorise the local bodies by law to impose taxes, duties etc. and assign to the local bodies such taxes/duties levied and collected by the state government.

**State Finance Commission (SFC) under Article 243I and 243Y** recommends principles for distribution of funds between the urban local bodies and different panchayats. Thus, the role of State Finance Commission becomes important regarding devolution of financial resources for panchayats and municipalities. However, devolution of finance to local bodies depends upon the revenue generated by each state which is never same.

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## DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

### ► WHEN FREE SPEECH IS TRULY FREE

#FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION

**Why this topic?** *Constant attack on free speech is becoming a norm; whether on real journalism, intellectuals, students etc. On the other side, real issues highlighted by free thinking and speech are regularly swept under the carpet by fake and paid media. This brings into highlight the importance of sane thoughts and for this free speech is an important factor for a vibrant democracy.*

While some states have followed the concept of pooling of all revenues and then sharing, others follow different percentages of devolution for different taxes. Thus, apart from principles of devolution of taxes, even fiscal administration of every state needs to be improved as it involves levy and collection of taxes at local level. State governments generally take a long time to implement the report of SFCs which further delay the process of devolution of funds.

The crucial issue of **capacity building** in urban and rural local bodies remains a largely neglected area in decentralised self-governance. Lack of training of personnel has resulted in capacity deficit within the Panchayat and Municipal Institutions. Thus, a proper exercise needs to be taken for capacity building which includes individual development along with organisational development through various schemes. Individual development involves the development of human resources including enhancement of an individual's knowledge, skills and access to information. It enables them to improve their performance and that of their organisation. State government should encourage holistic training programmes involving expertise in different fields. This can be best achieved by 'networking' of institutions concerned with various subjects such as financial management, rural development, disaster management and general management etc.

**CONCLUSION:** Empowering local bodies at ground level is very important as it involves people at local level which helps in strengthening democratic decentralisation. However, for the local bodies to function efficiently, they must be provided autonomy in their functioning. Local bodies having administrative, legislative and financial autonomy with a dedicated bureaucracy at the lower level will help in realizing the dream of Mahatma Gandhi.

"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending, circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But, it will be an oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual, always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of the villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integrated units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and will derive its own strength from it." – **Mahatma Gandhi**

**INTRODUCTION:** Freedom is a theme which is going to come up again and again for creating a vibrant democracy. It is a term, like truth, that has globally become extremely important today. But it is not an easy concept to understand, especially in a public political discourse. First of all, there are many kinds of freedom: freedom to speak, to write, to think, to imagine, to live our lives, to eat what we want, and so on. Since this term is invoked so quickly and so easily — witness little children saying they want their freedom to have ice cream! — It is important that we understand its diverse meanings in our everyday use of this term. Hence, let us understand what one of the most important expressions of freedom, free speech, could mean. Freedom to hold forth?

People often tend to think that among the main elements of democracy are the holding of elections and a free media. Both elections and free media are important because they stand, among other things, for the notions of free speech and free expression. Casting a vote anonymously, of one's own free will, is an example of free expression and is broader than just 'free speech'. Similarly, when the media has the freedom to air all kinds of views, it is seen to be an example of free speech. But is free speech really the essence of democracy? Is it really so important for an effective democracy?

**MAIN BODY:** Paradoxically, there is an inherent tension between free speech and democracy. If free speech is understood merely as the freedom to say what one wants, then that is obviously not conducive to meaningful social behaviour. For example, one can spread falsehood about another in the name of free speech. One can insult, lie, create harm and hatred through free speech. In these cases, free speech should rightfully be called rumour and gossip. Rumour, gossip, fake news and deliberate lying can be hidden under the guise of free speech. It is speech with an ulterior motive. To call these as free speech is a mistake.

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The answer to the problem of defining what really constitutes free speech lies in **understanding the meaning of 'free' in free speech. What is really free in free speech?** The freedom to say what one wants? We can't really say what we want all the time since all speech is constrained. We are constrained by language, words, concepts and grammar, and even by the physical contours of our mouth. We are constrained by the biological and cognitive structures related to thought and its expression through language. Socially, we are not fully free to say what we want. We cannot make certain utterances in certain places. A commentator, commenting on a game of cricket, cannot suddenly give a lecture on philosophy saying that he is protected by free speech!

In addition to constraints, all speech also has a cost. When we utter something, good or bad, there is a price to pay. Even in personal relations with family and friends, we cannot say what we want. If we do so — that is, if we are honest and outspoken — there is a price to pay. Relationships get broken, wars are declared between people because somebody spoke 'freely'. Thus, the essence of free speech is not really about the freedom to say what we want. It is more about speech which is free, which **comes with no cost**. Free speech is actually speech for which you don't pay a price.

The freedom of speech and expression under **Article 19(1)(a)** must take shape from the goals set out in the Preamble and must be read in the light of the principles mentioned therein. The Preamble seeks to promote "Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation". In its widest meaning and amplitude, fraternity is understood as a common feeling of brotherhood. While justice, liberty and equality have been made justiciable rights under the Constitution, the idea of fraternity has been used to interpret rights, especially horizontal application of rights.

The Preamble consciously chooses to assure the dignity of the individual, in the context of fraternity, before it establishes the link between **fraternity, unity and integrity of India**. The rights enshrined in Part III have to be exercised by individuals against the backdrop of the ideal of fraternity, and viewed in this light, Article 19(2) incorporates the vision of fraternity. Hence, the restriction imposed by the statutory provision (section 499 Indian Penal Code) satisfies the content of constitutional fraternity.

The fraternal ideal finds resonance also in **Part IVA of the Constitution. Article 51A** of the Constitution, which

deals with the fundamental duties of a citizen, makes it a duty "to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women". In fact, the Supreme Court has held that Part IVA could be used as an interpretative tool while assessing the constitutional validity of laws, especially in the context of restrictions imposed on rights.

But paying a price is not in the hands of the speaker. When we say or write something, we do not know who will take offence at it. People get upset and take offence very easily these days! Free speech is nothing but the conditions under which the hearer is not allowed to take offence and intimidate the speaker.

The real freedom in 'free speech' lies not in the freedom of the speaker to say what she wants but in the constraint on hearers to allow the speaker to say what she wants. Thus, when we demand the right to free speech, we are essentially demanding the right to stop others from not letting us speak. The most important consequence of the idea of free speech is that it **shifts the responsibility of free speech from the speaker to the hearer**. But does this mean that anybody can say what they want? Can they slander a person through falsehood in the name of free speech? Is slandering a person the same as criticising the government or the nation? After all, our governments, independent of which party is in power, have effectively used the charge of sedition to stop certain utterances in public.

**Criticism as a duty:** It is not free speech to purposefully slander a person. But criticising the government or nation is not the same as slandering an individual. Such criticism is not just a right, it is more a duty of democratic societies. In a true democracy, there is nothing that can be considered as slandering the government, even if a criticism may be wrong and unjustified. That is because free speech is a tool to make democracy workable and it is not really about the individual freedom to say what one wants.

**Democracy is about governance for others and on behalf of others.** It is a social and public system of responsibility of governance. The very foundation of democracy is collective action and the real freedom in a democracy is the freedom of choosing who will govern on our behalf. The ideal of democracy is that we are all potential rulers — any one of us can be the Prime Minister of our country. When we elect somebody, we are only putting a group of people to govern on behalf of

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us. Free speech is the mechanism to make sure that they govern correctly and on our behalf. It is only free speech, defined in this manner that makes democracy workable.

The true power of free speech lies in its capacity to make those in power accountable to those who do not have power. It is a means to control those in power and is not really about freedom of individuals. The price we demand for making somebody govern on our behalf (the elected leaders) is to allow us to say what we want about them, not as individuals but as political leaders.

**CONCLUSION:** Thus, true free speech covers only those acts of speech which speak against power, and keep those in power accountable. It thus safeguards the most cherished democratic principle. Free speech by itself is not the essence of democracy but is the means by which any democracy can be sustained. Anybody who doesn't like to hear criticism of government or government representatives is being undemocratic. We dilute the importance of free speech when we use it to derive personal benefit or cause harm or do so in situations which are not about power. Speech, in the task of keeping check on power, has to be subsidised and made free by those in power.

### ► COMMITMENT TOWARDS SECULARISM ENABLES FRATERNITY IN SOCIETY

#SECULARISM

**Why this topic?** Constant focus on 'Divide and Rule' politics by various political parties results in denting the multicultural and secular values of the nation.

Recently, the Supreme Court restrained Sudarshan News from broadcasting a divisive program targeting the entire community based on religion.

**INTRODUCTION:** India's success as a multi-religious, multilingual, multiracial, multicultural society will depend on how successful it is in working its secularism. No society can prosper or be at peace with itself if one-fourths of its population feels neglected, deprived and unwanted. It is disconcerting to see that, in recent times, serious questions are being raised about India's secularism.

It is for the first time since Independence that the majoritarian ideology is being talked about so openly, defiantly and persistently. The Supreme Court itself has expressed apprehensions in this regard: "India till now is a secular country... we do not know for how long it will remain a secular country."

**MAIN BODY: Secularism — Constitutional Precepts and Reality:** It was the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment which amended Preamble and changed the description of India from "sovereign democratic republic" to a "sovereign, socialist secular democratic republic", and also changed the words "unity of the nation" to "unity and integrity of the nation". A series of articles in the Constitution underline the precepts of secularism. The reality is, however, quite disappointing. The majority community as also the minorities are totally disillusioned with the working of secularism. Instead of being the cementing force, secularism has led to alienation of all communities.

In a secular state, religion is expected to be a purely personal and private matter and is not supposed to have anything to do with the governance of the country. The Supreme Court had observed in the Bommai case that if religion is not separated from politics, the religion of the ruling party tends to become the state religion. This seems to be coming true.

**Operationalising Secularism:** India's future is intrinsically tied up with secularism. To make a real success of it, action on a number of important points is necessary. The **first** is to **define the word "secular"**. Since secularism has been declared as a part of the basic structure of the Constitution, governments must be made accountable for implementing it. But how can they be held accountable unless the meaning of the term "secular" is clear? The **second** is to **define the word "minority"**. The concept of secularism is based on recognition and protection of minorities. The two cannot be separated. One would have, therefore, expected that the founding fathers of the Constitution would first define the term minorities. Unfortunately, this was never done.

The **third**, and most critical, is the setting up of a **commission on secularism** for ensuring adherence to the constitutional mandate on secularism. To be effective, such a commission must be appointed by an amendment of the Constitution and should be presided over by a former chief justice of India.

The **fourth** is the **separation of religion from politics**. It is of such urgency that no time should be wasted in bringing this about. The Constituent Assembly (Legislative) had passed an explicit resolution on the subject as far back in 1948. The first prime minister of India had welcomed the resolution and assured that the government wished to do everything in their power to achieve the objective which lies behind this resolution but action on resolution was non-existent. Even later,

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the governments did not sufficiently act proactively on the resolution. It was only after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, when the secular credentials were being seriously questioned in India and abroad, and hence the Gol brought the **Constitution (Eightieth Amendment) Bill** and a bill for amendment of the Representation of the People Act before Parliament in 1993 to bring about separation of religion from politics. However, the bills failed to receive adequate support and had to be withdrawn.

Unless this issue is addressed so as to carry through a suitable Constitution amendment, it will be futile to talk about India as a secular nation. On the basis of past experience and to meet the concerns expressed by some political parties during the debate on the Constitution (Eightieth Amendment) Bill in 1993 regarding the likely misuse of such an enactment, the suggestion is that the amendment bill should be confined only to deregistration of a political party which has religious links and restraining such political party from contesting elections at any level in the country.

The **fifth** item for action pertains to the **right to propagation of religion**. There are a number of decisions of the high courts and the Supreme Court according to which the **right to propagation is not a right to conversion**. This problem has to be nipped in the bud by **amending Article 25** to delete the word "propagation".

The **sixth** action pertains to doing away with the protection to minority educational institutions. There was considerable opposition to this article in the Constituent Assembly. There is no justification to continue this right.

**Finally**, serious thought needs to be given to deleting the provision for prohibition of cow slaughter. Article 48, though a part of the directive principles, has now been elevated in public discourse to the level of a fundamental right. The basic question is whether a total ban on slaughter of cows and their progeny is justified on any grounds at all except that of the religious sentiments of Hindus. But even in regard to them, there is no universal demand for a total ban by all Hindus. Most importantly, such a ban is not in keeping with secularism. Particularly in the drought-hit areas in a number of states such as Maharashtra, it is causing large-scale distress to farmers. The Indian Constitution is a mix of several compromises, particularly insofar as it's proclaimed secular ideology is concerned.

**CONCLUSION:** Two basic electoral reforms are imperative if secularism is to be strengthened. The first

is increasing participation of voters by investing in mass awareness programs so that voters choose the most apt candidates by overlooking divide and rule politics. The second is providing NOTA with the power of rejection so as to gradually pressurise political parties to field better candidates and forcing them to look beyond divisive politics. A lesser divided legislature on religious issues and more focused on inclusive democracy can become the harbinger of secular ideals but great deal remains to be done if secularism is to become a way of life in India.

### ► IS OUR PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY SHOWING PRESIDENTIAL TRAITS?

#DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

**Why this topic?** *With almost presidential style campaign in the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general elections where importance of local level candidates were undermined, resulted in undermining parliamentary democracy, so the question now arises:- "How to strengthen our parliamentary democracy where every representative is important or is it the time to consider presidential system?"*

**INTRODUCTION:** This debate is academic. A switchover to the presidential system is not possible under our present constitutional scheme because of the '**basic structure**' doctrine propounded by the Supreme Court in 1973 which has been accepted by the political class without reservation, except for an abortive attempt during the Emergency to have it overturned. The Constituent Assembly had made an informed choice after considering both the British model and the American model and after Dr. B.R. Ambedkar had drawn up a balance sheet of their merits and demerits.

**MAIN BODY:** A presidential system centralises power in one individual unlike the parliamentary system, where the Prime Minister is the first among equals. The surrender to the authority of one individual, as in the presidential system, is dangerous for democracy. The over-centralisation of power in one individual is something we have to guard against. Those who argue in favour of a presidential system often state that the safeguards and checks are in place: that a powerful President can be stalled by a powerful legislature. But if the legislature is dominated by the same party to which the President belongs, a charismatic President or a "strong President" may prevent any move from the legislature. On the other hand, if the legislature is dominated by a party opposed to the President's party and decides to checkmate him, it could lead to a



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stalemate in governance because both the President and the legislature would have democratic legitimacy.

A diverse country like India cannot function without consensus-building. This “winner takes it all” approach, which is a necessary consequence of the presidential system, is likely to lead to a situation where the views of an individual can ride roughshod over the interests of different segments.

The other argument, that it is easier to bring talent to governance in a presidential system, is specious. You can get ‘outside’ talent in a parliamentary system too. Right from C.D. Deshmukh to T.A. Pai to Manmohan Singh to M.G.K. Menon, talent has been coming into the parliamentary system with the added safeguard of democratic accountability, because the ‘outsiders’ have to get elected after assuming office. On the other hand, bringing ‘outside’ talent in a presidential system without people being democratically elected would deter people from giving independent advice to the chief executive because they owe their appointment to him/her.

Those who speak in favour of a presidential system have only the Centre in mind. They have not thought of the logical consequence, which is that we will have to move simultaneously to a “gubernatorial” form in the States. A switch at the Centre will also require a change in the States. Are we ready for that?

On the other side, our parliamentary system it is to vote for a legislature in order to form the executive. It has created a unique breed of legislator, largely unqualified to legislate, who has sought election only in order to wield executive power. There is no genuine separation of powers: the legislature cannot truly hold the executive accountable since the government wields the majority in the House. The parliamentary system does not permit the existence of a legislature distinct from the executive, applying its collective mind freely to the nation’s laws.

In our system, coalition governments have been obliged to focus more on politics than on policy or performance. It has forced governments to concentrate less on governing than on staying in office, and obliged them to cater to the lowest common denominator of their coalitions, since withdrawal of support can bring governments down. The parliamentary system has distorted the voting preferences of an electorate that knows which individuals it wants but not necessarily which parties or policies.

India’s many challenges require political arrangements that permit decisive action, whereas ours increasingly promote drift and indecision. We must have a system of

government whose leaders can focus on governance rather than on staying in power.

A system of directly elected chief executives at all levels – panchayat chiefs, town mayors, Chief Ministers (or Governors) and a national President – elected for a fixed term of office, invulnerable to the whims of the legislature, and with clearly defined authority in their respective domains – would permit India to deal more efficiently with its critical economic and social challenges.

Cabinet posts would not be limited to those who are electable rather than those who are able. At the end of a fixed period of time — say the same five years we currently accord to our Lok Sabha — the public would be able to judge the individual on performance in improving the lives of Indians, rather than on political skill at keeping a government in office.

The fear that an elected President could become a Caesar is ill-founded since the President’s power would be balanced by directly elected chief executives in the States. In any case, the Emergency demonstrated that even a parliamentary system can be distorted to permit autocratic rule. Dictatorship is not the result of a particular type of governmental system.

Indeed, the President would have to work with Parliament to get his budget through or to pass specific Bills. India’s fragmented polity, with dozens of political parties in the fray, makes a U.S.-style two-party gridlock in Parliament impossible. An Indian presidency, instead of facing a monolithic opposition, would have the opportunity to build issue-based coalitions on different issues, mobilising different temporary alliances of different smaller parties from one policy to the next – the opposite of the dictatorial steamroller some fear a presidential system could produce.

Any politician with aspirations to rule India as President will have to win the support of people beyond his or her home turf; he or she will have to reach out to different groups, interests, and minorities. And since the directly elected President will not have coalition partners to blame for his or her inaction, a presidential term will have to be justified in terms of results, and accountability will be direct and personal.

Democracy is vital for India’s survival: we are right to be proud of it. But few Indians are proud of the kind of politics our democracy has inflicted upon us. With the needs and challenges of one-sixth of humanity before our leaders, we must have a democracy that delivers progress to our people. Changing to a presidential

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system can be a way of ensuring a democracy that works.

On the desirability aspect, which presidential system are we talking about when we pit the American presidential system against the Westminster model? In the American system, the President appoints his officers; they have limited tenure and their offices are confirmed by the Senate (Upper House). Then, we have the Latin American model, where some Constitutions give Presidents a term often amounting to life tenure like in Cuba. There are plenty of models to choose from and there are arguments against each. So, which system is being argued for when the votaries of change seek a shift to the presidential system?

Our Rajya Sabha cannot be compared to the U.S. Senate where each state has its own Constitution and has the power to change it. The relationship between the states and the federal government is extraordinary; as is the status of their courts and the manner of appointment of judges. I do not think people have thought about it. Merely stating that a change to the presidential system is needed does not mean much. The Indian debate currently is not focussed on the kind of presidential system envisaged. What is the term we are seeking for the President? Should he/she be re-elected? If so, for how many terms? Then, who decides the change? Parliament? All this requires a massive amendment to the 'basic structure' of the Constitution. The Supreme Court has spelt its view on the 'basic structure' of the Constitution.

Giving an opinion is one thing. A judgment is a more carefully considered conclusion. Those who support the presidential system should do their homework when they argue against the parliamentary system. There is also the matter of separation of powers. In the U.S., the President, who is also the Supreme Commander, has the power to veto the Congress. Does India need this? The manner of removing the U.S. President through impeachment is a very complex process. There is also the possibility of aggregating more powers to the President.

**CONCLUSION:** Before embarking for a new set-up, it will definitely be more feasible to improve the current system so why not reform thoroughly and cleanse the electoral processes to get better representatives. There are ideas going around about reforming the electoral processes to make democracy more robust. From limiting expenditure of political parties and deciding the ceiling on the expenditure, declaring the results for a combination of booths instead of constituencies. It is

advisable to debate this and ensure that the gaping loopholes in the electoral processes are speedily plugged. The present parliamentary system has been tried and tested for 70 years. Rather than change the system, why not reform thoroughly and cleanse the electoral processes?

### ► EFFICIENT ELECTORAL PROCESS IS A GUARANTOR OF A VIBRANT DEMOCRACY

#### #ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

**Why this topic?** In each successive Lok Sabha, the number of parliamentarians having criminal records is increasing; almost touch 45% in the current Lok Sabha. It now the apt time to take a stock of our electoral processes because sound and transparent processes help in bringing better quality of political representatives and also prevent increasing criminalisation and use of money power in our political system.

**INTRODUCTION:** One of the most important features of a democratic polity is elections at regular intervals. Elections constitute the signpost of democracy and are the mediums through which the attitudes, value and beliefs of the people towards their political environment are reflected. Elections grant people a government and the government has constitutional right to govern those who elect it. Elections are the central democratic procedure for selecting and controlling the leaders. Elections provide an opportunity to the people to express their faith in the government from time to time and change it when the need arise.

If the process of reform in governance has to start, it has to essentially start from the reform of the electoral system, which serves as the entry point for the politicians to enter the governing system. Thus, free and fair elections are indispensable for the success of democracy.

In continuance of the British legacy, India has opted for the parliamentary democracy, since 1952, India has witnessed elections to the legislative bodies at both the national and state levels. Our system was largely free from any major flaws till the fourth general election. The distortion in its working appeared, for the first time, in the fifth general elections and these got multiplied in the successive election, especially in those held in the eighties and there after a number of initiatives have been taken by the election commission from time to time to cleanse the electoral process in India. Great political reforms are necessary in these fields. Some of

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the electoral reforms are suggested below in this regards.

**MAIN BODY:** On the issue of **disclosure of criminal antecedents** of the candidates, the ECI should provide for more stringent punishment for concealing or providing wrong information on form 26 of conduct of election rules, 1961 to minimum two years imprisonment and removing the alternative' punishment of assessing a fine upon the candidates. Such a provision will reduce instances of candidates' wilfully concealing information of furnishing Wrong information.

**Funding of political parties** require fullest transparency so as to prevent their manipulations by various powerful elements (companies, lobby organisations, funding agencies). Hidden funding negatively impact fairness in elections as bigger parties tend to get large funding and they dominate all elections subverting multiparty democracy.

Compulsory **maintenance of accounts by political parties and audit** thereof agencies specified by the election commission: The candidates have a responsibility to maintain proper accounts of their income and expenditure and a proper follow up action to the declaration of assets and liabilities by the candidates should be taken up. The various particulars of the declarations should be audited by a special authority created specifically under law for this purpose. To enforce complete compliance by candidates, strict action should be taken up against the erring candidates.

To remedy the negative impact of the excessive cost of election the first step should be to **reduce the cost of election** themselves.

**Curbing irregularities in polling:** Political parties and influential persons manage large scale registration of bogus voters, or large scale deletion of name of unfriendly voters. In order to get rid of this, an online database should be created by the election commission. The electoral rolls in this system could be prepared at the Panchayat or district level. It would improve the inclusiveness, fairness, accuracy and of voter registration.

There should be significant efforts to **make electoral participation more accessible**. Access to polling stations should be widened for many people through the introduction of in person absentee. Or postal voting including for voters out of country and through providing special voting special voting and voter information facilities for refugees, the disabled, the aged, and those in remote areas, in-hospital etc.

**De-Criminalization of politics:** There have been several instances of persons charged with serious and heinous crimes like murder, rape, dacoity etc. This leads to a very undesirable and embarrassing situating of law breakers becoming law makers and moving around under police protection. The law should be amended by providing that any person who is accused of an offence punishable by imprisonment for five years or more should be disqualified from contesting election even when trial is pending, provided charges have been framed against him by the competent court. Such a step would go a long way in cleansing the political establishment from the influence of criminal elements and protecting the sanctity and protecting the sanctity of the legislative house.

**Decrease the number of registered parties:** This move is necessary because the smaller parties are far more vulnerable to 'ideological shifts' and in this era of fractured mandates, hold the beggar parties to ransom for their narrow political gains. The Elections Commission should be given powers to de-recognize smaller political parties on the basis of their performance. Another move to achieve this goal would be to increase the minimum number of primary member that are needed to form a political party.

**Increase the amount of security deposit:** This move is necessary to put a check on the number of non-serious candidates contesting union and state assembly elections. Too many candidates in the fray puts unnecessary and avoidable stress on the management of election and increases expenditure on account of security maintenance of law and order and requires extra number of balloting units of voting machines. In recent time the number of candidates fighting elections has shown an increasing trend and hence there is a need to review the amount of security deposit.

**Issue of rigging through muscle power and Intimidation:** The election commission should be empowered to take strong action on report of returning officers or civil society in regards to booth capturing or intimidation of the voters. Elections commission should make use of electronic surveillance equipment as a deterrent to booth capture of intimidation of voters.

**Non-interference of Religion in politics:** No religion or sect should participate in the election campaigns. Such a practice is against the soul of our democracy. The activities of some religious institution regarding open political support to particular person and parties should be considered a violation of the election.

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**NOTA with the power of rejection** so as to induce more voter turnout and eventually pressurise political parties to field better candidates.

Making political parties **answerable under RTI**. In this regard, CIC had declared them as public authorities under RTI. Even SC issued notices on this issue but parties remain unconcerned. Coverage under RTI by making them answerable is very necessary for keeping a check on them by concerned citizens.

**Use of common electoral rolls in the union and state elections:** This move will put a check on the cases of people finding their names missing in the electoral rolls. This happens because different lists are prepared by the election commission of India for general election and the state election commission for the election of the state assemblies and local bodies. The effort and expenditure that are involved in making purpose will be greatly reduced.

**Constitutional protection of all the members Election commission and independent secretariat** for the commission: In order to ensure the independence of the election commission and to keep it insulated from external pulls and pressures, an amendment is required to provide the very same protection and safe-guard in the matter of removability of election commissions from office as is available to the chief election commission. The independence of the election commission would be further strengthened if the secretariat of the election commission consisting of officers and staff at various levels is also insulated from the interference of the executive in the matter of their appointment; promotion and all such function are exclusively vested in the election commission of India.

Last but not least, all political parties should **behave more responsibly**. This will definitely strengthen parliamentary democracy in India.

**CONCLUSION:** In all these circumstances, the only recourse is to create a strong public opinion in favour of the electoral reforms which shall pressurize the ruling political class of the day to implement these electoral reforms which shall constitute the first step in tackling the huge menace of politico administrative corruption of which criminalization is an off-shoot. An independent media and enlightened public opinion have no substitute in pushing through reforms. If people vote according to their convictions and punish those who interfere with rules, corrupt practices will automatically disappear and this will go a long way towards enabling democracy to flourish and grow to its full capacity.

### ► ACTIVE AND ENLIGHTENED OPPOSITION NURTURES A SOUND DEMOCRACY

#DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

**Why this topic?** *A proactive and constructive opposition is an essential element for a sound and vibrant democracy. But both in 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha and 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, the opposition numbers have reduced substantially.*

*Recent suspension of Question Hour along with lesser voice and space allotted to opposition in the mainstream media are creating hindrance for making opposition proactive.*

*Whatever the numbers are there in Lok Sabha and in assemblies, the opposition should always be on the toes for cross checking the incumbents for a vibrant democracy.*

**INTRODUCTION:** Indian Parliamentary democracy is getting a bad name due to repeated suspension of work in Parliament. Despite important Bills pending in the Parliament, ruling party and opposition are at loggerheads on various issues. This result in wastage of important time on baseless discussions and the decisions demanding immediate attention are lost in the noise, chaos and clamour. The role of the opposition is not to oppose anything presented for discussion but to look at the issues which can be discussed for the betterment of the things proposed. Opposition for the sake of opposition is diverging from the roles and responsibility of a constructive opposition.

Some forms of ruling systems cannot tolerate opposition, and root it out wherever it arises. Other forms not only tolerate it, but make room for it within the institutions of government. This feature of 'internalised opposition' has sometimes been taken as a mark of limited, as opposed to absolute, government, and also as the mark of politics, as opposed to coercion. It is hard to imagine the feature without extremely complex institutions and constitutional devices: it is one of the principal problems of political thought to discover what makes such opposition possible.

**MAIN BODY:** Considering the above, what is the role of opposition in a democracy? The use of the term 'opposition', to denote forces within political institutions that resist the ruling officers or party, is comparatively recent. J. Cam Hobhouse, speaking in the House of Commons in 1826, remarked that it was said to be very hard on His Majesty's ministers to raise objections to some proposition. For his own part, he thought it was harder on His Majesty's opposition to compel them to

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## DEMOCRACY, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

take this course. Hansard records laughter at the phrase "**His Majesty's opposition**".

Although the term 'opposition' was used as far back as the eighteenth century to refer to a party or a caucus within an assembly, the suggestion of an established opposition is relatively new. It is now, however, quite normal to refer to a 'loyal opposition', and to imply that the interests of the State are as well served by the opposition as by the government itself.

The 'opposition' in the modern UK Parliament consists not merely of opposition parties or factions, but principally of a '**shadow formation**'. The offices of government are imitated within the opposition, which thereby forms itself into a body prepared to substitute for all the occupants of those offices at any time. The opposition has its leader, its base organisation and committees, and usually responds to every move of the government with counterproposals, representing, in theory, what it would do if it were in office.

Even in states with high levels of repression it is rare to find no trace of opposition. In single-party systems, the opposition may exist as an underground movement as in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics where no formal opposition to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was permitted but dissidents like Boris Yeltsin continued to exist. Or an opposition may engage in armed struggle as in El Salvador. Undue repression of the opposition often results in bloodshed and even change of government through violent means.

Recently in Belarus, there have been huge mass protests by the opposition against President Alexander Lukashenko (considered as the last remaining dictator in Europe).

In democratic systems, the opposition is officially permitted and recognised. Even the leader of opposition is given an honourable place in the system. In Britain, the position of the leader of Her Majesty's opposition is formalised in statute and he or she has certain rights, such as the right of reply to prime ministerial broadcasts. In India, too, the opposition leader has been given certain rights and privileges on par with a cabinet minister if he/she commands the support of the required number of Parliament members.

The concept of opposition in the modern democratic state is closely connected with the idea of the political party. A political party is a more or less organised group of citizens who act together as a political unit, have distinctive aims and opinions on the leading political issues and problems in the state, and who, by acting

together as a political unit, seek to obtain control of the government. The party that is out of the government at a given point of time is called the opposition party. The number of the opposition party/parties may be one or more depending on whether there is a dual-party or multiparty system.

The most prominent question that may strike one's mind is: **Why does democracy demand the existence of opposition?** An opposition party always looks for an opportunity to replace the party-in-government, and implement its own policies and programmes. As a result, it serves two purposes. **One**, the government of the day eschews being arbitrary in its actions and negligent of the interests of the people in general; and **second**, the people of a democratic country are offered an alternative in governance of the country in their interests.

The opposition parties **also enable men and women** who think alike on public questions to unite in support of a common body of principles and policies and to work together to see that those principles and policies are adopted and implemented by the government. Without organisation, the people can neither formulate principles easily nor agree on policy. The opposition makes articulate the inarticulate desires of sections of the masses and gives expression to their pent-up feelings. This goes a long way in checking violence and political crimes which are, in reality, fatal for the healthy survival of democracy.

Out of the innumerable problems which call for solution in a state, the opposition is expected to select those which are comparatively urgent, study them, think out solutions and present them to the people and to the government. And, thus, it **acts as a "broker of ideas"**. It preserves a sense of continuity in public policy, organises and educates the electorate, and helps to carry on and necessitate regular elections. It also dramatises politics and keeps the nation politically alive. It keeps the government on its toes.

The opposition, like the judiciary, is an **agent for safeguarding the Constitution** in case the government wittingly or unwittingly does something to violate it. The opposition also necessitates periodic interpretation, reinterpretation and amendment of the Constitution to suit changes in times, circumstances and priorities. In most democracies, the opposition's views have to be taken into consideration in **legislating on socially-sensitive matters**. The opposition has the capacity to instil in the government the confidence and ability to deal with national crises. Here, the opposition's support

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means that the entire country is behind the government in the hour of crisis. Not many would have forgotten the thundering speech and support given by Atal Behari Vajpayee in the Parliament (1971) when the Government of India led by Indira Gandhi had to withstand the Pakistani aggression. In the absence of the opposition, the government cannot be sure of the entire population's support. Moreover, the opposition also gives credence and authenticity to any measures of the government taken in the interests of the people and the state. The parties outside power extend support to certain measures as they cannot afford to be regarded as anti-people or anti-nation as they, too, have ultimately to face the praise or wrath of the public. Thus, the opposition does not always have to oppose the government.

Sometimes the parties in opposition oppose the government measures merely for the sake of opposition. This delays even the progressive steps of the government and results in waste of time, money and material. It also misleads the masses. Not infrequently, the leaders in opposition resort to demagoguery which is harmful for the nation's health. However politically ignorant the people may be, they cannot forgive such irresponsible and delinquent behaviour on the part of an opposition party.

In a democracy, the modus operandi of the opposition involve going to the people and criticising the government, giving press-statements, debating and discussing issues in Parliament, arousing public opinion, both national and international, and placing no-confidence motions against the government. In India, submitting a memorandum to the President is also a common practice. All these are commensurate with the democratic norms and contribute to the consolidation and stabilisation of democracy in the social and political system.

**CONCLUSION:** To sum up, the opposition fulfils certain necessary functions—so necessary, indeed, that many competent thinkers consider it essential to the working of representative government. Of course, the opposition sometimes delays the proceedings and the implementation of vital legislation. But the balance tilts towards its beneficial impact rather than the baneful. If democracy has come to stay, it is not because it is the perfect form of self-government. Unlike dictatorship or totalitarian systems, it does not believe in self-evident principles. No plan or policy can benefit the people if we look only at its 'pros' and deny the 'cons'. Only the opposition can provide those 'cons'. Above all, it is the

opposition that puts a rein on the power of the government and checks it from becoming absolute.

### ► SHOULD INDIA HAVE SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS?

#### #ELECTIONS

**Why this topic?** *One Nation, One Poll is being promoted as a panacea for reducing expenses, better synchronisation of work all across the country which according to the promoters of this idea state that repeated elections hamper work.*

*On the contrary, there are many dissenting voices especially of the opposition and regional political parties which fear hegemonic political landscape where richer, bigger and powerful parties will rule the roost. So any idea even proclaimed as noble has to be cross-checked and evaluated on the scale of making our democracy vibrant.*

**INTRODUCTION:** The call for holding simultaneous elections have grown recently and the incumbent government has advocated holding simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to utilise maximum time for governance which is otherwise lost due to political campaigns and rallies.

India got independence on 15th August, 1947, adopted its Constitution on 26th January, 1950 and held its first general election between October 1951 and March 1952 under the guidance of **Sukumar Sen** who was the first Chief Election Commissioner of India. It was a stupendous and colossal task of gigantic proportion to conduct election for around 4500 seats including the Parliament and State Assemblies for the first time in India. This process of simultaneous elections continued till the year 1967. One thing to remember here is that Congress governed both at the Centre and in majority of the states and it became easy to conduct such simultaneous elections till Congress enjoyed stupendous majority. However, with time, clout of Congress as a political party reduced giving rise to political instability both at the centre and in the states. This instability and rising local demands also led to the emergence of many regional parties across India. This led to instability of many state governments and slowly this process of simultaneous elections came to a pause due to the constitutional need of having a majority in the state assemblies. Even Lok Sabha got prematurely dissolved in 1970 and this disrupted the chain of holding simultaneous elections completely.

On this, let us now understand the feasibility of conducting simultaneous polls in present times where

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multi-party democracy, centre-state relations and use of technology through social media have assumed greater importance as compared to our distant past.

**MAIN BODY:** The Constitution of India establishes a two-tier government system with the Union Government at the Centre and respective State governments at the provinces. The Constitution has demarcated each level of government by devising an elaborate scheme of distribution of legislative, administrative and financial powers between the Centre and the States. In this respect, **Article 246** of the Constitution clearly **enumerates the Federal character** of the Indian Constitution. It empowers Parliament to make law under Union List, States to make law under State List and both the Parliament and States to make law under Concurrent List. Thus, the Constitution through its Articles has created a separate existence for the state government independent from the existence of the Centre. Thus, elections are conducted every five years in different states as per their constitutional existence. Over the period of years, stability of the various governments at state level has been lost. Coalition politics have emerged slowly over a period of years and now we are witnessing coalition government in various states. Compulsion of coalition politics have often resulted in premature dissolution of both Central and respective state governments. This has led to different election years for different states. On this note, let us understand the merits and demerits of conducting simultaneous elections of such gargantuan level in a culturally and topographically diverse country.

**Possible Merits:** Simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and all State Assemblies will provide continuity, consistency and stability in governance throughout the country. The entire country after the completion of election process can focus on governance for an uninterrupted period of five years. It will reduce the massive expenditure done during elections throughout the year. Every year some states witness assembly elections and even the political party in power at the Union gets involved during the election process. This diverts much of Central Government's time from important national and domestic concerns and it consumes energy and resources to ensure victory in such state assemblies. Elections in states lead to the imposition of Model Code of Conduct which effectively restricts introduction of new development programmes and schemes in the state. Irregular elections at different time of the year affect productivity and have an adverse impact on the economy of the nation as a whole.

If all elections to state assemblies and Lok Sabha are held at one time, it will give a stable five-year term to the political parties in power to focus towards implementing their political manifestos and government schemes. This will prove beneficial both for the government and the public. Finally, simultaneous election would reduce the type of manpower and resource deployment necessary for the conduct of elections. This will also help in controlling corruption to a large extent as use of unaccounted money through illegal sources such as hawala is very common. Even though Election Commission with the help of other administrative and regulatory bodies keeps a tight vigil, yet to do so continuously through the year becomes burdensome. It also deviates much of the resources and manpower into such regulations which in general course of event can be utilised for their regular work.

**Demerits:** India has a federal structure and a multi-party democracy where elections are held for State Assemblies and the Lok Sabha separately. The voters are better placed to express their voting choices keeping in mind the two different governments which they would be electing by exercising their franchise. This **distinction gets blurred somewhat when voters are made to vote for electing two types of government at the same time**, at the same polling booth, and on the same day. When state assembly elections will be held along with Lok Sabha, then the local issues concerning the state may get swept by emotive issues of national importance. Voters in such a scenario in the past have always went for the same party whenever simultaneous elections were held. Assembly elections are fought on local state issues and, in the true spirit of federalism, parties and leaders are judged in the context of their work done in the state.

Clubbing them with the general election could lead to a situation where the **national narrative submerges the regional problems and issues**. In case of simultaneous polls, **bigger political parties who are better funded have advantage** over smaller regional parties. Even the **corporates would favour a uniform government throughout India for their benefit** hence could pour their entire fund in one or two strong national political parties. This may act as a huge disadvantage for the smaller political parties thereby distorting the very idea of federalism in India. There are other situations which may arise and cannot be pre-empted currently due to lack of practical experience. One such instance that can happen is that due to **constitutional failure in a state, the state assembly has to be dissolved**. Then, will the state be allowed to carry on or **President's rule under**

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**Article 356** will be imposed? Similarly, **if Union government dissolves** prematurely due to coalition politics or passing of no-confidence motion or some other reasons, then will this **amount to dissolution of all state governments**? Thus these are certain practical constraints in having simultaneous elections. There will be other practical difficulties in terms of logistics and movement of personnels involved in the election process.

**Recommendations of various Reports:** Law Commission of India has suggested that election of Legislation Assemblies where term is ending six months after the General election to Lok Sabha can be clubbed with it but election result can be declared at the end of their tenure. This can be possible with the cooperation of political parties.

The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice noted that the Representation of People Act, 1951 **permits the Election Commission to notify general elections six months prior** to the end of the terms of Lok Sabha and state assemblies. The Committee recommended that elections could be held in two phases. It stated that elections to some Legislative Assemblies **could be held during the midterm of Lok Sabha**. Elections to the **remaining legislative assemblies could be held with the end of term of Lok Sabha**.

The NITI Aayog in its Three Year's Action Agenda has suggested that all elections in India should happen in a free, fair and synchronised manner so as to cause minimum campaign mode disruption to governance. In this direction, NITI Aayog has suggested to move towards switching to a **synchronised two-phase election to the Lok Sabha**. This would require a maximum one-time curtailment or extension of some state assemblies. To implement this in the national interest, a focused group of stakeholders comprising constitution and subject matter experts, think tanks, government officials and representatives of various political parties should be formed to work out appropriate implementation related details. This may include drafting appropriate constitution and statutory amendments, agreeing on a workable framework to facilitate transition to simultaneous elections, developing a stakeholder communication plan and various operational details.

**CONCLUSION:** Any proposal to strengthen the roots of democracy is always a welcome step and all stakeholders must be willing and accommodative to explore options for the same. In this respect, the

proposal to introduce simultaneous elections in India both to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies is a bold reform and must be carried forward with the consensus of all state assemblies. Simultaneous elections if at all possible should be complied within the constitutional constraints and without disturbing the federal structure of India as it is also a Basic Structure of the Indian Constitution. However, if any state is unwilling to come to the terms of simultaneous elections then, the Central Government shall patiently listen to their concerns. If the concerns are genuine, then effective steps and alternatives must be suggested so as to bring all stakeholders at one common platform.

### ► INDEPENDENCE OF JUDICIARY STRENGTHENS THE EDIFICE OF DEMOCRACY

#### #JUDICIAL REFORMS

**Why this topic?** Different reforms are part of journey towards a vibrant democracy. Hence reforms in Judiciary are seen from similar perspective. Although the guardian of the constitutional principles yet judiciary itself is facing numerous challenges both internal and external.

In this regard, a highly decisive, unbiased and proactive judiciary having full and high quality judges is the need of the hour to make our democracy vibrant.

**INTRODUCTION:** For the past couple of years, judiciary is regularly in limelight, sometimes due to decisive decision making such as on 'Privacy' but also due to wrong impression and mistrust it is has created by showing partisan attitude. This partisan approach was even questioned by four senior-most judges of the collegium by conducting an unprecedented open press conference.

Like all institutions of governance, the judiciary too requires a periodic dose of institutional reforms to keep pace with the societal demands. Over the years, the higher judiciary had been proactive in trying to improve and strengthen the judicial process and justice delivery system to make them more accessible, cost effective and less time consuming. The Government has also taken steps to improve the working of the judiciary keeping in mind the needs of litigants, particularly, those belonging to the poorer sections.

**MAIN BODY:** **Accelerated Justice** is an essential component of an effective judicial system. And speedy delivery of justice also reduces the cost to a litigant, thus making it affordable. In this context, the problem of



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pendency of cases in lower courts, and in some cases even in High Courts and Supreme Court, requires urgent attention. Speedy justice is an assurance extended to a citizen under the ambit of 'right to life' guaranteed under **Article 21** of our Constitution. **Speedy justice** can renew our people's faith in the administration of justice and in the 'rule of law'. These constitute the bedrock of our democracy. The framers of the Indian Constitution provided for an independent and strong judiciary which would work within the framework of the supremacy of the constitution and a parliamentary form of democracy in India.

There are three crore cases pending in courts. The arrears seem to be increasing every year as disposal of cases is less than the institution of new cases.

Computerisation can help enhance the productivity of judicial work. It can create an accessible data base to help both judges and lawyers; it can help case management and courtroom management; it can speed up judicial work by removing the need for paper based transactions. Recognising the utility of this tool, the Government has approved a proposal for the computerization of district and subordinate courts. An E-committee set up, on the advice of the Chief Justice of India, to monitor implementation of computerization of the judiciary has also submitted its report on the National Policy and Action Plan for the Implementation of Information & Communication Technology in the Indian Judiciary.

In the era of globalisation, liberalisation, privatisation, a growing integration of economics and societies around the world has certainly influenced many aspects of individual's lives and institutional character. Yet the basic aim of every society remains the same that is to secure a just and humane society. Therefore, the system has to be suitably amended/ reformed to meet the demands and emerging pressure from the society and to forward this cause transparency and accountability in the judicial system must be adhered to. Otherwise the day is not far when the masses may raise defiant voice against the performance of the judiciary.

As an institution, the Indian judiciary has always commanded a great respect from the people of this country. The roots of this high regard lie in the impartiality, and independence of the members of the judiciary. The deeper aim of a good society is to respect the judiciary with morality. As Chanakaya said "law and morality sustain the world." But morality comes from ethical values. The societal perception of judges as being detached and impartial referee is the greatest strength

of the judiciary. The real source of strengths of the judiciary lies in public confidence in the institutions.

The judiciary is one of the three basic organs of the state. The other two are the legislative and the executive. It has a significant role in the smooth functioning of the states and in a democracy; it is based on rule of law. Since time immemorial, law and judiciary have played a vital role in Indian Polity. The constitution accords a high place of pride to the judiciary by conferring the power of judicial review of legislature and administrative activities and entrusting it with the task of enforcement of the fundamental rights guaranteed under the constitution.

In a democratic polity, the Supreme Power of the state is shared among its three main organs as constitutional functionaries. Each one of these is independent and supreme within its allotted spheres and none is superior to the other. Justice has to be administered through the courts and such administration would relate to social, economic and political aspects of justice as stipulated in the preamble of the constitution of the judiciary. Therefore, becoming the most prominent and outstanding organ of the constitutional system for fulfilling the mandate of the constitution. The judiciary has to take up positive & creative functions in securing socio-economic justice to the people.

The constitutional task assigned to the judiciary is to adjudicate disputes between the individuals, between individuals and the state, between the states and between the union and the states and while to adjudicating, the court may be required to interpret the provisions on the constitution and the law and the interpretation given by the Supreme Court becomes the law honoured by all courts of the land. There is no appeal against the judgement of the Supreme Court. It remains the law of the land unless its interpretation is reviewed or reversed by the Supreme Court of self or the law or the constitution is suitably amended by parliament. Therefore, it is no way less than that of the other two functionaries— legislature and executive. It is the role of the judiciary to carry out the constitutional message and it is its responsibility to keep a vigilant waters over the functioning of democracy is accordance with the dictates, directives and imperatives— commands of the constitution by checking excessive authority of the other constitutional functions beyond the limit of the constitution.

The issue of judicial reform has been raised by judges of Supreme Court, experts, academicians, and common

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people of this country. This alarming situations call for speedy remedial measures.

The following are some of the reforms that need to be implemented in our age old judiciary system. Non-delay and the credibility of the system is the first and foremost factor in judicial reforms. Justice delayed is justice denied. It is a vital aspect of judicial reform. The lack of speedy dispute resolution system has a direct impact on the level of lawlessness in every society. Therefore, if the system does not evoke confidence, it would become dysfunctional and fit to be scrapped. It can be possible to deliver a speedy justice mainly by computerisation of the whole judicial administration and reduce the delayed justice to the ordinary citizens and also can manage the work and time of the Supreme Court and high courts better.

Rural courts are needed for speedy justice as a lot of cases are pending for jurisdiction. It is quite necessary to reform the constitution of rural courts for speedy justice. If it is need to be a substantial increase in the number of judges of the local level giving access to the ordinary people, and the procedures of these local courts showed be made simple and uncomplicated giving room for sufficient flexibility to render justice. These courts should use only the local language and they should be empowered to visit the villages and hear the cases and record evidences locally. And deliver the verdict within the specified timeframe.

Revision of judicial procedure is equally needed. The civil and criminal procedures codes and the laws of evidence have to be substantially revised to meet the requirements of modern judicial administration. Although certain principles and procedures are still relevant yet several procedures have become cumbersome, and often counter-productive. There should be time limits prescribed for adjudication and the stages and endless adjournments should be stopped—except in exceptional circumstances for reasons specifically recorded in writing.

There is a need for a judicial commission to oversee judges' accountability. It is high time to set up a **judicial commission** and its members should be drawn from the judiciary, executive and the legislative and their recommendation is made binding on the president in all appointments to the higher judiciary. Similarly the provision for removal of a judge of Supreme Court and High Courts under Article 154 (clause 4) has become inoperative in practice. The Indian parliament has lost the capacity to act as a Court in such impeachment trials.

There are several administrative reform commissions which examine the entire administration fabric and advised a number of measures. But on the judiciary front, so far there is not any such comprehensive examination of the issues of reform. Thus, there is an urgent need to set up a commission to go into the entire gamut of judicial administration to ensure that judicial reforms in all its segments are comprehensively worked out and implemented to provide speedy justice of a minimal cost with efficiency, economy and accountability.

The Supreme Court jurisdiction should be limited only to matters involving interpretation of the constitution or disputes between two states or union and states in effect, the Supreme Court should function only as a constitutional court and federal court with high esteem. The High Court should not have the power to interpret the constitution except in matters involving the state legislation. The appellate power of High Courts should be restricted in order to reduce the case-loads.

Another point is that there is a need for a crime investigation force. The present system of police force has combination of several functions, including crime investigation, riot control, intelligence gathering, and security of state properties, protection of important citizens. All in a single police force has had a devastating effect on the criminal justice system. The police force has become inefficient and increasingly partisan. The crime investigation machinery has also become an instrument of partisan policies, mainly due to pressure from the government to the legal authority to drop criminal charges against the accused.

Due to delay and overburden of the judiciary, it's high time that the Indian judicial service should be created as an All India Service **under Article 312** of the constitution. All the officers of the district and session judges should be held by persons recruited to such a service after adequate training and exposure. Only such a meritocratic service with a competitive recruitment, high quality uniform training and assured standards of probity and efficiency would be able to ensure speedy and impartial justice. A fair proportion of the High Court could be drawn from the Indian Judicial Service.

Judicial activism and judicial restraint are two sides of the same coin. It is, therefore, essential to remember that judicial respect in the exercise of its functions is of equal importance for the judiciary while discharging its judicial obligation under the constitution. The judicial action should not become 'judicial adventurism'. The judge should not deliver his own notion of justice by

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ignoring the links of the law, the bounds of the jurisdiction and the binding precedents, the court must act with proper restraints and self-discipline.

There are four pillars of a democracy- the legislature, executive, judiciary and the fourth estate. The judiciary in our democracy has been sinking in the morass of inefficiency and delays. Charges of corruption in judiciary is undermining judicial system, denying citizen's access to justice and the basic human right to a fair and impartial trial, sometimes even to a trial at all. Petty bribery and political influence in the judiciary erodes social cohesion which reflects one system for the rich and another for the poor, fractured communities.

Comprehensive judicial reform would entail envisaging the whole spectrum of more judges, fast track courts, and the issue of capability and professionalism of those within the judicial system, to deploying new information technology systems, as something that needs to be quickly institutionalised. The current situation is such that the Supreme Court itself has said the nation "seems unconcerned" by the issue of delayed justice, and recently the Law Commission also raised the issue of the lack of professionalism among judges and lawyers in India as one of the ills that plagues the system.

**CONCLUSION:** A sound judicial system isn't just about delivering justice — it also affects economic interests as an effective legal system can mitigate some aspects of political instability, including security and law and order issues. But the basic issue is that any society with deep flaws in its justice delivery system wrecks citizens' faith in the processes and institutions of the state. Delivering justice, thus, is a foundational principle of a nation state — and on that front, it won't be unfair to state that India continues to face a crisis.

There is an urgent requirement to reform our judiciary, before we lose all our trust in judicial system and move towards anarchy. The reform has to begin, with the higher judiciary and from this very point we have to go further to other reforms.

### ► RIGHT CONDUCT OF A CIVIL SERVANT IS AN ENABLER FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

#CIVIL SERVICES REFORMS

**Why this topic?** With the recent emphasis on lateral entry system to bring more specialised people in civil services, the desire is better efficiency and knowledge inputs. All in all, Civil Services forming the steel frame of our country require

*drastic reforms to create a cadre of accountable, unbiased, efficient and citizen friendly civil servants for holistically improving governance standards, strengthening democratic institutions, and thus laying the path for a vibrant democracy.*

**INTRODUCTION:** A peaceful and productive society is based on effective state institutions. Good governance in this sense means effective and efficient structures which provide optimal support to citizens in leading a safe and productive life in line with their desires and opportunities. Essentially, this involves a combination of democracy, the social welfare state and the rule of law. For this, an efficient and productive civil administration is a panacea for any form of governance as an interface between the government and the governed.

In the modern context, a civil servant takes care of the orders of the government and their implementation. It is the duty of the civil servant to make sure that the decisions taken at the top are actually observed at the ground. All around the world such universality is applied to every nation. India too has such a hierarchy of civil administrators engaged in carrying out the political decisions of the elected representatives. For this to happen, the conduct of the civil servant gains eminence in delivering the goods.

In this regard and to promote it, Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has even included a paper in the civil servant recruitment process to test and guide the conduct of a civil servant. Let us now visualize the apt conduct of a civil servant given the pulls and pressures in which s/he operates his/her tasks.

**MAIN BODY:** The Civil services in India have a rich legacy. One of the first political thinkers in India, Kautilya, in his treatise; Arthashastra, brought the essence of a good civil administration which should work for the betterment of people. From the reign of efficient rulers such as Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, and Akbar, the civil administration followed a hierarchical approach carrying out emperor's orders. The fundamentals of modern day civil administration were laid during colonial period in India. However, the administration was inclined and tuned to further the British interests and had no real touch with the masses. Consequently, India after independence decided to reform the civil services and the task was carried over by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Unfortunately, he could not get sufficient time to reform the services and what followed was an Indian administration though working for the people but with a tinge of colonial legacy.

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The welfare approach of Indian government post-independence was hindered by colonial mindsets of civil servants. People could not feel a sense of belongingness by the attitude of civil servants. There was poor ground level implementation, harassment of people, political non-neutrality, corruption and abuse of power. The mentioned causes led to the idea of good governance in early 1990s in India concomitant with global concerns on the subject. With India opening up to globalization, the weakness of public service delivery in India got further highlighted. Continuous economic growth and increasing competition has brought multitude of challenges to a civil servant. It is in this context that a legitimate question arises; how should a civil servant conduct himself/herself? How should it be possible to keep a civil servant politically neutral? How can an effective public service delivery be set up?

The concept of an efficient civil administrator got a fillip during early 1990s with the publishing of a World Bank report which analysed the causes of poor response of public initiatives in developing countries. It highlighted how ineffective and poor civil administration hindered programme implementation. It was in this context that 'Nolan Committee' in United Kingdom came out with seven cardinal principles of a civil servant. These are--selflessness, integrity, accountability, openness, leadership, objective and honesty.

**Selflessness** refers to the feeling of serving others without thinking of oneself, **integrity** refers to the absence of any outside influence from the organization in decision making; **accountability** refers to answerability of the civil servant to the public; **openness** refers to transparency in decision making and facilitating flow of information; **leadership** infers that a civil servant should lead by example by following all the principles; **objectivity** refers to the principle of merit where selections would not be based on other considerations; **honesty** refers to the act of civil servant in such a way so as to avoid conflict of interest. In addition to these fundamental principles an ideal civil servant should have empathy i.e. compassion for the people. S/he should be politically neutral and should have courage to withstand undue pressures. In addition, s/he should have temperance in order to be patient enough to take decisions. S/he should use public funds prudently and is the best of the interest of public.

Apart from such virtues, a civil servant must possess **intellectual capability to take decisions**. S/he acts as an interface between the people and government; needs to follow the decisions taken at the top and respect hierarchy; needs to work within the four walls of the law;

and if conditions arise that there might be violation of law in carrying out any instructions from top then it should be clearly brought out to the notice of seniors. If still insisted on to carry out such instructions, then it should be carried out only through written orders and not through mere oral orders. It should be mentioned that illegal orders which hinder one's authority to exercise powers or is against any statute should be ignored. A civil servant only needs to act according to the law even if s/he finds it unfair or unjust. The best s/he can do is to put forth his/her reasons about its drawbacks.

In addition, a civil servant should never criticize government policies in public discussions. S/he is a part of the government and such act reduces the credibility of the government as well as his /her own merit. A civil servant should never hesitate to put forth his/her views even if it goes against the advice of ministers, and the views should be coupled with logical reasons and lucid presentations. Similarly, a civil servant should be open to any new suggestions, open to accept new challenges at work, try to develop innovative approaches to implement orders, should not hesitate to take tough decisions and should try to make a note in writing of all his/her actions in order to be transparent.

One of the toughest jobs for a civil servant is to **maintain balance in his/her personal and professional life**. There are numerous challenges to a civil servant when there is pressure of family members and close friends. S/he should be able to maintain such space so as not to allow any influence which hinders improvement in governance and transparency.

Should try to **include civil society in decision making** so as to make governance more participatory. Should take along with himself/herself private as well public institutions. Should maintain transparency in dealing with private sector and should avoid favouritism. Should not blindly follow any law but implement it considering all dimensions. The nature of today's administration is more people centric. S/he should be able to judge repercussions of allowing more competition or giving space to private entities on poor sections. This should be clearly brought out at policy discussions. This needs more of assessing ground level realities which requires open public discussions and bottom up governance.

The globalised world of today makes the task of civil servant more difficult. The increasing role of private sector, decreasing social sector public investment, high competitiveness, increasing marginalization of lower sections of society, increased awareness of the citizenry,

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requirement of flexibility and broad knowledge network has made it necessary for a civil servant to come out from a narrow outlook and update himself/herself according to changing needs. S/he needs to be more communicative by developing good inter-personal skills in dealing with multinational companies. S/he should be well versed with the power of information technology and make its sufficient use to broaden his/her knowledge and improve service delivery.

The **principle of utilitarianism** suggests benefit of majority is superior to minority loss. However, this approach violates the principle of equal justice where each member of the society should be able to enjoy his/her rights. In such cases, rights based approach that follows non-violation of anyone's universal rights needs to be followed. However, such ethical dilemma needs to be sorted out at the individual level according to one's discretion. Clearly such decisions need critical analysis and in-depth knowledge in order to be able to take effective decisions which a civil servant should possess.

The high work pressure and expectations often stresses a civil servant. In such cases, careful handling of situations is required. A civil servant should be equipped with the ability to maintain his/her cool and calm façade and follow laid out rules and regulations for maximum effect. S/he should try to include all stakeholders in decision making and should stand up against illegal directions. It may hamper one's career growth but in the longer run a civil servant is respected for his/her uprightness and strong commitment. His/Her attitude must be reflected in the behaviour which requires strong conscience. For this, s/he needs to have clear objectives, feedbacks from stakeholders, patient listening and articulation of right thoughts. S/he needs to ensure responsibility for his/her work and should be ready to accept accountability in case of failures.

Thus an efficient and upright civil servant ensures public service delivery to the best of his/her ability. It leads to a shift from responsive to proactive administration. A well-managed public administration strikes to achieve an egalitarian and just society. It removes inequality and marginalization and makes economic growth inclusive. India, with high demographic dividend needs to take up the challenge to utilize this dividend. This needs proper imparting of skills, medical and education infrastructure and right legislations. Clearly, the role of civil servant is preeminent in the facilitation of such national objectives

as it would help in elimination of social and economic injustice, improve standards of living and make India economically developed.

However, inspite of such importance, civil service today is not what an aspiring nation like India would want. It is marred with inefficiency, corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, apathy towards public. India has continuously been rated lower in international indexes such as corruption index, world competitiveness index, social index, education and health indexes, and ease of doing business index etc. However, it is not that government is not acquainted about such issues as it has taken numerous steps to make civil servants more accountable, and responsive initiatives such as e-governance, social audits, right to information and mandating citizen charter have also been instituted to make it more impactful.

However, more needs to be done. As pointed out by Santhanam Committee way back in 1960s, one of the reasons for mismanagement/corruption is discretion of civil servant. Hence, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (SARC) in its report has brought out the need of an ethical code of conduct to reduce personal discretion. It should be strictly implemented and civil servants should be penalized for not adhering to it. It is however not possible to frame all possible situations and have a code of conduct for them. It would ultimately depend on civil servant's attitude and capability.

**CONCLUSION:** Hence only a change in mindsets, where a civil servant should not think himself/herself as a ruler but a provider of government service, and where public acts as a customer of these services is the key. A shift to the approach where 'Customer is king' is echoed in public administration, is required. This needs proper sensitization of civil servants and effective training and skill enhancement initiatives. Every civil servant should remember Gandhi's Talisman before taking decision- "Whenever you are in doubt to take decisions follow this approach. Recall the face of the poorest man you have ever seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him/her. Will s/he gain anything?"

# THEME-4

## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

### ABOUT THE THEME:

UPSC topics related with Economy are based on the requirement to convert our economic growth into an inclusive growth so as to cater to entire demographic dividend and to the different skill levels present in our work force.

*Inclusive Growth acts as an enabler for promoting Economic Justice.*

*Without an inclusive economy, we cannot convert our society into a productive society and there will be lesser peace and more deprivation.*

*In this regards, the topics in this theme are based on the above thought process.*

**Economic justice is the idea that the economy will be more successful if it is fairer. The goal is to create opportunities for all to thrive and that prosperity and justice go hand-in-hand rather than in opposition to one another.**

### ► GDP (GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT) ALONG WITH GDH (GROSS DOMESTIC HAPPINESS) WOULD BE THE RIGHT INDICES FOR JUDGING THE WELLBEING OF A COUNTRY

#### #INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

**Why this topic?** There is a desire to become a \$5 trillion economy in near future but equally important is equitable distribution of wealth and resources and also simultaneously conserving the environment which are essential to spread peace, stability and happiness in the society for better coexistence.

Hence combing the GDP growth with Gross National Happiness (GNH) growth is a far better way of creating inclusive and sustainable economy.

**INTRODUCTION:** Happiness: Towards a Holistic approach to development was the title of Bhutan sponsored resolution approved by the United Nations. The resolution declared that "happiness is Fundamental human good and universal aspiration, that GDP by nature does not reflect the good, that unsustainable pattern of production and consumption impede sustainable development, and that a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach is needed to promote sustainability, eradicate poverty and enhance well-being and profound happiness.

Gross domestic product (GDP) is the total value of goods and services produced in a nation in a given year. Since 1930s at the time of great depression, the GDP has been a valuable tool for measuring how well or poorly an economy is doing at a certain point of time. GDP has remained a reliable indicator of economic health of a country. However, it measures only one thing and that is

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## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

money. Some people believe that money is all important as it determines the health of an economy. But some think that there is much more to be considered such as happiness.

**MAIN BODY:** A country is considered prosperous when it has strong consolidated economy. However, having a strong economy is just a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition. Economic well-being of a country does not guarantee social well-being of a country. A country with high economic rise but without fundamental facilities such as sanitation, drinking water, education, health, security cannot be called a perfect place to live. Money is worthless in an atmosphere of anxiety, grief and agony.

This is the reason that some economists started to think about the 'Happiness' aspect of the development. The term 'Gross Domestic Happiness' came to be first used in Bhutan; a small royal kingdom in the south Asia. In the year 1972, Bhutan fourth dragon king, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, started the age of modernization of Bhutan. He used the phrase for the first time to indicate that he was committed to build an economy that would serve Bhutan's unique culture based on Buddhism. The Buddhist ideology suggests that human society can benefit from development only when material and spiritual development occur side by side to compliment and reinforce each other. Promotion of sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of natural environment and establishment of good governance are the four pillars of development. This has been further elaborated into eight contributors of happiness i.e. Education, living standards, physical, mental and spiritual health, time balance, social and community vitality, cultural vitality, good governance and ecological vitality.

**Growing GDP in lack of sustainable development cannot help** a country in long term, because GDP is measured without taking into account the destruction it causes to the 'natural environment', which is the common property of human beings. It is a source of subsistence for millions of people. The main problem is the inefficiency of governments which has failed in delivering the goods and services to its people. If GDP is the sum total of all the goods and services produced within a country, it should not be the final yardstick for measuring the wellbeing of people of a country. As per the latest data, India is the third largest economy in terms of purchasing Power Parity. But it is an irony that 30 percent of Indian people fall below poverty line. India is a home for nearly one third of world's poor. In perspective of GDP, India has no precedents in this

world but when we see the poor, India is the dweller of largest poor in the world. Discrimination based on caste, honour killing, injustice and delay in justice, red tapism, corruption, nepotism, crisis in rule of law are the general features of a growing India which affects all the common citizens. These are the ingredients that make the lives of commoners cumbersome and clumsy. If we can overcome these root causes of crisis, then only can we get the right indices to judge the well-being of the people in a society.

How can GDP measure development in a country like India which has one of the world's dismal records in Human Development? How astonishing it becomes when we come to know that even Bangladesh and many third world countries score better than India in infant mortality? The levels of malnutrition among children are highest in India. The learning achievements of primary schools in India are no better than West Africa. In India nearly one third of new-borns are underweight in comparison to one-sixth in Sub-Sahara Africa. On the other side, Bhutan is a tiny country in the north of India. It has a very low GDP. But it is the eighth happiest place in the world. It is the only country among the top 20 happiest country having such a low GDP. There is no proper quantitative definition of GDH but it has elements which facilitate its quantifying measurement. If we take an example of mortality rate in a country, we can directly co-relate it with the quantitative aspect of happiness. A society with low mortality rate would mean that the quantitative aspect of happiness is high.

GDH acts just like a genuine progress indicator which indicates quantitative measurement of happiness and well-being. Its supporters think that the concept of GDH is motivated by the notion that happiness and well-being are more important and relevant than the concept of income and consumption. It cannot be measured directly but through the elements which facilitate its measurement. For measuring GDP some metric can be used. **Economic wellness** is one of the important metric proposed, Economic metrics such as consumer price index ratio and income distribution are some of the metrics which can be used. Direct survey and statistics measurements can be conducted to measure it. The next very important metric is Environmental wellness of a country. We can conduct survey for checking pollution levels, noise, traffic etc. These are hindrances in the way of leading a healthy and peaceful life. Cities must be well planned and environmental friendly. Then only people dwell there and lead a healthy life.

One the major metric is **physical wellness** of the people. If people are suffering from severe illnesses and

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## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

diseases despite having high GDP, we can't say that they are happy. **Mental wellness** is as important as physical wellness. If Surveys and statistic surveys indicate that if people are mentally sound, are not suffering from any psychological disorders, they are happy. Consuming too much anti depression pills indicate Psychological illness. If persons are physically and mentally well, but they do not have a suitable and affordable environment at their place of work, they cannot enjoy their work. So **workplace wellness** is as important as other two i.e. physical and mental.

Wellness at social front is very important Discrimination, safety; divorce rates, domestic violence, family lawsuits, crime rates etc. indicate the state of **social wellness** of a country wellness. The quality of local democracy, governance, individual freedom, foreign conflicts etc. indicate at the health of **political wellness** of a nation.

GDP was intended to be a yardstick to measure economic growth of a country. The theory of GDP makes the statement that economic growth enhances social well-being. This may be true in many cases but researches have "shown that GDP has been an imperfect measure as it does not include environmental and social degradation that accompany economic growth.

All this led to an overwhelming support to GDH across the world from all quarters of the society. The reason for this overwhelming support and encouragement is that people all over the world are dissatisfied with the way societies are progressing. They are concerned with the degradation of overall quality of life where GDP is the only yardstick to measure social and economic well-being of a country. People have started demanding more sustainable and complete approach to development. They want dimensions such as social, environment and culture to be taken into account while making policy framework.

GDH has evolved as a serious challenge to GDP which is a one sided measure of social and economic progress. Its supporters argue that GDP is simply a measure of currency that changes hands and doesn't take care of growing social problems. Its only focus is on economy. It does not consider the factors such as natural disasters which can contribute to the GDP growth as it encourages economic activities such as reconstruction. In measuring GDP there is a fear of statistic errors and the pollution factors are overlooked. GDP fails to measure quality development as it only measures the price as value. Gross Domestic Happiness aims to evaluate sustainability, well-being and quality of life. It measures total household income, the level of education, value of

voluntary work and unpaid work of wives at home, natural capital such as energy, air water, sustainable transportation, levels of health, crime, pollution etc. But measuring love and happiness has its own limitations. Different people have different perceptions and opinions about love and happiness.

At present, GDP has been a measure used to evaluate the economy in India. Due to the flaws in the GDP, the government agencies have been trying hard to devise techniques to strengthen GDP so that it can be made a comprehensive indicator. GDP indicate the' economic health of a country. It represents a sum of a country's production which consists of all purchases of goods and services produced by a country and services used by individuals firms, foreigners etc. GDP is considered important because it guides governments by indicating how much planning is needed and which policies are to be made.

India has made a phenomenal growth when we look at the growth in GDP. In terms of GDP, the economy is galloping to new heights. But does GDP reflect true picture of India? If we look more closely we come to see that the benefit of growth has reached to a small part of society. In India the gap between poor and the rich has been growing wide. Money has been restricted into a few hands. They are reaping the benefits of growing economy. They are the persons who are enjoying the luxuries of life. Poor are not able to fulfil even the bare necessities of life. Then there is a middle class who has now more money at their disposal but rising inflation in the prices of food and general items is leaving little money in their hands. They are not able to save for their future.

The real cause of unemployment is lacuna in our education system. The rise in GDP does not say anything about the state of education in the country. Moreover, education is not within the reach of everyone. The dropout rate in India is very high. It is true that the government has been trying hard to bring reforms in education but there is a lot needed to be done. Education must enable a person to become gainfully employed.

Vocational education must be incorporated into general education. The dismal picture of education sector does not match with the picture being depicted through growing GDP. Health sector in India is also very backward. Treatment is beyond common people's reach. There is lack of proper infrastructure in health services people have to long distance to get proper treatment.



## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Nearby dispensaries do not have adequate staff, and medicines. Private health care is very expensive. Only rich can afford such costly medical treatment. Transportation system is not up to the mark. Roads are not properly maintained in rural areas. In urban areas also we witness roads which are a clear invitation to accidents. Our railways are also in a primitive state. When most of the developed countries have introduced high speed bullet trams, we are still struggling to maintain whatever railways we have. People have to suffer a lot during journey.

**CONCLUSION:** The idea of measuring a country's performance through GDH is brilliant. It works in fairly small countries such as Bhutan but when it comes to larger countries such as India, china, U.S.A, Germany etc. it is difficult to rely totally on GDH. However, focusing only on GDP leads to stress, overworking suicides and unhappiness. Therefore, there must be a mixture of GDP and GDH while measuring a countries progress. It will surely cover all aspects of human development.

### ► ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN: CYCLICAL OR STRUCTURAL?

#ECONOMY

**Why this topic?** Our country has been witnessing gradual economic slowdown and the signs were visible in 2019. In 2020 and 2021, due to COVID-19 pandemic this has become more biting in nature impacting all the sectors/sub-sectors of the economy.

**INTRODUCTION:** Economy is the basic pillar on which the entire society rests. Karl Marx emphasized on the importance of economy. For Marx, it was the economic infrastructure which directly or indirectly controlled other social pillars such as education, religion, polity etc. Hence, in simple words, economy can be defined as the flow of capital, goods and services within and outside a country.

Indian Economy is one of the oldest and has its roots in the ancient Harappan Civilization. Archaeological evidences show that the economy was basically driven by agriculture and had trade relations as far as Mesopotamia. India had a flourishing economy with Roman Gold flowing into the country even in the Sangam Age or the Gupta period. However, conditions changed rapidly with advent of colonial rules since the 17th century. The policy of mercantilism drained India of her vital resources. Agriculture, which was the driver of the economy, became stagnant and backward, which resulted in widespread poverty all over the country.

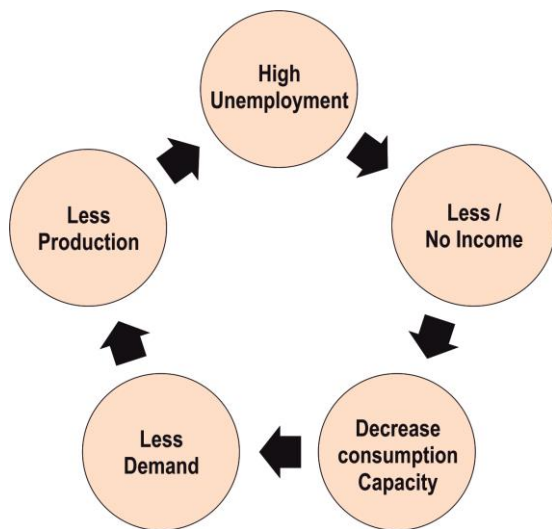
Post-Independence saw a revival of the economy with industries aiding the agricultural sector in uplifting the economy. However, dramatic changes occurred post-1991 reforms. Globalisation and industrialization gave a boost to the economy. Services emerged as a new sector which provided employment and became a major driver of the economy. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stated increasing with figures touching 7%-8% with the dawn of the 21st century. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) brought in the much needed foreign capital for investment in the Indian Markets.

However, the rate at which GDP has grown has not remained constant. Sometimes, the rate of increase in GDP has also come down to 4% or 5% this decrease in the rate at which the GDP grows has been termed as "Economic Slowdown". A slowdown is a phase in an economic cycle where the demand in an economy falls. This fall in demand has its effects on production and thereby on the entire economy. There are multiple reasons for a slowdown, some can be domestic reasons such as change in the government policies and demonetization and goods and service tax (GST), and some can be international reasons such as the policy of protectionism adopted by the United States. Also, a Slowdown can be cyclical or structural.

**MAIN BODY:** A Cyclical Slowdown is the one which is bound to occur after some years. Such a slowdown is short-lived and can be corrected though certain monetary and fiscal policy changes. A Structural slowdown, on the other hand is a deep rooted problem. Such a slowdown is long lived and it requires long term policy changes to correct the structural flaws in the economy. Recently, the Indian economy has slowed down. There are multiple reasons for this slowdown. In order to understand whether the present slowdown is cyclical or structural or both, we shall first go through the factors that have caused the present slowdown.

Indian economy is largely driven by consumption expenditure. According to the Economic Survey of 2018-19, 60% of India's GDP comes from consumption expenditure. Any adverse impact on the consumption capacity of people would severely affect the GDP of the country. Further, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report, unemployment in India is at 6.1%, which is at 45 year high. This high rate of unemployment in the economy has its adverse impact on the consumption capacity of the people as illustrated in the following figure:

## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE



**Figure: Vicious Cycle of Unemployment**

From the figure above, it is evident that unemployment is hampering the consumption capacity and is thus a major structural fault.

Agrarian and rural distress is one of the prominent reasons for unemployment in rural areas. Disguised unemployment in agricultural sector has given a rise to the demand of jobs of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Moreover, agricultural productivity has been an issue which has seen a drop in the farmers' income. Also, predominance of informal sector in the urban areas coupled with the distress in the Telecom, Automobile and Construction sector has led to a decrease in productivity in urban areas.

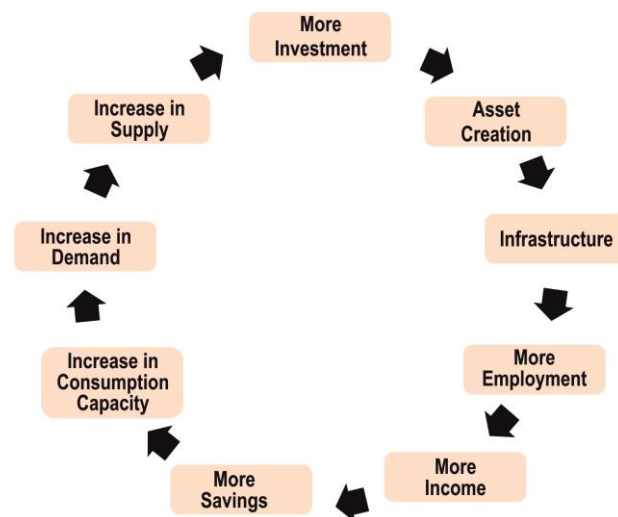
However, the distress in major sectors such as the automobile and construction sector is due to the decrease in demand. This looks more like a cyclical factor and can be corrected through effective measures. Failure of Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFUS) and accumulating Non-performing Assets (NPA's) had brought the banking sector to a standstill. This has in turn also led to the problem of Liquidity crunch in the economy. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has the uphill task to rescue the banking sector. Thus, the issues in banking sector also look like a cyclical issue.

Through the above discussion, it is evident that the present slowdown is a combination of both, Cyclical as well as structural factors. However, there are some serious structural factors (Such as employment) which are also affecting the cyclical factors. Let us now analyse the ways and means available to address the present slowdown.

**First**, to address the cyclical issues, the government and the RBI both have to come up with effective fiscal and

monetary policies. Although, the RBI has decreased the policy rates, the transmission of these policy rates have been an issue of concern. The RBI can think of External Benchmarking of policy rates to make the process of monetary policy transmission more effective. The cut in Corporate Tax by the government is indeed a welcome step. However, the GST tax collection by the Centre has been adversely impacted. This has resulted into poor compensation to the states. Thus, the government needs to work along with the states to look for measures to improve the GST collection. Co-operation between the Central and State governments is a must for implementing this measure. Further, there is an urgent need to look into the agrarian distress. Minimum Support Price (MSP) along with PM - AASHA needs to be implemented in letter and spirit so that monument from farmers is done effectively. Also, there is a need to allocate more funds to MGNREGA so that the consumption capacity in rural areas is boosted.

**Second**, to address the long term structural problems. Indian Economy has to shift its gears and move from a consumption driven economy to Investment driven economy. Such a shift would have long term positive impacts as illustrated in the figure below:



**Figure: Virtuous Cycle of Investment Driven Economy**

Such a Virtuous cycle, would solve the problem of unemployment thereby reducing large scale income disparities.

**CONCLUSION:** Thus, it can be said that the present economic slowdown, which is an amalgamation of both cyclic as well as structural factors, can be addressed by increasing the consumption expenditure in the short term and by shifting towards investment driven economy in the long term.

## ► FARMING HAS LOST THE ABILITY TO BE A SOURCE OF SUBSISTENCE FOR THE MAJORITY OF FARMERS IN INDIA

#INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

**Why this topic?** Three new acts brought by the govt. for bringing market access and price discovery to the farmers.

Gol plans to spend Rs 25 lakh crores to enhance agricultural productivity. This is required for balancing the growth in India's economy because rising rural incomes can provide productive livelihoods for majority of people, raise purchasing power and demand, trigger expansion in manufacturing and thus becoming a major factor for promoting inclusive growth.

**INTRODUCTION:** Agriculture has always been vital to India. Agriculture with its allied sectors is the largest source of livelihood in India. 70% of the rural households still directly depend on agriculture. India has been blessed with a varied climate structure and a wide variety of soils. Land is naturally suitable for cultivating a number of crops to add diversity to our food basket. Yet this sector suffers from both structural and implementation problems, which have deterred it as a source of profitable employment. In India, 82% of farmers are small and marginal farmers (1-2 hectares of landholding). Their heavy dependence on rainfall (seasonal), indirect credit, and dependence on intermediaries for food grain procurement make it a complex mix. A further problem of high input costs, lack of availability of technology, less diversification, heavy dependence on pesticides and fertilizers make the industry unsustainable. The distress can be seen in the number of farmer suicides witnessed in India. According to **NCRB 2019 data**, farming is the cause of 7% of suicidal deaths in the country. On average, 28 farmers end their lives every day in India.

The problem of making agriculture from a mere subsistence model to a revenue-generating one requires a multi-prolonged strategy—issues from procurement of seeds and inputs to the final selling. 'Ashok Dalwai's report on Doubling of Farmer's income laid a major emphasis on input cost reduction. Along with this, sustained credit support from the formal sector and effective implementation of schemes with timely disbursements are necessary.

**MAIN BODY:** India has been bestowed with a variety of climates. The first step towards making farming sustainable should be to adopt **agro-climatic condition-based farming**. The majority of farmers take

## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

a decision to sow the crop depending on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) announced by the government and prevailing market conditions. To induce farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, the government should increase procurement of other crops on MSP. Climate suitable crops should be adopted by increased MSP as incentive for such crops. A positive step in this direction has been taken by Haryana Government, where they will pay ₹ 7000 per hectare for non-paddy crops. Ensuring a supply of superior quality seeds locally, extending formal farm-based credit, insurance coverage at low premium rates (micro-insurance), and certainty of procurement by the government on MSP (crops other than rice) will boost the confidence of farmers to shift their pattern. Adopting agriculture suitable to climate will help us reduce resource exploitation, improve our soil condition and crop diversity, ultimately improving the nutritional intake, especially by pulses.

Majority of farmers being small and marginal, they can be organized in the **Joint Liability Group (JLG)**. The concept is similar to that of self-help groups, where like-minded people come together to progress together. Such JLGs would enhance the credit procurement power of the group, machines lent can be used effectively, and ultimately it will help in better bargaining power while selling in the market. Collective sharing of the loans and the liability to pay will keep all members accountable and reduce the excessive burden on one. The timely repayment of loans will lead to better credit trust among the banks and farmers. There has been a rise of 38% NPAs in agricultural loans; this problem will be effectively tackled. Further, once JLGs are successfully operating, they can be formally registered with State Governments and upgraded to farmer producer groups or companies.

A major cause of distress among the farmers is the repayment of loans taken from informal sources. Farmer's land in a debt trap due to no document availability and spiralling interest rate. There are only 48,000 rural bank branches for 6 lakh plus villages in India. Further, the branches are skewed-greater presence in green revolution success areas. To make formal credit accessible, bank branches, especially of Small Finance Banks (SFBs) should be opened. SFBs have a 75% priority lending commitment to agriculture. Furthermore, microfinance institutions and post office banks should be encouraged. In areas that are far off, mobile banking should be adopted. This will also benefit farmers who cannot visit the branches often. PMGDISHA is a scheme of government by which it aims to train members from rural households to use the internet,

## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

including basic banking features. To enhance the coverage, bank applications should have regional language options. Further, the group of youth in the villages can be trained as Bank Mitras and act as a linking pin in the model. This will enhance rural employment generation as well.

Further, **research and development** by agricultural universities in terms of seeds, practices, and crop protection should be encouraged. A gradual shift to organic inputs like bio pesticides and bio fertilizers should be encouraged. Under the Soil Health Card Scheme of the government, at least twice a year, testing of soil should be done. Farmers should be explained about the condition of their soil and ways to enhance production. Continuous research in the development of superior quality seeds will help to make agriculture a more sustainable option. In West Bengal, 'Muktoshri' arsenic-resistant variety of paddy was grown. This will help to tackle bioaccumulation. Such seeds should be available to farmers efficiently and effectively. For this community seed banks can be set up. Such banks can be maintained at Panchayat Level, and agro-climatic suitable crop seeds can be made available. Women SHGs can be roped to take charge. Further pooling of good-quality seeds by farmers can also be a solution.

Agriculture in India accounts for maximum use of water, accounting for 75% of water used both from underground and surface water. Further, the subsidized electricity and diesel pump sets worsen the exploitation. Subsidy of the government here is a huge burden on the exchequer as well. For this, a **community partnership for managing water resources**, especially by raving traditional sources-baolis, tanks, ponds, should be undertaken. MGNREGA has reaped success stories in various pockets of the country to make villages sustainable in water consumption by building infrastructure. Rainwater harvesting, agroforestry (Har Medh Par Ped) and sustaining water use is the effective way forward. Further, gradually the government can lower subsidy and divert it towards setting up of drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation systems can be done.

In order to make agriculture a revenue-generating model, it is necessary to reduce its crop dependence nature. Agriculture in India is majorly rainfed, and this brings in high chances of crop failure due to less rain. Sources of non-crop incomes are dairy, poultry, sericulture, agriculture, aquaculture, jatropha plantation, sea-weed cultivation, etc. The government has been productive in introducing a number of initiatives like Apiary on wheels to train farmers in beekeeping, but a regular and sustained approach is required. Recently,

the government has introduced Shaphari Scheme to make shrimp production regulated and antibiotic-free. Such initiatives to check the quality ensure pricing, and preventing farmers from being exploited are required to be carried on a large scale.

Further, a **biogas plant** can be set up by aggregating 2-3 villages with the help of the government to utilize the agriculture residue, get biogas as a cleaner fuel, and use the residue cultured as manure. India is 2nd largest producer of sugarcane in the world. To prevent distress selling and revive the sugar industry, ethanol production from it should be encouraged. This will further supplement the trending of the fuel program of the government.

**CONCLUSION:** Lastly, training farmers to adopt such practices and making them understand the benefits holds the key to bring change. Regional languages should be used to communicate with farmers through local newspapers, community radios, street plays, mobile apps, etc. NGOs, student groups from agriculture and science backgrounds can be referred to spread information.

Revival of rural income will help to improve the socio-economic conditions of people residing in rural areas (majority). It will keep a check on urban migration, open opportunities for better access to health and education, and improve the country's social fabric. The dream of economic and social justice in Preamble should keep the rural area in focus. In this way, we will realize the dream of Atmanirbhar Bharat through Atmanirbhar Villages.

### ► TOURISM: CAN THIS BE NEXT BIG THING FOR INDIA?

#### #INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

**Why this topic?** AI is taking over, capital intensive industries are becoming dominant and resultantly labour intensive work is getting reduced especially in the organised sectors.

India has huge work force and in this only 5% is skilled hence we need to focus on more labour intensive sectors. In this regard, Tourism which is labour intensive sector becomes hugely important. Of late, Government is focusing on attracting inbound foreign tourists but our share in the inbound arrivals is just around 1% of the global share despite having both natural and historical places of attraction.

If promoted comprehensively, it can become the trigger for an inclusive economy.

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## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

**Introduction:** Human beings are curious and inquisitive by nature. They like to explore things and places around them. During the entire evolutionary journey of humankind, people loved to travel, to explore and seek adventure. People still love to travel, explore and seek adventure, but not out of some compulsion to ensure their survival rather for leisure and fun.

This distinct nature of human being has paved the path for the development of a full-fledged service industry in the form of tourism around the globe and India being no exception to this. Rather, India has for ages captivated and ruled the very imaginations and thoughts of travellers, adventure seekers, philosophers, traders, etc. So much so that it was no exaggeration when our beautiful country was quoted as follows: "India is the cradle of human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most artistic materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only."

In the background of the greater prospects that lie within the Indian domain for development of tourism, the question can be answered by understanding the fabric of Indian tourism itself and how it can be further pushed towards seizing growing global needs in tandem with various other development needs.

**MAIN BODY:** In terms of tourism potential, India is the epitome of the world. No single country in the world has been endowed with such diversity and as varied geographical and climatic conditions as is India. This variety in geography and climate has made each part of India -- the deserts of Thar, coastal beaches of South India, Himalayas of the North, Rainforests and Wetlands in the North East-- beaming with scenic beauty favourable for tourist destination. Throughout the year and across the country, mild temperature of South India, pleasant summer and cold freezing winters at hill stations in North India, monsoonal rhythms of rainfall provide better and favourable conditions for tourism.

Apart from the geography of India; the entire course of Indian history from Harappan civilisation to the India of today, played a significant role to promote and nurture Indian tourism. The history has left its indelible mark in the form of various --statues, shrines, tombs, minarets, forts, palaces, monuments, buildings -- every piece of art or architecture gives us a glimpse into the Indian past.

The performing arts-- (music, drama and dance), traditions and customs, costumes, cuisine, languages, social norms and practices, religious rites and festivals-- are expression of the rich Indian culture and heritage.

This distinct culture of India has helped flourishing of variety of festivals, lively markets, vibrant lifestyle and traditional Indian hospitality -- all of which act as sources which attract foreign tourists to India.

In a world based on knowledge economy, and growing health consciousness, there can be seen a pragmatic shift towards the conventional Indian wisdom based on-- Yoga and Ayurveda. Nowadays, Yoga, Ayurveda and natural health resorts are contributing greatly to the growth of 'Medical tourism' in India. Also, significant is the urge of 'Spiritual Tourism' in India; people visiting the Ghats of Ganga, seeking peace and self-realization towards exploration of inner-self.

Given such a shining profile and prospects of tourism, India has not fully leveraged the advantage hitherto, as others have such as the South East Asian economics of Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, etc. The tourism sector is largely seen as a mere contributor towards foreign exchange reserves and employment generation. But if we want tourism to be the sunrise sector for India, this perspective must be shunned. Tourism goes far beyond these too alone. Its development has a wider and deeper rationale. Tourism can be greatly helpful in the social development process also. The objectives of poverty alleviation and sustainable human development can be met in coherence along with tourism development.

The local community stakeholders must be made aware of the prospects and benefits of tourism development in their area. If they are engaged to promote tourism, it will boost their quality of life with the additional income they'll receive from this engagement. This engagement can be nurtured and developed by the government as a part of its many poverty alleviating programmes; the difference here being that instead of being only recipients of allowances, the locals can be provided with a platform whereby they can sell articles of handicrafts, such as jewellery, carpets, antiques -- wooden and metallic etc. directly to customers without being harassed by middlemen brokers.

At community levels, tourism offers opportunities for **direct, indirect and induced employment and income, spurring regional and local economic development.** The local people of a community know best about the resources in its community. Therefore, they can play a greater role in conservation and sustainable development of their region. Thus the development of community or community development programmes facilitates sustainable development as well as tourism development.

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Tourism can also be seen as a way forward to **promote pluralism and multiculturalism**, which can further help to build and spread feeling of secularism and communal harmony among diverse communities of India. India is often boasted as a Hindu nation by the Hindu fundamentalists masses and because of this highly flawed and narrow outlook tensions are created and spread in the society. Here lies the importance and need for a reinterpretation of our history and culture. The very name of our country Hindustan has no religious importance. The term 'Hindu nation' has nothing to do with religion or rituals. The nation can have a number of groups professing different religion, faith or beliefs. 'Hindu' does not connote a religion. It connotes culture, certain value system. And the most salient feature of our Indian culture or value system is the respect for plurality, diversity and inclusivity. We are a population of 1.35 billion people making a diverse, multicultural of plural society with different beliefs, faiths, languages, dress codes, food habits and what not.

All the religious places are visited by tourists even local nationals only as a part of either 'Char Dhaam Yatra' or as 'Holiday trip'. If the attitude of Indian people is to be changed about this that these places having religious connotation, or places of historical importance i.e. historical monuments must be seen beyond exclusively in the sense of being mere tourist places. They rather provide deeper insights about the evolution of our great tradition, culture and history over the ages. They will not only help in creating integration and harmony, it will broaden our understanding of history and culture which will further help in promoting the ethos of brotherhood and secularism in the country.

The right way to strive towards it would be to create awareness among the people. And it can be achieved via education. For this there must be change in school curriculum and subjects' history, culture and sociology must be taught with a new and broader perspective. However, to achieve this in true spirit, attitude of teachers also must change. In schools, students dread subjects like History and Culture because of the way in which they are being taught. As a result, the future of India remains in darkness, under-informed or highly misinformed about the history and culture of the country.

To develop tourism sector in India in a prudent manner—**local, domestic as well as international tourism**—must be focused for holistic effect. Also it can greatly help to increase India's share in world tourism. The Government of India too, realizing India's potential took this issue seriously, dealing it with due importance in

Five year plans, setting up committees, departments and above all a separate Ministry of Tourism, but failed in achieving any great success.

With India having so much to offer for global tourism, it is still plagued by serious problems. One of them is lack of infrastructure including lack of connectivity which debars us from places offering vistas of scenic beauty in its pristine form. The more serious issues are that of security such as problem of insurgency, naxalism and terrorism, which have marred the morale of tourists to visit areas affected by terrorist and naxalite activities. Then there are also problems of frauds, misbehaviour and harassment, even heinous crimes like rape and murder against foreign tourists are committed which seriously harm the ethos of Indian hospitality.

One of the factors that act as a negative impediment for tourism in India is lack of professionals who can cater to the needs of the tourist. In many instances the tourist guides give misleading explanations and conclusions about a particular tourist place or monument. Moreover they are not able to give an overall pleasant experience to the tourists visiting our country. Therefore, it's high time we promote tourism studies in schools and colleges or centres of higher education for bringing professionals to the tourism industry. This will in addition to increasing awareness about the rich heritage and culture of country, increase efficiency and hence employability of people (youth) in the tourism sector.

Further as a part of policy making, we must incorporate the success stories and experiences of other countries like Switzerland, China, and Singapore etc. while retaining our strengths in initiating development in this sector. Infrastructure development then becomes a necessary pre-condition. Though smart cities and bullet trains are sought to become reality for India; we have to really work a lot for it. We still lack all-weather roads, so firstly roads have to become commutable throughout the year, there is a need to upgrade the quality and capacity of our railways and air transport, providing faster and safer access to tourist places. Hotels and resorts should be developed as per needs to tourists based on international norms and standards. Sanitation and hygiene must be given due importance. For this 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan' needs to be taken more seriously.

While defining the growth trajectory of the country with the help of tourism it should be kept in minds that the infrastructure development policy and urban development policies must be such which caters to preserving cultural and natural heritage of our country.

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Tourism is a multidimensional, actively and basically service industry, it would be necessary that all wings of central and state government, private sector and voluntary organizations become active partners in the endeavour to attain sustainable growth in tourism, if India is to become a world player in the tourism industry.

**CONCLUSION:** To make tourism crucial to economy's growth, the role of common citizenry cannot be minimized. If we are conscious enough about our basic fundamental rights, we must be aware of our fundamental duties too, and one of them clearly states, 'to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture' and 'to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife'.

We must pledge to honestly abide by our duties and also make others to do the same. We must understand that these are a part of our glorious past commonly shared by us. By pilfering waste and causing degeneration of these historical and geographical assets of the country we not only are setting hurdles to growth & development of tourism in the Country. We also become culprits in the eyes of future generations, as we deprive them of the mesmerizing beauty and pleasure offered by these tourist spots.

Most importantly, the haphazard approach that we apply to development of tourism should be discarded and replaced with a planned and long-term vision abiding by famous Japanese proverb which says, "**Vision without Action is a daydream, but Action without Vision is a nightmare**".

### ► LIVELIHOODS TO ALL: CAN THIS BE A REALITY FOR INDIA?

# ECONOMIC JUSTICE

**Why this topic?** *The rate of unemployment is highest in the last 45 years. This along with expansion of automation, AI and loss of livelihoods due to COVID-19 is giving an impression that livelihoods to all is a myth.*

*This scenario brings into picture the importance of livelihood growth in our country which is rich in demographic dividend and having diversified skills based labour force.*

*Livelihoods to all can be a reality by promoting an all-inclusive economic growth focusing on labour intensive sectors to create large scale livelihoods. Livelihoods bring productivity, engage people, ensure better peace and stability and also better distribution of incomes.*

**INTRODUCTION:** India's challenge on employment is getting tougher and tougher. Employment is now regarded by many as the central long-term challenge facing the country. India has a low labour force participation rate (LFPR) by world standards. LFPR is defined as the number of persons looking for a job as a proportion of the working age population (age group 15-59). As per International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates, the world LFPR was around 61.9% in 2017 whereas the corresponding number for India is just 53.7%. In 2015-16, the LFPR for males in India was 75.5%, while that for females was a meagre 27.4%.

As per World Bank's recently released South Asia Economic Focus report titled "Jobless growth?" India's employment rate is 50% which is significantly lower than the expected rate of about 60%. Further, the ILO report says that the number of workers in vulnerable forms of employment (own-account workers and contributing family workers) is likely to increase in the years to come. Vulnerable labour includes self-employed family workers who are typically engaged in informal work and lack social security. Let us now elaborate on the issue.

**MAIN BODY:** Vulnerable employment is often characterized by inadequate earnings, low productivity and difficult conditions of work that undermine workers' fundamental rights. In India, a significant proportion of the jobs created in the services sector over the past couple of decades have been in traditional low value-added services, where informality and vulnerable forms of employment are often dominant. Similarly, the rapid growth of ICT services in recent years in some emerging countries, notably India, has not generated enough employment opportunities for the large majority of the population. In India, for example, the share of informal employment has risen within almost all manufacturing industries, partly as a result of labour market rigidities preventing modern manufacturing from creating employment opportunities. Hence, the quality of jobs is a critical part about the employment challenge.

The crux of the problem is the **shortage of 'good jobs'** that have high labour productivity and therefore provide decent incomes. Such jobs are largely to be found in the organized sector, while most workers are bottled up in the unorganized sector. In the absence of social security, households accept any employment if no quality jobs is available. This leads to low wages and no severance pay. While public discussions on jobs have increased, discussions on labour reforms have not been taken up with equal vigour. Sticky labour laws and difficult business environment have led to employers shifting their new hiring in favour of contract labour where social

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security is much lesser. Hence, the focus should be on how to increase employment for low-skilled workers in the organized sector. We need to raise quality jobs, the social security offered and at the same time we need to improve labour laws to ensure that markets allocate labour efficiently. This will, in true sense, promote inclusive growth in the country.

### So what can the policymakers do to revive job growth?

**Special package for labour intensive industries:** Special packages are needed for labour-intensive industries to create jobs. There are a number of labour intensive manufacturing sectors in India such as food processing, leather and footwear, wood manufacturers and furniture, textiles and apparel and garments. The nature of the package will need to be individually designed for each sector defined as quickly as possible.

**Promotion to labour intensive exports:** An export promotion programme focusing exclusively on labour-intensive exports is needed for India to expand in the global value chains. Export markets are the major source of demand for labour-intensive products.

**Improve environment to do business:** There is a need to address infrastructure and credit constraints, land-acquisition constraints, skill constraints, and the numerous and onerous bureaucratic obstacles that deter the growth of firms, particularly the small labour-intensive firms that numerically dominate industry and services.

**Labour market reforms:** A major factor underlying the weak demand for low-skilled labour in the organized sector is India's labour laws and regulations, which are some of the most rigid in the world. For any firm that employs more than a hundred workers, the Industrial Disputes Act makes retrenchment of jobs legally impossible without prior government permission. The Act makes even flexible redeployment of labour within an enterprise very difficult. One legal way round is to employ contract labour. But contract labour leads to poor-quality jobs. Moreover, the Contract Labour Act prohibits the employment of contract labour in 'core' activities.

Labour market reform would be possible only if it was negotiated with trade unions as part of a deal that includes more generous severance benefits, a better overall safety net, and more effective schemes for job-search and training, in other words, some strengthening of income security in exchange for some weakening of extreme job security. In the Union Budget 2017-18, the

government announced that legislative reforms will be undertaken to simplify, rationalise and amalgamate the existing labour laws into 4 Codes on (i) wages; (ii) industrial relations; (iii) social security and welfare; and (iv) safety and working conditions.

**Invest in urban infrastructure:** Infrastructure investment by the government always creates many jobs. Thus, an engagement between the Urban Development and MSME Ministries is necessary as it will attract more investment to industrial clusters, which is where most non-agricultural jobs are.

**Focus on women:** As reflected by the low female labour force participation rate, there is a strong need to create jobs for women across all sectors. Promoting entrepreneurship by women will have a multiplier effect on employment creation.

Further, India has one of the youngest populations in an aging world. In 2020, the median age in India is just 28, compared to 37 in China and the US, 45 in Western Europe, and 49 in Japan. Demographics can change the pace and pattern of economic growth. Investing more and more efficiently in people will enable India to tap into its demographic dividend and prepare the country for the future. There is a powerful link between these investments and economic growth, stability and security. Investing in people through healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills helps build human capital, which is key to supporting economic growth, ending extreme poverty, and creating more inclusive societies. Human capital is now the fastest-growing component of India's wealth.

**CONCLUSION:** There is a desperate need to boost employment in both formal and informal sectors in India. The experience of countries that managed to transform rapidly, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and China, shows that the manufacturing sector and the ability to compete in the vast global marketplace hold the key to the creation of well-paid jobs for low and semi-skilled workers. With its large workforce and competitive wages, India can become a hub for manufacturing industries and thus create employment opportunities.

### ► UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (UBI): INCOME SUPPORT OR MAKING PEOPLE DEPENDENT

#INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

**Why this topic?** According to Oxfam, richest 1% in India own 58% of total wealth. This income gap is alarming as it is



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*reflecting large scale poverty and deprivation. How to balance it?*

*In past two years, COVID-19 led to loss of work and nose-diving of incomes, food insecurity etc.*

*Nurturing of right skills, employability and livelihoods for all can provide lasting solution but in the meanwhile to support the most deprived; UBI is being discussed as a medium of support and thus nudging towards betterment of the masses and laying the platform for a more inclusive economy.*

**INTRODUCTION:** A referendum was carried out in Switzerland in 2016 where in the people were asked to give their opinion on the implementation of Universal Basic Income (UBI). The proposal included the UBI of 2,500 Swiss francs to be provided to all the adults living in Switzerland. The result of the referendum was quite surprising given the fact that more than 75% of the population rejected the idea of UBI. Despite its rejection, the idea of UBI has caught the imagination of the world. A large number of countries such as US, Canada, Kenya, Finland, Namibia, Netherlands, and India etc. are implementing UBI through a pilot program in order to study its impact on the society.

UBI has its advocates as well as opponents. On one hand, the advocates have pitched for UBI as an answer to solve the problems of poverty and unemployment while, on the other hand, the opponents have argued that UBI would not be economically feasible and impose additional social costs in the form of inducing laziness and increased demand for temptation goods such as alcohol, cigarettes etc. Against this backdrop, questions which can be raised here is whether India is ready for UBI?

**MAIN BODY:** A Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a regular fixed cash transfer payment provided by the government to every citizen or resident regardless of their socio-economic status to ensure that they are at least able to meet their basic needs. The idea of a basic income is founded on the three following characteristics: **Universality:** UBI should be given to the entire population without taking into account the socio-economic status; **Un-conditionality:** UBI should be unconditional i.e. UBI should be given without any conditionality; **Agency:** UBI should be in the form of cash transfers without dictating the choices i.e. the recipients should have complete freedom to use the UBI in whatever way they deem fit.

The capitalists argue that growing automation would lead to loss of jobs and hence can have an adverse impact on the demand in the economy. Under such

circumstances, the UBI would enable the economies to keep the demand intact and consequently the future economic growth would not be jeopardised. Further, the capitalists argue that UBI would not induce laziness among people. It is based upon the assumption that all the individuals are utility maximisers and would strive for higher quality of life once they are assured of basic needs through the UBI.

On the other hand, the socialists argue that implementation of UBI would reduce the growing socio-economic disparities across the world and would go a long way in taking forward the idea of modern welfare state.

Thus, it is argued that UBI is neither right (Capitalist) nor left (Socialist), rather it should be way forward for all the countries.

There are some advantages of UBI in India such as:

**Freedom and Justice:** It is often said that the greatness of a nation can be judged by how it treats its weakest member. In this regard, the UBI would enable the government to realise its vision of social and economic justice as enshrined in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

It is to be noted that Article 21 of the Indian constitution includes the Right to Life. The right to life is not confined to mere animal existence and it means more than physical survival. It includes the right to live with human dignity by being able to meet the basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, education, healthcare etc. Thus, the state is required to play a facilitative role in ensuring human dignity and enabling the individuals to reach their optimum potential. Hence, the implementation of UBI would promote the basic values such as freedom, justice, equality, fairness in a country.

**Poverty Reduction:** The Government has launched a large number of schemes and programmes aimed at poverty eradication. However, it has not had intended benefits. In this regard, the UBI can be considered to be a much better tool for poverty eradication for number of reasons. **Firstly**, if we look at the BPL population in India, it has got reduced from almost 70% in 1950s to 22% in 2011-12. However, in spite of this huge achievement, a large section of Indian society is even today unable to meet their basic needs.

**Secondly**, the BPL list in India is characterised by inclusion and exclusion errors due to which we have been unable to ensure basic needs for the poorest and most vulnerable sections of Indian society. In this regard, since the UBI is designed to be universal, it would be

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most appropriate tool to ensure basic rights of the poor and the downtrodden.

**Thirdly**, reasons for the poverty in India vary across the families. In some families, lack of basic education could be reason for poverty whereas in other families, lack of unemployment opportunities or poor health conditions could be reasons. Due to which, "One size fits all approach" to eradicate poverty does not work. Hence, it is the family and not the government that is in the best position to decide as to what actions should be taken in order to come out of the vicious cycle of poverty. The UBI would empower the families to take this important decision and hence can be considered to be a much better tool for poverty eradication.

**Reducing Income Inequality:** The UBI could also be considered as a solution to address the growing inequality in India for number of reasons. **Firstly**, 1/3 of jobs in developing countries could face immense pressure due to growing technological advancements and automation. Hence, the UBI would provide the people with the necessary security net in order to withstand any potential job losses in future.

**Secondly**, the UBI would be financed through the progressive income tax leading to redistribution of income from the richer class to the poor people.

**Thirdly**, provision of income security through the UBI would have positive spill-over effects such as increased levels of entrepreneurship among the poor families. This would promote inclusive growth and reduce the gap in the income levels between the households.

**Promote Women Empowerment:** Even though, women contribute significantly for the growth of our economy, their contribution is hardly recognised since majority of the women are involved in "unpaid" household work. Hence, in this regard, the feminists argue that the implementation of UBI would lead to change in the outlook of the society towards women and promote gender equality. This becomes extremely important in India where the women are regarded as burden on the families leading to their low social status.

**UBI and Mental Health:** Normally, the poor people across the world are burdened with the "psychology of scarcity" characterised by anxiety, distress and depression leading to poor mental health condition. This significantly affects their decision making ability and hence they fall into the vicious cycle of poverty and poor mental health condition.

The UBI could, therefore, help people free themselves of the mental burden and preoccupations and move towards a healthier life.

The motivation behind most universal basic income is laudable. However, some of the economists have argued that the UBI may not have intended benefits on the economy. In this regard, let us understand some of the problems and challenges in implementation of UBI in India.

**Economic cost of UBI:** Many opponents of the UBI argue that providing an income transfer to the entire population would result in very high expenditure. For example, if India has to provide UBI to all its citizens, it would be required to pay Rs 1190 per person per month (This is based on the Poverty line estimates of 2011-12 according to Tendulkar committee estimates). This expenditure would amount to around 12.5% of its GDP.

**Social Cost of UBI:** Work plays a central role in the life of the people. Apart from enabling them to earn their livelihood, working has certain social benefits. It contributes to feelings of self-worth and personal satisfaction, facilitates social interaction and enables the people to fulfil social needs and establish their role and identity in the society. In this regard, some economists have opposed UBI on the grounds that it would disincentive work and lead to negative social cost on the society.

Apart from that, modern societies are necessarily based upon the principle of reciprocity i.e. the people's rights must be commensurate with their duties and obligations. The UBI would violate this principle of reciprocity since people would receive the money as matter of right without the imposing any economic or social obligation.

**Political Cost of UBI:** In order to implement UBI, the government would be required to do away with all the subsidies, which presently account for around 4.24% of the GDP. However, doing away with the subsidies has always been Achilles heels for India since it imposes political cost in the form of loss of vote bank.

Further, it has to be noted that the UBI may have to be revised periodically taking into account the rate of inflation and standard of living. Hence, competitive and vote bank politics may play a major role in the revision of UBI leading to unnecessary increase in the UBI amount.

Besides the above, there are other questions of concern about UBI such as: - **Does UBI discourages work and make people lazy?** It has been argued that UBI would

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discourage work and make people lazy since they are assured of minimum income for meeting their basic needs. On the other hand, this criticism against the UBI has been countered by some of the economists on number of grounds.

**Firstly**, the amount of money to be given under the UBI is meant to cover only the basic needs of the people. This means that the UBI cannot be considered to be sole means of survival for the large chunk of India's population. People would still have to work in order to meet their higher order needs. This can be explained through Maslow's Theory of Motivation.

**Secondly**, the argument that UBI would discourage work is based upon erroneous assumption that people work only in order to meet their basic needs. However, such an assumption demeans human dignity and labour and portrays the human beings in negative manner.

**Thirdly**, it can also be argued that the UBI would lead to increase in the productivity level of the workers. UBI would enable the workers to increase their bargaining power and negotiate on better terms of employment such as increased wages, better working conditions, access to social security benefits such as pension, insurance etc. Further, assurance of UBI would enable the workers to spend the money on development of their skills leading to increase in their productivity.

Hence, it can be argued that, contrary to the claims that UBI would discourage work, implementation of the UBI would actually improve the status of the workers, improve their bargaining power and more importantly, lead to higher productivity.

**Does UBI lead to increase in demand for Temptation Goods?** It has been argued that the implementation of the UBI would lead to increase in the demand for temptation goods such as Alcohol, Tobacco, Gambling etc. leading to moral hazard. However, this criticism against UBI may be countered on number of grounds.

**Firstly**, it is to be noted that both alcohol and Tobacco are inferior goods and not normal goods i.e. their demand reduces as the income level of the people increases due to the substitution effect (Law of Demand).

Hence, it is expected that as the income levels of the people increases through the implementation of UBI, the people would spend less money on the temptation goods and instead substitute this wasteful expenditure with some productive expenditure such as education, healthcare etc. So the assumption that the UBI would

lead to increase in the temptation goods goes against the empirical evidence.

**Secondly**, there is also evidence that as the poor people are provided with UBI, they are willing to start small businesses and pull themselves out of poverty trap.

UBI has now entered policy debate in India ever since UBI was proposed by the Economic Survey 2016-17 as a social welfare scheme suitable for India. Further, recently, the Sikkim government has declared that it would be implementing the UBI from 2022. But the question here is does India has sufficient financial resources to implement UBI? From where should we generate revenue to fund UBI? The Economic survey has given answers to these questions.

The Economic survey proposes that the UBI should target only 75% of the population rather than being universal. It is of the opinion that the top 25% of the India's population can be easily excluded from the purview of UBI through automatic exclusion criteria such as payment of income Tax, ownership of movable and immovable property etc. Hence, in order to provide the UBI for 75% of the population in India, we would be required to spend around 5-6% of the GDP in order to implement the UBI.

The Economic survey has proposed that the UBI can be implemented by doing away all the subsidies presently given by the government. However, financial resources alone would not guarantee the success of UBI in India. There are host of other factors which should have to be considered.

**Firstly**, it is observed that the success of the UBI initiative would depend upon the Political will and administrative efficiency.

**Secondly**, there is a need to recognise that the success of the UBI would depend upon providing information and enhancing the awareness levels of the people in India.

**Thirdly**, lack of Financial Inclusion may create a significant impediment to UBI implementation. According to the WB, there are only around 20 ATMs for every 100,000 adults in India. Hence, under circumstances, it may become quite difficult for the people living in remote areas to access the UBI. Hence, there is need to make the optimum use of JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile) trinity solution for making cash transfers. Apart from that, we need to improve the last-mile connectivity before implementing UBI. In this regard, there is a need to give further boost to differentiated banks such as Payment Banks and Small

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Finance Banks along with enhancing the presence of Banking correspondents (BCs) in the rural areas.

**Fourthly**, being a large and diverse country, India has to implement the UBI in an incremental and phased manner. Such an approach would enable us to keep learning from the challenges and problems which would be encountered in the implementation of the UBI.

**Lastly**, the government has to realise that the implementation of UBI is just one facet of welfare state and its implementation should not deter the government from undertaking other welfare measures. The Government needs to continue to invest in the creation of welfare state such as provision of Education, Healthcare, Housing, Sanitation etc. Provision of such basic infrastructure is equally critical for the success of the UBI.

**CONCLUSION:** It can be construed that the option of UBI has been floated as a panacea to promote welfare but it should be accompanied with more focus and weightage towards education, generating awareness, skilling, creativity, productivity, employability, employment and health of the people. Major budgetary investment is desired in all these areas which make people capable rather than dependent, make them citizens rather than subjects.

"Lending hands to someone is better than giving a dole."

### ► DIGITAL ECONOMY CAN BECOME AN ENABLER BY BRIDGING DIGITAL DIVIDE

#### # INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

**Why this topic?** In the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, there is push towards digital age. This has been fast tracked during the COVID-19 pandemic where digital technologies are impacting all spheres-Political, Economic, Social.

In the economic sphere, work from home, automation, AI are emerging as alternatives but on the other side we need to take care of the masses who are digitally challenged. This is required to create a level playing field rather than expanding digitally infused inequalities.

**INTRODUCTION:** Click on the Zomato app and you will have your pizza delivered at your doorstep, one click on the Uber will make you reach the airport in time and with just a single click, you can actually plan your vacation in Mauritius. Thereby, going digital is no longer an option, it is the default.

Technology has evolved so much in today's time that everyone has become tech savvy. A student with access to internet can learn more than a child with no internet connectivity. A trader can buy his work and sell it online on higher prices. A farmer can stay updated with real time advisory. Not just this, a young man or woman with internet skills is more likely to be hired at a departmental store. One swipe of the ATM card resolves the issue of carrying cash and the list goes on. It's this digital world which has made every impossible thing possible.

**MAIN BODY:** Digital economy is a term coined in the mid-1990s which is considered as the by-product of internet revolution. The digital economy is the worldwide network of economic activities, commercial transactions and professional interactions that are enabled by information and communication technologies. Naming one thing where technology is not present is difficult.

Digital economy has evolved tremendously. Apart from the basic applications, many new features and new areas have emerged such as Internet of things, 5G, data analytics robotics, 3D printing, automatic vehicles, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, etc. It finds application in education, entertainment, banking, science, healthcare, financial services, space, medicine, agriculture and so on.

Digital technologies provide a level playing field, easy accessibility, affordability and services to all. It's a saying that in 21st century one cannot completely switch off!

**Digital Economy as a leveller:** Was not man apprehensive when computers had first arrived? Was not joblessness provoked as a fear at that time? Similarly, with the fast pacing and globalised world, man is again doubtful about the possibility of these technologies replacing men or brushing gender equality.

Starting from our own households, digitisation has shaped our lives such as smart electricity, LED TVs, smartphones, ipads, automatic cars and what not. The problem of cash transactions during availing banking services, health care services, payment of fees, shopping etc. has been eradicated through digital payment modes like net banking, credit/debit cards, Paytm, Phone Pe etc.

Technology finds numerous applications outside of the households such as in the production sector where digitization has seen spur in innovation which is engine of growth. Many e-commerce companies, cloud computing, ITES, smart grid etc. have availed these

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technological advancement opportunities for producers and sellers.

B2B e-commerce between industries and many retail giants like Amazon, Flipkart etc. have increased production efficiency and high output. Thereby, improving India's ranking in Ease of Doing Business Report published by World Bank from 77 in 2018 to 63 in 2019.

The Govt. of India's '**Digital India**' program has been instrumental in bringing change towards paperless transactions. Most of the e-commerce companies monitor consumer behaviour and provide desired shopping material at their fingertips, reducing travel time and increasing affordability for customers that today customers prefer online shopping than traditional shopping methods.

Artificial Intelligence has started to make its way in the field of health care and medicine. India faces shortage of qualified doctors i.e. 0.76 doctors/1000 population, non-uniform accessibility and affordability issues. Artificial intelligence in combination with internet of medical things (IOMT) will serve as new nervous system for healthcare. Machine learning in assisting pathologists will guide in quality and precise diagnosis of diseases like cancer.

Today's farmer also will be engaged in 'climate smart agriculture' where with the help of digital technology she will be aided in real-time advisory regarding weather forecast, monitoring soil health, condition of micro nutrients, predictability of monsoons etc. Certain technologies involve the use of AI in monitoring soil health such as the Plantix App by the Berlin - based Germany which examines images of soil and uses whether there is any kind of pest or disease and offers remedial step for action. There is also an AI sowing app which predicts apt sowing time for beautiful harvest.

USA and China account for 75% of all patents in digital technologies and 50% of global spending on Internet of things (IOT). 4th industrial Revolution is known to transform existing technologies towards a brighter and improved quality of life.

Govt. in planning to establish 100 smart cities under the 'Smart India' mission which will incorporate the use of smart and advanced technology towards the creation of smart parks. Smart homes, crowd management, AI driven service delivery etc.

Change of such a kind requires change of people's attitudes because it's very hard to transform the culture and workforce to the digital world if all of the processes

are stuck in the traditional world. If people do not adapt themselves to the fast changing world, then they will lag behind most others and will not be able to compete.

Technology is sometimes also treated as a driver of economic inequality due to globalization, organizational and situational factors. Many inequalities are observed such as in terms of income difference which eventually breeds inequalities among people.

Large firms are in concentrated markets where executives are paid exorbitantly compared to the rest of the areas. But, these are exceptions and are not so always. There are some differences among the gender usage of technology such as per the Digital Economy Report of 2019, in around 2/3rd of countries women using internet are less than men.

Some disparities remain but to eradicate them UNCTAD recommends enhancing e-commerce radius in which firms and people create value through digital economy.

**First** step would be formulation of appropriate strategy through establishment of a leading ministry to enhance focus on digital technology, awareness generation towards importance of digital empowerment, engagement into public-private partnership dialogues. Just as PPP model has been proved to be effective in the construction of highways, bridges etc. similar model can be applied in the digital technology as well.

**Second**, creations of ICT infrastructure such as fast, affordable, reliable internet services and last mile connectivity especially connecting the rural population those in inaccessible hinterlands. PPP model can serve as national backbone infrastructure for access to internet bandwidth.

**Third step** would involve creation of legal and regulatory framework to regulate the e-commerce firms and digital economy and laws aimed at consumer protection, data protection, Intellectual property right etc. This would also include stringent provisions in ease of violation of laws and rules.

**Fourth**, would include development of skills i.e. making the workforce eligible for high-skilled or expertise requiring tasks through reskilling and upskilling. This can take place through vocational training by providing incentives such tax holidays, tax breaks/grants to employer. Recognition of training provided by informal training institutes such as in various diploma courses or distance education courses. One such initiative is of Ministry of Tribal Affairs to impart training to tribal girls (5000) by mentoring them on weekly basis in collaboration with Facebook.

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## INCLUSIVE ECONOMY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Empowering women in the digital economy is a prerequisite for upward mobility of women and making them financially empowered. Wireless women for entrepreneurship and empowerment are a program in India which is women driven ICT based micro social enterprises.

Haiti, has also started a program called Radikal to empower women with tools such as internet, social media, mobile technology etc. to tackle poverty and handle micro-enterprises.

**CONCLUSION:** At the end, fostering digital entrepreneurship and innovation through large scale 'talk-shop' conferences such as i4 Policy initiative in Africa incorporates hub managers for policy dialogues.

Many such initiatives like these will help in making digital economy as a leveller and not as a source of economic inequality.

Times are changing and are bound to change, it depends on us how we adjust ourselves to the changing times.

# THEME-5

## SOCIAL ISSUES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### ABOUT THE THEME:

UPSC topics related with Society are based on the desire to convert our society into a more democratic and egalitarian society. Here the major elements for achieving a just society are evolved education system, giving respect and recognition to all irrespective of caste, religion, gender and region. In this regards, the topics in this theme are based on the above thought process.

*The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable people.*

### ► I MEASURE THE PROGRESS OF A COMMUNITY BY THE DEGREE OF PROGRESS WHICH WOMEN HAVE ACHIEVED

#### #WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

**Why this topic?** All round opportunities extended to women not only help in their individual and collective development but also comprehensively contributes in the development of entire society and overall progress of the nation.

This becomes a force multiplier and an indicator of the progress of the community at large.

**INTRODUCTION:** Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar used the degree of progress achieved by women as a yardstick to measure the overall progress made by the society. One of the most prominent reasons why the American and European societies are developed economically, technologically, socially and politically is the freedom and liberty enjoyed by the women of their societies.

Renaissance <13th century> and enlightened <15th century> were major events which changed the course of history. American Revolution for the first time displayed to the whole world the strength of democracy. The French Revolution gave room for novel ideas such as liberty, equality and fraternity. All these liberal ideas, brought with them a new age for women. An age where women were independent to take their decisions, an age where the role of women was not just confined within the four walls of the house; an age where they enjoyed greater political freedom; an age where they worked shoulder to shoulder with men to take their countries to newer heights of success and glory.

However, the case with India has been diagonally opposite. In the Rig Vedic Age <3rd century BC>, women did enjoy equal rights with that of the men. Archaeological evidence and scriptures depict that women did participate in the Sabhas and Samitis <political assemblies> of those times. However, with the onset of the later Vedic Age, the position of women got degraded in the society. Slowly, but steadily they started losing their rights and freedom. Religious

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scriptures and manuscripts written in those times further propounded the image of women to that of a puppet whose strings were held by the men of the society. Her role in the society was just to maintain the household chores and reproduce so that the generation continues. For instance, Manusmriti projected women as a source of misery. Thus, it was one of the reasons why Dr. Ambedkar, publicly burnt the book.

**MAIN BODY:** Patriarchy was thus manifested in the order of Indian society. Further, till the British invasion of India, the people of India were not exposed to the liberal ideas of equality and freedom. Hence, Indian society was backward, orthodox and male dominated. But, with the British Raj also came the western education and the idea of equality and freedom. Many Indian intellectuals were thoroughly influenced by these ideas and the degree to which the European society had progressed. Orthodoxy and belief in superstitious ideas were attributed to as the main reasons for the poor state of Indian society. Patriarchy was at its helm as was evident from the evil practices of Sati and Child marriage. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar rose to the occasion to fight off these evils. Further, education was something from which the women of the Indian society were kept aloof. The basic perception, which was manifested by scriptures, was that a girl is someone else's wealth; and therefore they were married off early. Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule were two pioneers who worked for the cause of women education and tried to bring about a social change in the society. Furthermore, movements such as the Prarthana Sabha were stated to provide support to widows. Therefore, it can be said that, with the onset of British Raj, some social reforms took place to alleviate the position of women. However, these reforms were not successful in altogether overthrowing patriarchy and establish a society which provided equal states to men and women. Hence, in post-independent India, the fathers of our constitution safeguarded Right to Equality as the fundamental right. Thus was to ensure that women progress and come on an equal footing to that of men.

This **ideal message of the Constitution** has time and again being reinforced by the Parliament by enforcement of several legislations which ought to improve the status of women. Initiatives such as "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" emphasized on eradicating female infanticide as a social evil and educating girl child to help her achieve her targets; Pradhan Mantri Matra Vandana Yojana is a noble initiative to aid and help the pregnant and lactating mothers; POSHAN Abhiyan <National Nutrition Mission> aims at providing proper nutrition;

Vishakha Guideline, 1997 and Prevention of Women at workplace Act have ensured that women are safe at places of work; POCSO <Prevention of children from sexual offences> Act makes sure that children are not sexually harassed.

All the measures taken by the government have indeed proved to be noble initiatives in ensuring equality and social, economic and political justice for women. However, patriarchy, even today seems to be dominant character of the Indian society. Further, new focus of crimes against women has started raising their heads. According to the National Crimes Record Bureau <NCRB>, there has been a surge in the amount of rapes in the country. The Nirbhaya Rape Case, Unnao Rape Case, Hathras Rape Case and the Hyderabad Rape Case are some examples of the most heinous crimes against women. Further, it is estimated that a women gets raped in India in every two hours. Such cases and estimates raise some serious questions on our security apparatus and the mindset of the country.

**Marital rapes**, is another crime against women which often goes unnoticed and unquestioned. Acid attacks and hate crimes are other examples which demonstrate that even in the 21st century, we have not been able to provide a safe and secure environment to women as envisaged by our Constitution. Moreover, **female infanticide, dowry and child marriage** continue to be practiced in some rural pockets Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. On the economic front, there have been various factors which have resisted women from achieving newer heights. The **Glass-Ceiling effect** experienced by women often does not let her realize her own potential. On the political front, poor representation of women in parliament and State Legislative assemblies has been an issue which must be dealt with security. Health indicators for women have been poor. Women have been suffering through malnourishment and anaemia. Such a state during pregnancies also impacts the child. A malnourished woman gives birth to a child which is not only physically weak but also does not possess the required learning capabilities. Thus, it leads to poor human capital formation for the country. Further, there has also been an increasing trend towards "feminization of poverty". With an increase in the rate of rural-urban migration, women are left alone to feed the family. Also, there has been an increase in the trend of feminization of agriculture. However, as the land is not registered in the name of the women, she is unable to reap the benefits of any financial services. In the urban areas, majority of the women are employed in the informal sector. This



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deprives them of any financial security such as pensions or provident fund.

**CONCLUSION:** In the light of the above problems faced by women today, there is a need to bring about social change which shall help in addressing the problems and elevating the status of women. Women Education must be insured, as teaching women makes the entire generation educated. Further, according to the Comprehensive Report on Nutritional Security, it was found out that education of women and nourishment of children were directly linked. Educating women can also help in effectively addressing the issue of malnourishment.

Further, laws for protecting women against heinous crimes must be made more stringent. Also, there is a need to speeding up the justice to women. Pro-active policing is the need of the hour to upgrade women security in the country. Further, there is a need to bring about a behavioural change in the society. This change can be brought about by shunning commodification of women. All this will ensure that a social change is brought in, which makes the society safe and just for women. Such a safe and just society will be progressive as envisaged by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Hence, what is required today is not a new bill, but political will and administrative skill and then unitedly go for the kill of the social evils.

### ► THE LONG ROAD TO REAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.

# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT #SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Why this topic?** Female labour participation rate in India fell to 16.1% during the July-September 2020 quarter, the lowest among the major economies. Further, amid lack of access to quality education and underlying social, economic barriers limiting the opportunities for women.

*This again sheds an introspecting light on the question: Are we marching towards or retreating from the path of women empowerment?*

**INTRODUCTION:** The core of empowerment lies in the ability of a woman to control her own destiny. This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), they must also have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as are provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions) and to exercise

agency, women must live without the fear of coercion and violence.

**MAIN BODY:** In terms of Indian women, the women empowerment is very essential, because of the male dominated patriarchal society. It is very difficult to achieve social, political, economic and other development of the nation without empowerment of women community. There are many practical steps that can reduce inequalities based on gender, inequalities that constrain the potential to reduce poverty and achieve high levels of well-being in society. There are also many positive actions that can be taken to empower women. Without leadership and political will, however, the world will fall short of taking these practical steps and meeting the goal.

In the Indian society gender inequality is deeply rooted in entrenched attitudes, societal institutions, and market forces. Political commitment at the highest international and national levels is essential to institute the policies that can trigger social change and to allocate the resources necessary to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The women should be empowered, and then only India can overtake its challenges to achieve the desired growth.

Like race and ethnicity, gender is a social construct. It defines and differentiates the roles, rights, responsibilities, and obligations of women and men. The innate biological differences between females and males form the basis of social norms that define appropriate behaviours for women and men and that determine women's and men's differential social, economic, and political power. The concept of empowerment is related to gender equality in the distinct from. Inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment need an operational framework within three dimensions:

The **Capabilities Domain**, which refers to basic human abilities as measured by education, health, and nutrition. These capabilities are fundamental to individual well-being and are the means through which individuals access other forms of well-being.

The **Access to Resources and Opportunities Domain**, which refers primarily to equality in the opportunity to use or apply basic capabilities through access to economic assets (such as land or housing) and resources (such as income and employment), as well as political opportunity (such as representation in parliaments and other political bodies). Without access to resources and opportunities, both political and economic, women will be unable to employ their capabilities for their well-

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being and that of their families, communities, and societies.

The **Security Domain**, which is defined to mean reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict. Violence and conflict result in physical and psychological harm and lessen the ability of individuals, households, and communities to fulfil their potential. Violence directed specifically at women and girls often aims at keeping them in "their place" through fear.

These three domains are interrelated. Change in all three is critical to achieve empowerment. Building capacities means enhancing the role of participation in the society. The dimension security refers to violence and crimes arising against women and the other social evils such as the crimes against women, female infanticide. Women are also more susceptible to cheating and exploitation. Child marriage and dowry system see women as trade goods.

From the gender perspective reservation policy is implemented for equity and equality of the women and access to resources and opportunity for empowerment. The recommendation to include 33 percent women in the decision-making level of political parties should be made compulsory as implementing steps to ensure that women propose their own views in the decision-making of the administration, judiciary, non-government organisations and private sector. It is also recommended increasing political position of the ministry of Women and Children Affairs with provision of required resources.

The Indian government conducts multidimensional programs for empowering women. To empower women further, the bare minimum necessities are: Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education. **Schooling is the first step** toward gender equality in education. However, the world is still far from achieving gender parity in enrolment and completion rates, particularly at the secondary school level. A number of interventions that have proven effective for increasing girls' participation in primary school may also apply to post-primary education. These include making schooling more affordable by reducing costs and offering targeted scholarships, building secondary schools close to girls' homes, and making schools girl-friendly. To make all schools feminine friendly in terms of toilet and campus. Education must serve as the vehicle for transforming attitudes, beliefs, and entrenched social norms that perpetuate discrimination and inequality and promotes

empowerment. All interventions taken to promote gender equality in education must, therefore, be transformational in nature

**Guarantee of sexual and reproductive health and rights** cannot be achieved without empowerment of girls and women. A large body of evidence shows that sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to women's ability to build their capabilities, take advantage of economic and political opportunities, and control their destinies. Conversely, gender inequality that restricts women's access to economic resources compromises their sexual and reproductive autonomy. Interventions to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights must therefore be a priority and should occur both within and outside the health system. At a minimum, national public health systems must provide quality family planning services, emergency obstetric care, safe abortion (where legal), post-abortion care, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), and interventions to reduce malnutrition and anaemia.

**Invest in infrastructure** to reduce women's and girls' time burdens. Increasing women's participation in the design and implementation of infrastructure projects can help to overcome obstacles to access and affordability. This is best illustrated in the sanitation and water sector, where women play key roles as users and managers. There is strong evidence from community water and sanitation projects that projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that ignore women. Adapting modern science and technology to meet the infrastructure needs of poor people in a way that builds on the knowledge and experience of women and is accessible and affordable to all is therefore a development priority.

Guarantee women's and girls' **property and inheritance rights**. Eliminate gender inequality in employment by closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation. Women's work, both paid and unpaid, is critical to the survival and security of poor households and an important route through which households escape poverty. Recognizing the value of early education, especially targeted to poor children, governments in India, also support childcare and early education services. Yet, no single country provides the investment in care services that is required to fully meet the needs of women and their children. Filling this gap is essential for empowerment. To improve the nature and conditions of work, employment-enhancing economic growth is a prerequisite for low-income countries,

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coupled with social policy that eliminates discriminatory employment.

**Increase women's share of seats** in national parliament, assemblies and local governmental bodies. Increasing women's representation in political office is now a widely accepted Indicator of empowerment for tracking progress. Indeed, the bench mark recommended a target of 33 percent of seats for women in national parliaments. There are three reasons why the task force has selected political participation as a strategic priority. Countries where women's share of seats in political bodies is less than 30 percent are less inclusive, less egalitarian, and less democratic. Equality of opportunity in politics is a human right. Evidence also suggests that women's interests often differ from men's and those women who participate directly in decision making bodies press for different priorities than those emphasized by men. Finally, women's participation in political decision making bodies improves the quality of governance.

**Combat violence** against girls and women. Although no single intervention will eliminate violence against women, a combination of infrastructure, legal, judicial, enforcement, education, health, and other service-related actions can significantly reduce such violence and ameliorate its negative consequences. Throughout countries around the world adopted new legislation on intimate partner violence, reformed laws on rape and against domestic violence.

**Information, Education and Communication:** The key step for overall empowerment of women is to educate them. Education is the greatest and primary way to empower women society, and giving awareness about their right especially in rural women. The parents have the prime duty that is to educate children. Education provides another important entry point for combating or preventing gender-based violence. Educational interventions include both school-based programs and broader communications campaigns aimed at raising community awareness about the damaging effects of violence. Communications media such as pamphlets, radio, television, and theatre serve to educate and promote change, as they can reach large audiences, because violence often occurs in unsafe public spaces, interventions to improve public infrastructure can contribute to reducing violence against women. If any exception occurred the government should take immense and suitable action to educate them.

Gender inequalities exist among the rich and the poor, but they tend to be greater among the poor, especially

for inequalities in capabilities and opportunities. Moreover, the wellbeing and survival of poor households depend on the productive and reproductive contributions of their female members. Also, an increasing number of poor households are headed or maintained by women. A **focus on poor women** is therefore central to reduce poverty and empower them. Women empowerment faces other challenges in this patriarchal society that are poverty, unemployment, dependence over male counterpart for safety, security and survival etc. The government should step in to include necessary measures in the upcoming Poverty Reduction Strategy to ensure empowerment of women in every sphere of society. Overall long term plan with strategic steps should be taken to empower Indian women community's socio-economic freedom, equality with male counterpart, right to own title and heir of property.

**Situations of conflict** have disproportionate impacts on women and children, who are typically the majority of displaced persons. Post conflict periods present a window of opportunity for reducing gender barriers and creating a gender-equitable society, which is more likely to occur if the reconstruction process fosters the full participation of women. Women in conflict and post conflict needs a damage management system to empower them.

**CONCLUSION:** All of the above transformation requires a critical mass of change agents committed to the vision of a gender equitable society. These change agents include leaders at all levels of government who control critical levers for change — financial and technical resources and set the priorities for actions affecting the lives of many. To be effective, government leaders must work in partnership with civil society institutions, especially organizations that represent women's interests. Simultaneously, there must be a critical mass of change agents at the international level in the institutions that provide support to national governments and civil society organizations in implementing changes necessary for a gender-equitable society.

Accountability and monitoring systems need to be in place to ensure that fundamental change is broad-based and lasting. The needed systems include a strong legal framework along with the mechanisms to enforce it within and outside government, and a strong women's movement along with the processes that enable women's groups to inform and influence government policies and resource allocations. The philosophy of women empowerment should identify indicators for

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measuring invisible contribution of women. At the same time, it should incorporate budget, National Women's Development Policy and Platform of Action in the meaningful planning of the future for the empowered women in society. The way is long for us to go, but with the sustained and collaborative steps, and implementation of favourable policies, the vision of empowered women will be achieved. Then only India can be a developed nation.

### ► RECOGNISING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE BY ENABLING LAND ENTITLEMENTS

# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT #SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Why this topic?** *In rural areas, more and more women are donning multiple farming roles according to the Economic Survey. To facilitate dignified participation of women in Indian agriculture, the ownership of land should be extended to women who will ensure enhanced access to resources like financial inclusion, technology and training to women farmers and their emergence as entrepreneurs and breadwinners.*

**INTRODUCTION:** "How wrong is it for a woman to expect the man to build the world she wants, rather than to create it herself?" ~ Anaïs Nin (Cuban activist)

#### What is the issue of land ownership for Women?

In many parts of the world, women's rights to land and property are systematically denied. Laws give women fewer or less secure rights than men, and discriminatory attitudes and practices undermine them. This leaves many women almost entirely dependent on the men in their lives for basic economic survival and vulnerable to violence, poverty, and food insecurity, particularly if widowed, divorced, single, or in marriages not formally recognized. As land resources are increasingly contested, these problems have worsened, particularly for rural women.

**MAIN BODY:** Women's access to, use of and control over land and other productive resources are essential to ensuring their right to equality and to an adequate standard of living. These resources help to ensure that women are able to provide for their day-to-day needs and those of their families, and to weather some of life's most difficult challenges. Women's access to land and other productive resources is integrally linked to discussions around food security, sustainable economic development, as well as the pressing fight against

gender-based violence. Why have we not able to achieve that in India?

One of the foremost reasons is the patriarchal mindset of Indian society which identifies women's role with narrow outlook. The biggest manifestation of such outlook is the continuous land deprivation that women are subjected to. According to the estimates, about 90% of agricultural land is owned by men. Similarly, in urban regions, majority of property is owned by male counterparts where even the most liberal legislations related to property rights have not been able to make a difference. Families prefer to name their property and land in the name of male members and somehow get around with the laws.

The Indian society is, basically, more tied towards the theory of females being temporary members of the family, and once married would go to other family. This further leads to the mindset where sons are seen as the caretakers of parents during their old age. Such beliefs are not restricted only to the lower sections but continue to persist in the educated and advanced most sections of the society. On the contrary, it is lower sections where women enjoy more liberty in terms of working and ownership. However, such instances are not a norm. The other reasons for such deprivation is stereotyping that women's role is being confined to that of domestic and household works. In rural areas there is an emotional attachment to land and ancestral property. Families want these to remain in the family thus prefer to name it to male members.

The persisting land deprivation comes with its own set of perils. In rural areas agricultural land belonging to male members disempower women. The Indian government provides bank accounts and credit facilities in the name of land holders. This effectively means women are deprived of financial inclusion. Women would continue to be subjected to discrimination. This results in lesser say of women in decision making. It is proved that women are better managers of household income. They would judiciously spend in important works and save the rest. Such instances develop a financial cushion for the household. On the contrary male counterparts may spend in other tasks such as gambling and drinking. Drinking leads to deterioration of health and increase in domestic violence. Children are deprived of a better life and there are no savings for financial emergencies. Drinking is also related to other forms of crimes such as rapes and murders.

Additionally, when male members migrate to other places, it is the women who work on fields. However due

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to low level of financial awareness and absence of land titles they are not able to enjoy government welfare measures such as access to markets, subsidized inputs and loans as these are linked to landownership. Also, such deprivation makes them vulnerable to opportunists who may try to grab their land.

Land deprivation of women brings with it plethora of problems in urban areas also. The lower sections of people reside in slums and generally do not own any land. Even if they do own due to government housing allocations it is in the name of male counterparts. In the upper and middle urban sections conditions are slightly different. They have higher levels of education and income; women may be working in well-established enterprises and are more aware of their rights. The urban middle class is most developed in this sense where women share property and have higher societal status. Unfortunately, even in this section land and property deprivation of women is prevalent. Conspicuously, it is the rich business class where women are deprived the most. Preference to son is given in the continuity of business. Thus absence of women ownership leads to lesser role of women in decision making.

**In this regard, the multi-dimensional advantages related with women ownership of land are given hereunder: -**

Considering the labour input of women in agricultural land and also at home, justice demands that she has ownership in the land owned by the family; Land ownership establishes one's rootedness and belongingness to the community; Land ownership elevates woman's status in the family; Land provides social security for women; Land is a fall back option in case of widowhood, desertion and divorce; Land enhances the probability of being well looked after in the old age; Land ownership enhances the probability of being treated with respect within the family; Propertied women have greater role in household decision making; Ownership of land decreases the chances of Domestic Violence; Ownership of land aids women in walking out of an abusive marriage; Land ownership increases the bargaining power of women within the family; Ownership of land gives financial security to women-land is the least liquid asset and hence will not be easily appropriated by others; Ensures livelihood if properly utilised; Land ownership provides economic security and reduces poverty; Women's land ownership enhances the welfare and well-being of the family and money earned by women result in more equitable intra household distribution of resources than money earned by men in

the family, which is evident through the following: When women own agricultural land, health of daughters improve; When women own land, education of children improve.

Further, land is collateral for availing loans; Women's access to credit increases. This enables timely purchase of inputs and this in turn enhances production; Women negotiate better with suppliers of credit when they are the owners than when the owner is another family member;

On the positive note, the government on its part has recognized the problem and has been taking steps to increase women's ownership. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 was a breakthrough in this regard. An amendment to this Act in 2005 took the progressive step of making daughters coparceners (a person who shares equally with others in the inheritance of an undivided estate or in the rights to it) at par with sons, such that they receive an equal birth right to a share in the natal family's ancestral property, i.e., parents' property.

But, there are many **hindrances** in its implementation. They are: Hindu social practice allows the parents to absolve themselves from honouring the daughter's inheritance right at par with their sons with the alibi of paying dowry at the time of the daughter's marriage. Dowry as a substitute of land and other properties in inheritance is one key way the patriarchal beliefs are deeply anchored in social practice, denying the women social and economic equality within the family. The practice of dowry is so entrenched that women themselves do not feel that it is their moral or legal right to claim inheritance rights in their parents' property.

Women's understandings of the current inheritance law and of the claim processes are clearly rudimentary and fragmented. Land has historically been a male domain and it continues to be so. Even when the women do receive land in inheritance, it is invariably much less than an equal share. Women are likely to get more land as widows than as daughters.

The people and institutions that are mandated to enforce the law are prisoners of the same practice.

Even when women do get land in their own names by inheritance, through dowry, or through purchase by their marital family in their name (this is often done to take advantage of reduced stamp duty on property purchased in a woman's name), the ownership by women is only notional. The women are seldom in possession of the land, title and the Record of Rights (ROR) that make it a secured tenure. The decision

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## SOCIAL ISSUES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

making power on use of the land remains firmly in the grip of men – father, brother, husband or father-in-law.

There is a lack of political will on the part of the State governments to implement the law. Additionally, there are informal barriers as well, in the form of social and cultural barriers. Women are generally forced to give up their share of their parents' property in favour of their brothers for various reasons, such as the fear of breaking familial bonds.

Several other legal reforms and positive steps have taken place since independence in India on equality of women when it comes to property yet equal status remains elusive. The theoretical reforms so far have not been adequate to give women right to property on the same footing and terms as to men. It varies with states, region and religion. Though law has given equal rights it's the practices, customs and norms that stand as an obstacle in giving due recognition to the women.

Given these strong social customs that prevent women from getting a share of their parents' land, robust support systems are needed to help women stand up for their rights and begin to claim the land that is rightfully theirs. The government of India has started this by establishing women's self-help groups (the Mahila Samakhya Program). These village-level groups support women dealing with a variety of challenges, including alcoholic husbands, domestic violence, unfair labour practices, and disrespected property rights. It is in everyone's interest that women be recognized as the farmers that they are. Their continued lack of assets contributes to not only their individual vulnerability, but also country's stubborn poverty.

**CONCLUSION:** To some extent, women themselves are responsible for their present condition. They relinquish their rights as daughters, wives, daughters-in-law, mothers or sisters. This further gets accentuated when they lose the security of the family, as single women, divorced or separated or widow. Social awareness of the rights under law, attitudes of the individual and determination to bring change can ensure social justice and equality in our society and can improve the status of the women.

Finally, to quote Justice Sujata V. Manohar of Supreme Court of India "It is not easy to eradicate deep seated cultural values or to alter traditions that perpetuate discrimination. It is fashionable to denigrate the role of law reform in bringing about social change. Obviously law, by itself, may not be enough. Law is only an instrument. It must be effectively used. And this effective use depends as much on a supportive judiciary as on the

social will to change. An active social reform movement, if accompanied by legal reform, properly enforced, can transform society."

"Woman must not accept; she must challenge. She must not be awed by that which has been built up around her; she must reverence that woman in her which struggles for expression." — Margaret Sanger (an American activist, educator, writer, and nurse)

### ► RECOGNISING THE VALUE OF HOUSEWORK

# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT #SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Why this topic?** *Recently, the Supreme Court has said the value of a woman's work at home must be placed at par with that of her office-going husband. In January 2021, the Supreme Court directed an insurance company to pay a higher claim amount by taking into account the unpaid work performed by a deceased homemaker.*

**INTRODUCTION:** Women everywhere carry a disproportionately higher burden of unpaid work, namely, unpaid domestic services as well as unpaid care of children, the old and the disabled for their respective households. Though this work contributes to overall well-being at the household level and collectively at the national level, it is invisible in the national database and particularly in national policies.

This work is repetitive, boring and frequently drudgery — a 24-hour job without remuneration, promotions or retirement benefits. It restricts opportunities for women in the economy and in life. Women do this job not necessarily because they like it or are efficient in it, but because it is imposed on them by patriarchal norms, which are the roots of all pervasive gender inequalities. This unequal division of unpaid work between women and men is unfair and unjust and it deprives women of equal opportunities as men.

#### **MAIN BODY: Origins of the demand**

The demand for 'wages for housework' arose in the context of struggle and consciousness-raising associated with the Second Wave of the women's movement in North America and Europe. Alongside other demands for social and political equality, women's rights campaigners made visible and also politicised women's everyday experience of housework and child care in the 'private' realm of the household. In doing this, they challenged the assumption that a 'natural' affinity for housework was rooted in the essential nature of women who were performing a 'labour of love'. For leading

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women's rights activists of the 1960s and 1970s, it was important to bust the myth that women's work at home was a personal service with no links to capitalist production. In a concrete sense, this meant linking the exploitation of the worker in the factory to women's work at home.

Despite the links between the 'housewife' and the factory worker, the unwaged status of the former accounted for crucial differences between them. As feminist scholar and writer **Silvia Federici wrote (in 1975)**, in "Wages against housework", it was possible for wage-earners to bargain around the terms of their paid work and the quantity of the wage. 'Housework, on the other hand, had come to define the very nature of a woman. This disallowed women from seeing it as 'real work' or as a social contract. And, therefore, the women who sought to negotiate housework with their partners were seen as 'nagging' and not as workers in struggle'. For the advocates of 'wages for housework', the wage that the state ought to pay women would make them autonomous of the men on whom they were dependent. More fundamentally, the very demand for a wage was a repudiation of housework as an expression of women's nature. It was a revolt against the assigned social role of women. Therein lay the radical nature of the demand for wages, not in the money itself.

For political parties to recognise this work is a positive development and the demand for wages for housewives has emerged from this concern. However, its implementation may create problems such as affordability of the government and calculation of the amounts. Women may not be eager to enter the labour market. More important, these wages may confirm unpaid work as women's work only, which would deny opportunities to women in the wider world. Payment of pension to old women (60+ years) may be a better idea to compensate them for their unpaid work.

### What the government could do?

What governments could do is recognise this unpaid work in the national database by a sound time-use survey and use the data in national policies. Also, they could **relieve women's burden of unpaid work by improving technology** (e.g. better fuel for cooking), better infrastructure (e.g. water at the doorstep), shifting some unpaid work to the mainstream economy (e.g. childcare, care of the disabled, and care of the chronically sick), and by making basic services (e.g. health and transportation) accessible to women.

Also, they could redistribute the work between men and women by providing different incentives and

disincentives to men (e.g. mandatory training of men in housework, childcare, etc.) and financial incentives for sharing housework. These measures will give free time to women and open up new opportunities to them.

### Unpaid work and the economy

What is critical is to understand the linkages between unpaid work and the economy. The household produces goods and services for its members, and if GDP is a measure of the total production and consumption of the economy, it has to incorporate this work by accepting the household as a sector of the economy.

**CONCLUSION:** At the macro level, unpaid work subsidises the private sector by providing it a generation of workers (human capital) and takes care of wear and tear of labour who are family members. The private sector would have paid much higher wages and earned lower profits in the absence of unpaid work. Unpaid work also subsidises the government by taking care of the old, sick and the disabled. The state would have spent huge amounts in the absence of unpaid work. Unpaid work is a privately produced public good which is critical for the sustenance of the mainstream economy. This work, therefore, needs to be integrated with the mainstream economy and policies. It will be up to public policies then to improve the productivity of unpaid workers, reduce their burden, and tap their potential in development, as the household could also be an important economic sector.

By excluding this work from the economy, macroeconomics shows a clear male bias. It is not surprising that many economists call economics "a wrongly conceived discipline" that is narrow, partial and truncated. There is an urgent need to expand the purview of economics not only for gender justice but mainly for moving towards a realistic economics.

## ► MARITAL RAPE: AN INDIGNITY TO WOMEN

# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT #SOCIAL JUSTICE

**Why this topic?** A relationship between two individuals, including marriage, is built around love, respect, trust and consent. Within that civilised framework, a violent and exploitative act like rape has no place.

**INTRODUCTION:** Marriage in India among other things, a sexual contract because it gives the man implied consent to sex in perpetuity. It reinforces the man's "ownership" rights over the wife. This denies the woman any agency over her own body, its sexuality and its

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reproductive function. Refusing to criminalise marital rape is to accept that sexual coercion against a woman, so long as it is within a marriage, will be endorsed by both government and society. If women are to wrest control of their lives, they have to have the right to say no to their husbands without being socially penalised for it. The myth of the 'wifely duty' and the 'conjugal right' must end because marital sex, as all sex, must be with mutual consent and pleasure.

On the other hand, domestic violence in India is an entrenched problem, and it has only been exacerbated in the recent years. About 70 per cent of women in India are victims of domestic violence. National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) 'Crime in India' 2019 report was worrisome but not startling. As per the report, in India, a woman is raped every 16 minutes, and every four minutes, she experiences cruelty at the hands of her in-laws. An analysis of National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015-16 data indicates that an estimated 99.1 per cent of sexual violence cases go unreported and that the average Indian woman is 17 times more likely to face sexual violence from her husband than from others. In spite of the recent amendments in the criminal law, various laws meant to protect women from domestic violence and sexual assault has largely remained ineffective. But what happens when laws provide a safeguard to the culprits and endanger the victims?

**MAIN BODY: Interpretation by Law:** The High Court of Chhattisgarh recently decided a criminal revision petition challenging the charges framed against the applicant husband. Based on the allegations of his wife, charges were framed by a trial court under Section 376 (rape), Section 377 (carnal intercourse against the order of nature) and Section 498A (cruelty towards wife by husband or his relatives) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The High Court upheld charges under Sections 498A and 377 but discharged the husband under Section 376 on the ground that by virtue of Exception 2 to Section 375 (the definition of rape), sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife (provided she is over the age of 18) would not amount to the offence of rape.

Since the High Court was bound by the law, which exempts husbands from being tried or punished for raping their wives by creating the legal fiction that all sex within marriage is consensual, no other conclusion was open to the Court. Notwithstanding this, the discrepancies and failings of Indian criminal law, highlighted by the judgment, deserve scrutiny.

### Inconsistent provisions

**First**, the marital rape exception is inconsistent with other sexual offences, which make no such exemption for marriage. Thus, a husband may be tried for offences such as sexual harassment, molestation, voyeurism, and forcible disrobing in the same way as any other man. A husband separated from his wife (though not divorced) may even be tried for rape (Section 376B). A husband may be charged and tried for non-consensual penetrative sexual interactions other than penile-vaginal penetration with his wife under Section 377 (prior to the decision of the Supreme Court in *Navej Singh Johar v. Union of India*, 2018, consent or lack thereof was not relevant to Section 377, but it is now).

As a result, penetrative intercourse that is penile-vaginal is protected from criminal prosecution when performed by a husband with his wife, even when done forcibly or without consent. If there is an underlying rationale to this extremely limited exemption, it is not immediately clear.

### Patriarchal beliefs

**Second**, the marital rape exception is an insult to the constitutional goals of individual autonomy, dignity and of gender equality enshrined in fundamental rights such as Article 21 (the right to life) and Article 14 (the right to equality). In *Joseph Shine v. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court held that the offence of adultery was unconstitutional because it was founded on the principle that a woman is her husband's property after marriage. The marital rape exception betrays a similar patriarchal belief: that upon marriage, a wife's right to personal and sexual autonomy, bodily integrity and human dignity are surrendered. Her husband is her sexual master and his right to rape her is legally protected.

**A commonly cited rationale for preserving the marital rape exemption is that recognising marital rape as a criminal offence would 'destroy the institution of marriage'.** This was the government's defence in *Independent Thought v. Union of India* (2017). Rejecting this claim, the Supreme Court astutely observed, "Marriage is not institutional but personal – nothing can destroy the 'institution' of marriage except a statute that makes marriage illegal and punishable." **If it is true, however, that criminalising marital rape will destroy the institution of marriage, what does that tell us about this so-called institution? If its very existence depends on husbands' right to rape their wives, and on the legally sanctioned violation of wives' sexual autonomy, is this institution worth saving?** Does this kind of marriage deserve to be the cornerstone of our society? Surely, we can do better.



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Another argument frequently raised against the criminalisation of marital rape is that since marriage is a sexual relationship, determining the validity of marital rape allegations would be difficult. Even if we accept, that marriage is necessarily a sexual relationship, this argument does not hold water. It is not marriage that creates a problem in adjudication, but the dangerously erroneous belief that consent may simply be assumed from a woman's clothes, her sexual history, or indeed, her relationship status. While the current law seems to operate under this misconception, marriage does not signify perpetual sexual consent. Therefore, the determination of consent or lack thereof in the context of a sexual interaction within marriage would be the same as in any other context (especially in other ongoing sexual relationships): through physical evidence, through the prosecutrix's testimony and through the defence of the accused.

**CONCLUSION:** It is shocking that Exception 2 to Section 375 of the IPC survives to this day. Antithetical to the liberal and progressive values of our Constitution, and violative of India's international obligations under instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the provision underlines women's subordination to men, especially within marriage.

In 2017, the Supreme Court, in *Independent Thought*, had read down the exception so that husbands who raped their minor wives could no longer hide behind it. It is high time adult women are afforded the same protection and dignity in marriage.

### ► NEED FOR A RENEWED PUBLIC HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

#HEALTH

**Why this topic?** COVID-19 pandemic has again highlighted the need of robust, cost effective and all-inclusive public health system in the country. An efficient delivery system of health to all plays an important role in upgrading the quality of manpower and creating a highly productive society.

**INTRODUCTION:** The current public health situation in India is a sad story of deprivation. Unless one is eye-washed by displays of hi-tech medical care and use of state-of-the-art medical technologies in five star deluxe facilities of a few select urban centres, the tale of utter helplessness and callous carelessness is so apparent that it is now frequently taken as a matter of course. The blatantly paradoxical spectacle of buying and selling of

health improvements as a consumer goods by the well-off minority in the metros on the one hand and the denial of basic health facilities to the vast majority of the population along the length and breadth of the country on the other hardly evokes any comment.

On daily basis, bleak picture of health services emerge from different parts of the country. In this regard, let us understand the importance of healthy public health system.

**MAIN BODY:** Public Health is the science and art of promoting health, preventing disease, and prolonging life through the organized efforts of society (WHO). It is a social and political concept aimed at improving health, quality of life among whole population through health promotion, disease prevention and other forms of health interventions. Public Health approach is a holistic approach which encompasses all elements required for healthy living. It controls disease through health promotion, specific protection and by restoration and rehabilitation. In addition, disease surveillance which informs about ongoing as well as emerging public health issues is a core public health function. Other important functions are developing partnerships, formulation of regulations/laws, planning/policies and Human Resources Development.

Directive Principles of State Policy considers that the State shall regard raising of the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and improvement of public health as among its primary duties under **Article 47**. In addition, **Article 42**, the State shall make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. The health system in India is expected to perform with objectives based on these principles and evolve its spirit and structure to achieve these objectives.

The most comprehensive health policy and plan document ever prepared in India was on the eve of Independence in 1946. This was the 'Health Survey and Development Committee Report' popularly referred to as the '**Bhore Committee**'. This Committee prepared a detailed plan of a National Health Service for the country, which would provide a universal coverage to the entire population free of charges through a comprehensive state run salaried health service. Later, many other committees reviewed the existing health infrastructure/situation in the country and made recommendations needed to prevent and control diseases including communicable, non-communicable and emerging diseases.

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Later, the 'Expert Committee on Public Health system (1996)', the 'National Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (2005)', National Five Year Plans, 'National Health Policy (1983, 2002)', and many international initiatives such 'UN Millennium Development Goals (2000)', have also provided strong policy directives for the development of health care delivery system to control/prevent diseases.

Broadly, the healthcare services are divided under **State list and Concurrent list** in India. While some items such as public health and hospitals fall in the State list, others such as population control and family welfare, medical education, and quality control of drugs are included in the Concurrent list. The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (UMHFW) is the central authority responsible for implementation of various programmes and schemes in areas of family welfare, prevention, and control of major diseases.

The public sector ownership is divided between central and state governments, and municipal and panchayat local governments. The facilities include hospitals, secondary level hospitals, first level referral hospitals (community health centres [CHCs] or rural hospitals), dispensaries, primary health centres (PHCs) and sub centres, and health posts.

The major weaknesses in the Public Health system in India have emanated from -Issues related to quality and functioning of Public Health Services. 'Quality of public health services' is defined by the extent of their **availability and coverage, economic affordability and social accessibility** to all sections of society, efficacy, safety and epidemiological rationale, and attitudes of the personnel. This, in turn, is dependent upon the 'culture of health services', which consists of the organizational principles, motivations of personnel at all levels and their interactions among themselves as well as with those to whom they provide services.

The factors that have contributed towards dilution in the quality and reach of Public Health Services are given hereunder:

Public health has effectively remained a **low priority** for the Indian state in terms of financing and political attention in successive five-year plans. The overall system of health planning and decision making remained highly centralized and top-down with minimal accountability, giving little scope for genuine community initiatives.

It may be noted that until 1983 India had no formal health policy. Although, significant expansion of healthcare infrastructure did take place after 'National Health Policy-1983' yet this remained grossly underutilized because of poor facilities and low attendance by medical staff, inadequate supplies, insufficient hours, lack of community involvement and lack of proper monitoring mechanisms. The Primary Healthcare Approach was never implemented in its full form, and selective vertical programmes were pushed as a substitute for comprehensive health system development.

This already unsatisfactory situation seriously worsened with the onset of liberalisation era from 1990s onwards. This phase has witnessed staggering health inequities, resurgence of communicable diseases and an even more unregulated drug industry with drug prices shooting up, adding up to the current crisis in public health. Along with the retreat from the goal of universal access, special health needs of women, children and other sections of society with special needs have become further sidelined or are inadequately addressed.

Closely related to this, and compounding this situation has been a **Techno-managerial model of healthcare** inspired by the West, with an inability to evolve effective indigenous models and appropriate technologies, or to effectively integrate modern and indigenous systems of medicine.

Consequently, emphasis is on more curative services and with inadequate lab capacity in the system and poor participation of private sector in public health activities. As per NFHS, the pattern of health care expenditure in India shows that more than 70% of expenditure is from out of pocket by households. Estimates suggests that in India the total health expenditure is around 6% of GDP, and is dominated by out of pocket spending i.e. around 5%. The government/public expenditure on health care is around 1.4% of GDP. Due to this low public expenditure the reach and quality of public health services are below the desired level.

By considering the above, rejuvenating the Public Health System in India should be provided utmost priority. Making **right to health care a fundamental right** is an important step to initiate changes in the public health delivery mechanism. The other major steps that may be taken for rejuvenation are:

**First**, a considerably strengthened, accountable and reoriented public health system needs to be nurtured. Such a rejuvenation of the public health system would

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require changes at levels of policy, structure, programmes, and processes. Such strengthening should ensure adequate infrastructure, human power, services and supplies at various levels, restoring the basic functionality of the system and rebuilding public confidence.

**Second**, the base of strengthened public health would need to be a framework of comprehensive Primary Health Care including Community health workers in every habitation; much more functional and accountable Primary health centres (PHCs) and First referral units (FRUs), combined with a range of appropriate preventive and promotive activities.

**Third**, to institutionalize accountability would require a legal and constitutional framework to assure health services as a Right. Once right to health care is considered, the task of the health movement would be to make sure the range of services is as comprehensive as possible, and to ensure that the services required by various marginalized sections and groups with special needs are definitely included.

**Fourth**, substantially raising public finances for the public health system, through general taxation along with various forms of special taxation and cesses for health security. Ending subsidization of the private medical sector and effectively taxing this sector, especially its upper end; a special health security cess on all financial transactions above a certain level; and preferential taxation of industries with negative health impacts are some other measures that may be considered.

**Fifth**, specific health care requirements of various groups with special needs – such as women, children, and elderly persons – would need to be met through sets of special measures, sensitively delivered by the general health system.

**Sixth**, specific major health problems, both communicable diseases such as TB and HIV-AIDS, and non-communicable health issues such as mental health would need to be addressed through programmes closely integrated with a robust comprehensive health system.

**Seventh**, progressively bringing the private medical sector under social regulation would be essential for realization of health rights in meaningful manner. A first step in this direction would consist of legally and organizationally ensuring that this sector meets minimum standards -follows standard treatment

guidelines, and observes ceilings on prices of essential health services.

**Eighth**, much more effective public health support to indigenous healing systems is required, including active research on areas such as community based evaluation of indigenous healing methods and synergistic combination with modern medicine.

**Ninth**, ensuring access to essential drugs in rights based framework, both in form of ensuring availability of the range of essential drugs free of cost in public health facilities, and stringent price control.

**Tenth**, operationalising accountability and redressal mechanisms to ensure regular civil society monitoring and inputs at various levels.

**CONCLUSION:** Besides above, for realization of 'Public Health for All', in its fullest and most humane sense, coordination and synchronization with other conditions such as- comprehensive nutritional and food security (linked to livelihood security), universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation, provision of healthy housing and local environments, universal healthy working conditions and a safe general environment, access to health related education and information for all, and an equitable, gender-just social milieu, free from violence are required.

### ► IS THE STANDARDIZED TESTS GOOD MEASURE OF ACADEMIC ABILITY OR PROGRESS?

#EDUCATION

**Why this topic?** *New Education Policy 2020 is trying to open up new methods of delivery of education by incorporating innovative methods.*

*Liberating the students from the punishing pressure of the examination based evaluation system is the key for holistic evolution because standardised test is not a right indicator of academic ability and progress. Globally, many countries have moved beyond pass-fail system and in India we experimented with the 'No Detention Policy'. On this note, with the initiation of the new Education Policy, the manner of evaluation again becomes a priority.*

**INTRODUCTION:** Every year declaration of the results of the board examination is marked by a cacophony of two contradictory voices that rise to deafening levels when the results of various school boards were declared. The first voice celebrated those who succeeded and did wondrously well. Newspaper articles were published on which sections of students did better than the other. Did

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girls do better than the boys? Did school system 'X' do better than school system 'Y'? Pictures of individual students who topped the examinations were published and their parents, teachers and schools eulogised. Once the general 'results fever' subsided, this shrill voice was echoed by private schools which claimed to have taught some of the toppers, with their posters appearing in every possible place, from roadside electric poles to walls.

In general, this celebration of success in an examination goes on for the whole year, till the next results season when the old faces are replaced with new ones to valorise. More importantly, the second voice is one of lamentation as many students, wilting under stress and pressure, burn out and even commit suicide in this season, simply because they could not fulfil their parents' expectations.

In our country, the stress on rote learning instead of critical thinking continues, unlike in European systems. The importance accorded to school-leaving examinations in India puts enormous pressure on students to score the highest possible marks. Bagging a rank among lakhs of students is accepted widely as a mark of excellence. But how scientific is the examination system at determining the progress of students?

**MAIN BODY:** With reference to above, the loss of these young, and often bright, people must make us ponder. They have moved up all the way from nursery class to high school to fulfil their parents' ambitions of seeing them grow into engineers, doctors or managers graduating from the so-called top-level institutions in the country. These children must have seen themselves only as exam-cracking "achievers" in order to make their parents happy. They lost out on their childhood play and free time; no pranks with their friends and no experience of the simple joy of just being a carefree child. This loss would have led to a narrow vision of human life guided by the all-important value of "success"; which is just defined as getting a top job. Period. These children, deprived of social development and trapped in an artificially developed world, choose death over struggle when that world suffers a rude shock with exam results that are less than expected.

There is very little recognition that the first voice I talked about creates a powerful environment wherein the trait of parents imposing their ambitions on the children becomes dominant. When they do not turn out to be as successful as their parents want them to, they fade away. This problem has two sides to it: the first is the

examination-oriented Indian education system, and the second is competitive and cruel parents.

About eight decades ago, the **Zakir Hussain report on National Basic Education** noted that the "system of examinations prevailing in our country has proved a curse to education". It pinpointed the malady by saying that a bad system is made worse by awarding examinations a place much beyond their utility. The problem, however, is much older than stated in the Zakir Hussain report.

For this, one has to go back as early as 1904 to the Indian Educational Policy issued by the then Governor General. This colonial document had a section titled "The abuse of examinations" and noted that "examinations as now understood, are believed to have been unknown as an instrument of general education in ancient India". It also claimed that examinations did not have a prominent place even in the **Despatch of 1854, commonly known as Wood's Despatch**. The Hunter Commission report of 1882-83, which left examinations and promotions to the next class up to standard eight entirely to the schools, did not recommend any province-level or board exemptions. Still, the educational policy of 1904 noted that examinations had "grown to extravagant dimensions, and their influence has been allowed to dominate the whole system of education in India, with the result that instruction is confined within the rigid framework of prescribed courses, that all forms of training which do not admit of being tested by written examinations are liable to be neglected". It further noted that the system was adopted on the precedence of English education which itself has "finally condemned" it; however, in India, it was proving to be disastrous in its influence on education. The policy recommended reforms that included abandoning public examination at the primary level, more equitable tests of efficiency, and to relieve the schools and scholars from the heavy burden of recurring mechanical tests.

The Indian Educational Policy of 1913 declared victory and stated that "the formerly crushing weight of examinations has been appreciably lightened. It further declared that the "principal objects of the school final examination are adaptability to the course of study and avoidance of cram.

All this shows that the devastating effects of this "curse to education" have been known quite well for over 100 years. There is no commission or committee report after Independence which does not acknowledge the burden of rote learning and the examination system on its

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students and its futility in assessing their real abilities. They all recommend examination reforms.

But our system compares very poorly with the evaluation and assessment systems which are in place in other societies, including European and North American societies as well as China. These societies have reformed their evaluation systems from within by improving teachers' understanding of what they are looking for in a child right from the start. In our case, we don't equip our teachers with a deep understanding of how children learn and how to assess a child's growth. Our system right from the beginning becomes intensely competitive and stressful and starts promoting cramming as a way to move forward with high marks.

An attempt made in the Right to Education (RTE) Act to introduce Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) was an important step but this was not welcomed by a large number of schools and State authorities. And the idea that the RTE introduced — that we will not have a Board examination up to Grade 8 — has now been amended by Parliament. States are now once again free to introduce a Board exam. Some have already moved towards that by reintroducing at Grade 5 and Grade 8 levels an exam that can classify children into pass and fail categories. This was the old system. This reversal of a progressive step that the RTE had taken also shows how accustomed our system is to this old and rigid practice of examining children one against the other. And how dependent it is on certain time-honoured skills like cramming and preparing for an exam through coaching.

In comparison, European systems, including the British system on which we were modelled originally, have moved on to far more holistic and humanistic ways of assessing each child's own growth trajectory right from the beginning. Even where there are public exams, they are taken with much greater care for objectivity and justice for every child. The GCSE [General Certificate of Secondary Education] in Britain, for example, makes sure that each child's work and performance gets a fair chance to be assessed properly by more than one evaluator. Internal reforms in the system in these directions have taken place in all those societies and they have been ignored in India.

Our public education system has completely failed to implement these reforms and the private schools have never paid much attention to them. We have now reached a stage where no one in the country knows how the CCE can be implemented, and how we can measure progress of the child without pass-fail systems. Therefore, there has been a concerted effort to discard

this half-hearted foraging into unknown territory as soon as the present government came to power at the Centre. The result is that many States have gone back to their familiar pass-fail system and board examinations at the end of eighth standard if not earlier.

The question that stares us in the face is how is it that we haven't cleansed our education system of a curse that has been well known for over a hundred years? There is never a single factor behind the persistence of such problems; it always has to be a nexus of forces. Some of the factors that lie within the education system are often mentioned. The lack of seriousness, of resources, teachers untrained in new methods, etc. forms the routine list. One reason rarely mentioned is the inconsistency between the prevailing grade-wise curriculum and school structure on the one hand and the idea of progress on the learning continuum inherent in the CCE on the other. The CCE does not suit our authoritarian school organisation, administration and syllabus organisation.

But it seems that the biggest force behind the persistence of this curse and useless examination system is a social one which is grossly under-examined. We are a caste-based and strictly hierarchical society. In earlier times, this hierarchy had the iron-clad stability of the caste system. That determined the place, function, work and life of an Indian even before his/her birth. There are attempts now, which range from constitutional rights to political struggle, to break that mould. It may not have been dismantled yet, but is under tremendous pressure ever since the freedom movement began.

But social hierarchies involve privileges, prestige and goods of life that are cherished by all. None is ready to let go of the privileges one has. As a result, the attempts to maintain the old hierarchy as well as the ways to challenge it look toward education. Education, therefore, becomes a means of fierce competition either to remain in one's position of privilege or to rise in the hierarchy. It completely stops being a self-motivated way of forming an authentic self and gaining an understanding of the world, and is reduced to a means to beat/best the neighbour. A more open and thoughtful system of education will challenge the hierarchies which are so dear to a caste-minded Indian. The result is that the authoritarian system of pass-fail stays.

This creates an illusion of equal opportunity in an otherwise highly unequal society. It is in the exam that all children — no matter what their background is or whether they study in a posh school or a poor school—

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face the same test of three hours. Their names are turned into roll numbers. The identity of paper-setters and evaluators is not revealed. Thus, confidentiality enhances the legitimacy of a situation where children from contrasting circumstances are given an equal-looking opportunity.

**CONCLUSION:** Children do acquire snippets of information, but whether they construct that into knowledge remains seriously doubtful. The problem is further compounded by thrusting the young mind into the soul-destroying world of private tuitions. Given this scenario of being trapped in a soul-less classroom and tuition centre obsessed with “teaching for the test”.

As long as the school structure and the structure of the curriculum remain as it is today, where every child has to finish certain kinds of learning in a given time, the possibility of children exploring on their own will remain limited.

It is high time that we consciously plan and implement a better system of comprehensive evaluation by upgrading all facilitative factors like infrastructure, Teacher: Student ratio, Regular training of teachers, counselling systems, all stakeholder approach and thus supporting even the most distracted student by enabling her to evolve without the pressure of tests and examination.

Finally, it is only the beyond examination approach that will create wilful learners and will generate open minds reflecting the end purpose of real education.

### ► TRUE EDUCATION IS COMPLETE EVOLUTION OF AN INDIVIDUAL

#### #EDUCATION

**Why this topic?** *The time has come to realise and apply the broad perspective of education. Education which is just focused on getting jobs and livelihoods is not a complete education. This is just a unidimensional/linear approach.*

*But education as a whole should nurture 360 degree perspective delivering original, independent and critical thinking.*

**INTRODUCTION:** “Education is the most powerful tool that can change the world.” These are the wise words of great South African leader, Nelson Mandela. This quote provides a very holistic view point to education. However, unfortunately in the contemporary times, education is viewed from a very materialistic and narrow perspective. It is considered merely as a source to earn a livelihood. So, is it really just a source of livelihood?

#### **MAIN BODY: Levels of Education**

There are primarily three levels of education. The **first level** begins the moment a child is born and becomes a part of a family. Family and especially the mother are the first teachers of a child. A new born child is like a clay-round. The child will take shape as s/he is moulded. This is especially important for child to imbibe good morals and values. Unfortunately, for some children when this level is disturbed due to either negligence or the fact that the child may be coming from a battered household, it leads to many issues, juvenile delinquency being one of them.

The **second level** begins with formal education. This level imparts both materialistic as well as immaterialistic education. Materialistic education gained at schools and colleges is important for shaping the career and professional life of a student. Along with that the morals and values taught to the child at home during early years are strengthened and cemented by teachers at school. This is crucial for the student to evolve into a responsible citizen. But much of the knowledge gained at the second level is the critical and needs to be tested practically.

So, the **third level** involves the practical tests of life. The world itself is a huge university with all people being students here. When the knowledge gained at the first and second level is tested at the third level it validates the educational attainment of the student. After all, education is not just about a piece of paper declaring a person to be literate, it is about the complex tests of life which any truly educated person must clear.

So, these three levels are crucial for completing the process of educating a person. However, now a days education is treated just a mean to a certain end and not end in itself and this has given rise to many prevailing socio economic and environmental problems. E.g. A few years back Supreme Court gave out strict guidelines regarding burning of crackers on the occasion of Diwali in Delhi due to the deteriorating air quality of the capital. Still many ‘educated people’ flouted the rules blatantly disregarding the air quality of the city. So, here one must ask a very pertinent question. Is the process of education for such people complete yet?

Historically, since the Vedic times, education had a very wider connotation. For a child to complete the education process, apart from learning basic skills moral and value education was also essential. However, this system changed gradually and eventually with coming of the Industrial Revolution, education for the society ended up just a means to earn a livelihood.

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Considering this situation, Gandhiji and his associates, in the Wardha Scheme propounded the concept of 'Nai Taleem' (New Learning). Gandhiji's Nai taleem was a holistic view towards education which focused on mind, body and soul of the student. In the Wardha scheme of education, focus was not only laid on formal education but also on other aspects for the holistic development of the child. Handicraft activities were also part of the curriculum for the development of creative facilities in the mind of the student. Along with this, moral education was also focused upon.

So, such a holistic view towards education is currently the need of the hour, in order to create a class of youth who will propel our country forward towards the path of prosperity.

### What needs to be done?

Going forward, there is a need to overhaul the education system of the country to shift focus from a mere materialistic view towards a more holistic view. Moral and value based education should be part of the curriculum right from the primary level. Students should be evaluated not only through written tests but also through situational viva based examinations. This would go a long way in instilling good morals and values in children and will create a morally upright generation. This can act as a panacea to all social ills that are prevailing in our society at present.

Apart from this, moral and value based education should also be part of the curriculum of higher education. Students of higher educational institutes today are future of our country and these students will be holding many public offices in future. So, moral and value based education is extremely crucial to tackle contemporary challenges such as corruption which are playing the system of our country.

So, there is a need to consider the importance of education from a broader perspective in order to tackle the contemporary socio-economic and environmental challenges.

Renowned Buddhist Religious leader Dalai Lama has said in the context of education that "while educating the minds of the youth, we must not forget to educate the hearts as well."

**CONCLUSION:** So, to sum it up, it can be pointed out the education is not just about acquisition of necessary skills in order to earn a livelihood, but it is about the holistic development of a human being, so that the life of a person can be given a certain meaning.

## ► DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND CAN BE REAPED THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVE COMPETITION

### # DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

**Why this topic?** Demographic Dividend in India will remain theoretical until and unless it is educated, skilled, productive and creative but this can be achieved by creating an environment of constructive competition among the youth in society which is currently moving towards self-destruction due to unhealthy competition and in this regards, the starting point is rejuvenating the education dynamics.

**INTRODUCTION:** The inherent quality of nature is to maintain an equilibrium condition. Anything disrupting this would result into something unwanted. The same can be applied to competition. The purpose of competition is to bring out the best in an individual. The indispensable components of competition are stress, hard work and talent. Rising competition in the current scenario is a debatable topic. Increased stress, high level of unemployment and in some cases death, cannot be ignored. At the same time, excellence and success are a result of undaunted perseverance provided by the platform of competition. Competition can be classified in mainly two categories: Healthy competition, which has become a rare phenomenon, integrated with the values of sportsmanship, contributing to social, moral and self-development. On the contrary, there is unhealthy competition which focuses on materialistic gains that may even compromise with social and ethical values.

Competitive exams like JEE and PMT, produce the best engineers and doctors who may go ahead to achieve global recognition. India's move to achieve the status of a superpower is taking its toll on the youth. The expectations are too high with the least sophisticated support mechanisms. While affirmative action makes the competition stiffer for many; there remains a large number who study under street lights and in much more adverse conditions.

**MAIN BODY:** The basic theory of Economics which is the demand-supply mismatch tends to explain the rise in competition. Consider a rubber band being pulled at the extremities-one end by demand and the other by supply. As the tension increases, the band elongates to the point where its elasticity equals its resilience. The band snaps if the tension is increased further. The same applies to human beings. People undergo a lot of stress. Once snapped, they adopt to suicides or other unethical practices to get relief from the stress. This essay will

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describe the various effects of competition and how to mitigate its negatives.

The history of competition clearly depicts its importance. Competition is so ingrained in the living world. Starting from our birth, we compete with a million sperm cells to come to life, start walking, talking and reading in the blink of an eye. In the primordial period of human development, competition to gather food and hunt were the key to stay alive. Competition drives the society on the path of development. Sports competitions like wrestling, jousting as well as many Olympian Games were the main source of entertainment for the people.

India is a young country with an average age of 29. Being considered as a major upcoming nation, it is important for the country to guide the youth and assimilate it into the workforce. Though competitions pick the best, however, it discourages or rejects a large number of young determined people. Striking a balance to make the competition fair and providing opportunities can do well. The Government of India adopted "The Competition Act 2002" to bring out the best among different companies and preserve competitive attitude. The small enterprises were supported till they became self-sufficient. This is evident from the fact, how small scale industries are giving tough competition to foreign and domestic companies. Innovation and optimization are a result of strong and healthy competition.

The theory of Charles Darwin presents the same view. As man is a social animal, it tends to adhere to the needs of society. These needs though dynamic in nature remain overall static. For example, the need 20 years ago was to have a scooter, while currently the same is to have a four wheeler. Thus evolution along different epochs has modified such needs. 'Social Darwinism' refers to the survival of the fittest in a society which is fuelled by competition.

But it should be borne in mind that competition alone will not suffice the purpose. This is where ethics comes into play. Competition must not in any way compromise the universal ethical values of an individual. The amalgam of ethics and competition will turn the wheel of development and take humanity to the next level. What is ethics without competition? And what is competition without ethics? They are only self-satisfying ambitions catering to one's own interests. The world today is connected, thanks to globalization. We thank capitalism for bringing free market enterprises, giving rise to fair competition. Is it because of capitalism, where 10 percent of the global population controls 80 percent of the riches? While still many countries remain

impoverished, people die of hunger regardless of the fact that we are in the 21st century.

It cannot be forgotten that competition brings a lot to the table. It forces the youth to work and train hard. This leads to excellence and recognition of world class talent. It makes them responsible and keeps them focused on their goal. Lionel Messi, currently the best soccer player said, "I start early, and I stay late, day after day after day, year after year. It took me 17 years and 114 days to become an overnight success." Life without competition will disable the thrills, ambitions and passion of individuals. It keeps them mentally and physically fit and vigilant. Competition makes them constructive. It is also responsible for the spread of education.

Competition moulds the youth into responsible citizens who have the capacity to take part in social change and improve the socio-economic condition. Satya Nadella-the current CEO of Microsoft, Sundar Pichai- current CEO of Alphabet and many such personalities are examples who made India proud. Outperforming every other candidate from different nations and achieving global recognition is the pioneer product of this growing competition. Theory of Darwinism suggests that competition will never end. It is a natural process which will drive the human race to different eras of evolution. If it wasn't for competition, ISRO would not have been able to accomplish its grand feat to Mars. Competition produced a wide variety of musicians ranging from Lata Mangeshkar to Yo Yo Honey Singh. At the same time, the ending of the hegemony of the Bretton Wood twins- The IMF and World Bank by establishing The BRICS Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are the result of competition on global scale.

Although, there is a lot we receive from competition but its negative impacts cannot be sidelined. The problem with increasing competition is the lack of an adequate support system. For example, millions of children in the age 6-14 are out of school. Many work in unsafe or hazardous environment. The provision of urban amenities in rural areas (PURA) aims to provide latest infrastructure to rural parts of India. The absence of instant communication facilities like internet and telecommunications to keep up with high paced world keeps capable rural traders away from the share market. Share market businesses are completely dependent on telecommunication services which are still not an integral part of Rural India. With the growing competition, comes greater stress. The advancement of human race to the next level raised the aspirations and possibilities of the youth. One must notice with evolution, there came various types of health disorders.



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Prolonged mental pressure and stress leads to multiple psychological disorders. Anxiety, increased blood pressure and premature mortality are some examples. Recent studies reflect, increased pressure has detrimental effects on marriages and personal life.

The youth possess immense energy to achieve the impossible. Proper counselling from elders with strong emphasis on physical fitness and various stress relieving activities is the key to unlock the tremendous potential of the younger generation. Another such factor which causes the youth to take desperate measures is an unfriendly society. High amount of criticism is associated to people who try hard but fail to achieve success. This is a major factor for the unrequired mental pressure the youth accumulates. Although criticism is an integral part of this process but as long as it encourages people to perform better and not eliminate them from bonding socially. Competition is directly proportional to the number of candidates and indirectly to the number of vacancies for a particular job. Either way, competition skims the cream, leaving the huge lot of energetic, determined people behind and unemployed. They do not lack talent or labour. They lack opportunities. They are forced to settle for something meagre to make both ends meet. The stiff competition may lead to repeated failures, where the youth falls into the clutches of depression. Aggravated conditions may lead to identity crisis which can be fatal.

Creating more employment opportunities can go a great way in the development of a country. The youth are the most productive class of workers, hence must be preserved and guided. Modifying the education system to focus on practical learning rather than rote learning will develop a sense of perception and perspective among the young who wield the power of making a better tomorrow. Getting a score of 90 percent has lost its lustre. Why not 95? The one stereotypical statement which dreads the life of every 'Indian Youth', "Sharma jike bete se kuch seekho" meaning 'learn something from Mr. Sharma's son'. If we demand excellence, we should know that excellence is driven by passion and passion cannot be forced. It comes from within. Imagine if Sachin Tendulkar was forced to be a musician, Lionel Messi an engineer and Rahul Dravid a scientist. Wouldn't that be disastrous and complete waste of talent? The point is, people should be free to choose their career. Breaking the age old norms of being an engineer, doctor or a chartered accountant will not only diversify from the mainstream competition but also unfold many new talents to the world.

**CONCLUSION:** The major effect of growing competition with negligible opportunities is 'Hypocrisy'. It is quite ironical where I being an Engineer am preaching the exact opposite. Slowly and steadily hypocrisy firmly establishes itself in the society and drains it hollow like a weed. The pangs of unethical competition are biting us since childhood. It kills the honesty within us. Perhaps it is rightly said that honesty has too big a price to pay in this world. However, amongst these dark clouds of uncertainty, we do have a silver lining- The Youth. They are the catalyst for a social change. Achieving success with high level of moral development is the future we believe to see. This is indeed a colossal task but not impossible. The elders playing their roles as guardian angels with their blessings the youth will realize and redirect to the right path of development through constructive and healthy competition.

### ► EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK MIRRORS PROMOTION OF GENDER PARITY

#GENDER PARITY

**Why this topic?** Workplace throws up many challenges especially for women work force. One of the challenges is discrimination in payment, where men are paid more than women. According to, Monster salary index, Women in India earn 19% less than men, reflecting the high gender pay gap in the country.

**INTRODUCTION:** The pay inequality between men and women is still alive. Women's status particularly in the labour market is inferior to men's in most countries of the world including India. Men still get offered more at the start of the job. They receive promotions sooner than women and they get pay raises more often. From small businesses to large organizations to the unorganized sector, women are paid lesser wages than men for the same work. If the work of a woman is valued less simply because she is a woman, her individual dignity is injured. It is an economic as well as a human right issue. To promote equal treatment is equivalent to promote the nation's productive potential. There will be no equality until men and women get the same pay for the same job. On this note, let us understand its overall dimensions.

**MAIN BODY:** The principle of equal pay for work of equal value means the rates and types of remuneration should not be based on the ground of sex but on an objective evaluation of the work performed. Men and women in the same workplace are entitled to equal pay

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for equal work. Equality means equality in salary, overtime pay, bonuses, stock options, profit sharing and bonus plans, life insurance, vacation and holiday pay, cleaning allowances, hotel accommodations, reimbursement for travel expenses, and benefits. If men and women both are performing similar work the employers cannot reduce the wages of either sex. Pay equity is a fundamental human right. It is also known as equal pay for work of equal value. Its goal is to stop discrimination related to the under-valuation of work traditionally performed by women. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

The principle of equal pay for equal work was recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948** provides: Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, has the right to equal pay for equal work, has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

The **United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** provides the States Parties to undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights. This Covenant also provides the States Parties to recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular: (a) Remuneration which provides all workers, as a minimum, with: (i) Fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, in particular women being guaranteed conditions of work not inferior to those enjoyed by men, with equal pay for equal work; (ii) A decent living for themselves and their families in accordance with the provisions of the present Covenant; (b) Safe and healthy working conditions; (c) Equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence; (d) Rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, as well as remuneration for public holidays.

Further, the **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women** was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. The Convention may be described as the

Magna Carta of women's human rights as it essentially constitutes the International Bill of Rights for Women. It declares that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity and as a result it hampers the growth of the prosperity and the family. States Parties are required by the Convention to eliminate discrimination in the exercise and enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The **UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment 7 Principles** offer guidance to companies on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. They are the result of collaboration between the United Nations Global Compact and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN. Women) and are adapted from the Calvert Women's Principles. UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principle 2 treats all women and men fairly at work and recognizes respect and support human rights and non-discrimination.

In India, **Article 15 of the Constitution** prohibits the state from discriminating on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth in various day-to-day activities, including when it comes to providing equal employment opportunities.

**Article 16(2)** provides-no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be negligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

**Article 39(d)** of the Constitution of India provides that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Further the SC observed that to the vast majority of the people the equality clauses of the Constitution would mean nothing if they are unconcerned with the work they do and the pay they get. To them the equality clauses will have some substance if equal work means equal pay. The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work. Hence, the **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (ERA)** addresses employee discrimination issues with respect to recruitment, wages, work transfers and promotion. It provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers, for same work or work of similar nature. The Equal Remuneration Act also discourages the reduction of wages of any worker. This Act also provides that there will be no discrimination against women by an employer while making recruitment of men and women for the same

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work or work of a similar nature, or in any condition of service subsequent to recruitment such as promotions, training or transfer except where the employment of women in such work is prohibited or restricted by or under any law for the time being in force.

Further our country enacted the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013** on prevention of sexual harassment against female employees at the workplace almost 16 years after the Supreme Court of India, in its landmark judgment in Vishaka and Others v. State of Rajasthan, laid down guidelines making it mandatory for every employer to provide a mechanism to redress grievances pertaining to workplace sexual harassment and enforce the right to gender equality of working women.

But what is keeping the female labour force way behind men in pay scales? The largest number of women is in the unorganised sector and the problem with gender wage gap is in sectors like garments and agricultural industries. In the organised sector, there is less chance of a wage gap, but there are no social securities and no laws which govern the unorganised sector. That is why the wage gap is alarming.

Although the laws for protecting equal wage rights are sufficient in India, the existing ones have to be put to use.

Further, there are fewer women in STEM careers. Simultaneously, there are certain professions where the gender balance is the other way, like in the professions of nursing and domestic work. So, creating a different work field for men and women is not a solution. One of the reasons that women are fewer in number compared to men in the corporate sector or in government is because of the notion that women also have to handle their families. It is also the reason why women are often not paid at par with men. There are also socio-cultural biases that men can be better team leaders and will be able to contribute more in a profession.

**CONCLUSION:** All in all, equal remuneration is essential right of women and men workers. There are so many reasons for disparity of wages between men and women whether it may be existing social norms, practices, given less value to the work of women or considering them physically weak etc. even women are performing similar work as performed by men. There are several international as well as national laws for providing equal treatment to women with men in respect of equal pay for equal work, but still there existed the pay inequality which lends itself to global injustice and creates obstacle

in the economic empowerment of women. There cannot be women economic empowerment in true sense if stereotypes and prejudices with regard to women's work are not eliminated from the society.

### ► CREATING A SAFE CHILDHOOD FOR OUR CHILDREN

#### #CHILD RIGHTS

**Why this topic?** *Since children are the future citizens of the country it is necessary to ensure that their childhood blossomed in a healthy environment. In this regard, the decision to ratify two key ILO conventions on child labour makes clear India's intent of zero tolerance for the exploitation of children.*

*In a local initiative, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) organised a one-day sensitisation workshop for police personnel, NGOs and others on child protection and the rights of children at the District Police Office.*

**INTRODUCTION:** Children are the supreme national assets of the nation and the future well-being of the nation itself depends upon how its children grow and develop. There are various rights guaranteed for the children at the national and international level but the reality that these all assurances intended to provide for their protection and safeguards are far from reality. It is well known fact to all that in this civilized society some children face hurdles and humiliation in the society as well as in their home.

Violence against children knows no boundaries. No country or region is immune. It occurs in homes, schools and streets, in places of work and entertainment, in care and detention centres. Perpetrators include parents, family members, teachers, caretakers, law enforcement authorities and other children itself. Some children are particularly vulnerable because of gender, race, ethnic origin, disability or social status. The consequences of violence can be devastating. Indeed, violence places at risk not on their health, but also to their ability to learn.

In every region, in contradiction to human rights obligations and children's developmental needs, violence against children is on the rise. Violence against children is multidimensional and calls for a multifaceted response. Protection of children from violence is a matter of urgency. Children have been suffering violence for centuries. Children must be provided with the effective prevention and protection to which they have right.

**MAIN BODY:** Violence against children is under-reported for various reasons. Very young children lack

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the capacity to report violence. Children often fear reprisals by perpetrators or interventions by authorities, both of which may worsen their overall situation. Sometimes Parents are perpetrators of violence against children, or parents may remain silent when violence is committed by other family members or by powerful members of the community or society. But it is the persistent social and legal acceptance of some forms of violence against children that too often leaves such violence unnoticed and unreported.

In many cases parents, who should protect their children, remain silent if the violence is perpetrated by a spouse or other family member, a more powerful member of Society such as an employer, a police officer, or a community leader.

Violence against children is never justifiable or acceptable. States are obligated to protect all children from all forms of violence. International human rights laws based on respect for every person's human dignity. Extreme forms of violence against children - including sexual exploitation and trafficking, genital mutilation/cutting the worst forms of child labour and the impact of armed conflict, child prostitution, child sex tourism, child pornography, incest, child marriages, infanticide etc. have provoked international outcry and achieved a consensus of condemnation, although there is still no rapid remedy.

**Child sexual abuse** has existed in all societies for centuries. The United Nation's has defined child sexual abuse as contacts or interactions between a child and an older or between child or adult when the child is being used as an object of gratification for the older child's or adult's sexual needs. These contacts or interactions are carried out against the child using force, trickery, bribes, threats or pressure.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 has been enacted to strengthen the legal provisions for the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation. For the first time, a special law has been passed to address the issue of sexual offences against children.

The Act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years and provides protection to all children under the age of 18 years from the offences of sexual assault sexual harassment and pornography. This is the first time that an Act has listed aspects of touch as well as non-touch behaviour (e.g.: photographing a child in obscene manner) under the ambit of sexual offences.

The Act incorporates child friendly procedures for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and trial

of offences. The attempt to commit an offence under the Act has also been made liable for punishment for up to half the punishment prescribed for the commission of the offence. The Act also provides for punishment for abetment of the offence, which is the same as for the commission of the offence this would cover trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

**Child pornography** is the fastest growing crime against children. Child pornography refers to depicting sexually explicit activities involving a child. Children in contemporary world are growing up with an unprecedented exposure to sophisticated sexual and violent kinds of imagery. It has surpassed all generations in making available to the sexually explicit materials. They are exposed to every kind of harmful material through cable, magazines, phones, internet etc.

Indian Penal code provides for the sections 292, 293 and 294 which prohibits the sale distribution, publications, export, import etc. of obscene books etc. other materials and also provides for the punishments for that. It also prohibits the sale of obscene material to young persons. Section 294 also prohibits the obscene acts and songs to the annoyance of others or in the public place.

**Child labour** means that when work is done by children under the age of 18 years which is considered as danger to his physical and mental being. Poverty and lack of social security are the main causes of child labour. The increasing gap between the rich and the poor, privatization of basic services and the neo-liberal economic policies are causes major sections of the population out of employment and without basic needs.

**Article 24** the constitution of India prohibits the employment or recruitment of children below 14 years in any factory or mine or heavy and harmful industries to the health and growth of children.

The Factories Act of 1948 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in any factory. The law also placed rules on whom, when and how long can pre-adults aged 15-18 years be employed in any factory.

**The Mines Act of 1952** prohibits the employment of children below 18 years of age in a mine.

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in hazardous occupations identified in a list by the law. The list was expanded in 2006, and again in 2008.

Further in July 2016, the Parliament passed the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2016. This act amends the Child Labour (Prohibition and

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Regulation) Act, 1986 by widening its scope against child labour and provides for stricter punishments for violations.

**Child marriage** in India has been practiced for centuries. The problem of child marriage in India remains rooted in a complex matrix of religious traditions, social practices, economic factors and deeply rooted prejudices. Regardless of its roots, child marriage constitutes a gross violation of human rights, leaving physical, psychological and emotional scars for life. Sexual activity starts soon after marriage, and pregnancy and childbirth at an early age can lead to maternal as well as infant mortality. Moreover, women who marry younger are more likely to experience domestic violence within the home.

Child marriage affects both boys and girls, but statistics show that girls are far more likely to be forced into a child marriage than boys; however, the percentage of girls forced into child marriage in India has declined in recent years. Child marriage tradition in India has social reasons too. Indians performed child marriages to get their girls protected against rapes and abductions by foreign rulers.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, put into place to address and fix the shortcomings of the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929. In the act of 2006, Boys and girls forced into child marriages as minors have the option of voiding their marriage up to two years after reaching adulthood, and in certain circumstances, marriages of minors can be null and void before they reach adulthood.

**Prostitution of children or child prostitution** is the commercial sexual exploitation of children in which a child performs the services of prostitution for financial benefit. The term normally refers to prostitution by a minor, or person under the legal age of maturity. A customer may negotiate an exchange directly with a prostituted child in order to receive sexual gratification, or through an intermediary who controls or oversees the child's activities for profit.

Immoral Traffic (prevention) Act 1987 has been passed in India to control the situation. Under the act detention of women for the purposes of prostitution is a punishable offence.

According to UNICEF, **child trafficking** is defined as "any person under 18 who is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation, either within or outside a country" There are many contributing factors to child trafficking, which include economic deprivation, conditions lack of

employment opportunities, social status, and political uprisings. Many of the families in India are unable to afford the basic necessities of life, which forces the parents to sell their children off to gangs, and the gangs to exploit them.

The consequences of violence against children vary according to its nature and severity. But the short- and long-term repercussions of violence can be devastating. Exposure to violence in early childhood can affect the maturing brain. Prolonged exposure of children, whether as victims of or witnesses to violence, can disrupt nervous and immune systems and lead to social, emotional and cognitive impairments as well as behaviours that cause disease, injury and social problems. Violence can result in health-risk behaviours such as substance abuse and early sexual activity. Related mental health and social problems include anxiety and depressive disorders, impaired work performance, memory disturbances and aggressive behaviour. Early exposure to violence is associated with later lung, heart and liver disease, sexually transmitted diseases and foetal death during pregnancy, as well as later intimate partner violence and suicide attempts.

Children, who witness violence in their homes or community show excessive irritability, immature behaviour, sleep disturbances, emotional distress, fears of being alone, and regression in toileting and language. In extreme cases of exposure to chronic community violence, school-age children may also exhibit symptoms akin to post-traumatic stress disorder. Exposure to violence can have significant effects on children during their development.

Hence, the **Constitution of India** prohibits every kind of discrimination against individuals, including children. The major provisions of rights that are relating to the rights of children are:

Article 14 recognizes the equality before law and equal protection of laws for every individual which includes the children also. Article 15 (3) It empowers the State to make special provisions for the development of women and children. Article 21a provides for compulsory education to all children of age 6-14 years. Article 23 prohibits traffic human beings and abolishes bonded labour. Article 24 prohibits the employment or recruitment of children below 14 years in any factory or mine or heavy and harmful industries to the health and growth of children.

Articles 32 and 226 of the constitution it confers the remedial measures through judiciary for the violation of any of the rights conferred on its citizens through judicial intervention through.

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Under the constitution of India, the State is to make necessary policy formulations and legal enactments, through the Directive Principles of State Policy. The relevant provisions of Directive Principles of State Policy, which deal with children, are: Article 39 clause (e) directs the state to evolve policy formulations not to abuse the tender age of children, and economic incapacity should not adversely result in their employment in any avocation, especially below the age of fourteen years in no circumstances.

Article 39 clause (f) imposes an obligation on the state to provide opportunities and facilities for children to develop in a healthy environment. It further directs the state that life, liberty, and childhood be protected from any kind of exploitation, which includes moral or material negligence.

Article 45 provides for care of early childhood, and compulsory education for all children until the child attains the age of six years.

Article 46 further directs the state to take special efforts to promote the rights and interests of children belonging to social, educationally backward classes. In no way their economic and social status, adversely affect their rights.

Article 47 imposes an obligation to raise the nutritional standards of living and provide easy public access to health facilities.

Article 51 (c) imposes a duty on the state to promote and respect international commitments and obligations. As signatory to number of conventions, covenants and other documents on international human rights law, it is the duty of the state to discharge its obligations in the promotion of children's rights through national legal framework.

According to Article 51 (A) (k) imposes the fundamental duty on the parents or wards to provide education to their children between the age group of six to fourteen years compulsorily.

**CONCLUSION:** All States should develop a multifaceted and systematic framework to respond to violence against children which is integrated into national planning processes. It is the duty of the States to prohibit all forms of violence against children, in all settings, including all corporal punishment, harmful traditional practices. Health, criminal justice and social service systems should be designed to meet the special needs of children. Governments at various levels should promote and support programmes and campaigns to educate the public and parents on child rights generally and in particular on maintaining positive, non-violent

relationships with children in families. Here, the media can also play a key role.

For the growth of the society, the welfare of the children is very important. So it becomes essential that for the welfare and growth of a nation, the children are to be protected from all kinds of discrimination and violence and must be brought up in a secured atmosphere. It is important that society in a collective manner must take all the relevant steps to secure the rights of the children which will enable them to develop and progress in the society.

### ► ARE WE PAYING ENOUGH ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS OF THE EXPANDING ELDERLY POPULATION?

#### #ELDERLY ISSUES

**Why this topic?** Currently, India has the largest demographic dividend. But on the other side the population of elderly is also rising steadily and India will witness faster greying in coming decades.

The India Ageing Report by UNFPA states that "the current percentage of elderly population is expected to rise from 6% (2019) to around 19% by 2050. This now brings into focus care for the elderly and related elderly issues.

**INTRODUCTION:** A large number of people enter 'old age' with little, or no, awareness of what this entails. While demographically, we acknowledge that a person is considered to be old when (s)he attains the age of 60 years, there is no such clear indicator available to the individual. For each person, there is a turning point after which (s)he feels physiologically or functionally 'old'. This event could take place at any age before or after the age of 60. Unfortunately, in India, there is almost no formal awareness program – even at higher level institutions or organizations – for people to prepare for old age. For the vast majority of people, old age sets in quietly, but suddenly, and few are prepared to deal with its issues. Most people living busy lives during the young and middle age periods may prefer to turn away from, and not consider, the possible realities of their own impending old age.

Thus, the majority of Indians are unaware of the problems, rights and entitlements of older persons. Let us analyse the common problems to get prepared in advance for 'old age'.

**MAIN BODY:** It has been said that "we start dying the day we are born". The aging process is synonymous with failing health. While death in young people in

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## SOCIAL ISSUES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

countries such as India is mainly due to infectious diseases, older people are mostly vulnerable to non-communicable diseases. Failing health due to advancing age is complicated by non-availability to good quality, age-sensitive, health care for a large proportion of older persons in the country. In addition, poor accessibility and reach, lack of information and knowledge and/or high costs of disease management make reasonable elder care beyond the reach of older persons, especially those who are poor and disadvantaged.

To address the issue of failing health, it is of prime importance that good quality health care be made available and accessible to the elderly in an age-sensitive manner. Health services should address preventive measures keeping in mind the diseases that affect – or are likely to affect – the communities in a particular geographical region. In addition, effective care and support is required for those elderly suffering from various diseases through primary, secondary and tertiary health care systems. The cost (to the affected elderly individual or family) of health has to be addressed so that no person is denied necessary health care for financial reasons. Rehabilitation, community or home based disability support and end-of-life care should also be provided where needed, in a holistic manner, to effectively address the issue to failing health among the elderly.

The problem of **economic insecurity** is faced by the elderly when they are unable to sustain themselves financially. Many older persons either lack the opportunity and/or the capacity to be as productive as they were. Increasing competition from younger people, individual, family and societal mind sets, chronic malnutrition and slowing physical and mental faculties, limited access to resources and lack of awareness of their rights and entitlements play significant roles in reducing the ability of the elderly to remain financially productive, and thereby, independent.

Economic security is as relevant for the elderly as it is for those of any other age group. Those who are unable to generate an adequate income should be facilitated to do so. As far as possible, elderly who are capable, should be encouraged, and if necessary, supported to be engaged in some economically productive manner. Others who are incapable of supporting themselves should be provided with partial or full social welfare grants that at least provide for their basic needs. Families and communities may be encouraged to support the elderly living with them through counseling and local self-governance.

**Isolation**, or a deep sense of loneliness, is a common complaint of many elderly is the feeling of being

isolated. While there are a few who impose it on themselves, isolation is most often imposed purposefully or inadvertently by the families and/or communities where the elderly live. Isolation is a terrible feeling that, if not addressed, leads to tragic deterioration of the quality of life.

It is important that the elderly feel included in the goings-on around them, both in the family as well as in society. Those involved in elder care, especially NGOs in the field, can play a significant role in facilitating this through counseling of the individual, of families, sensitization of community leaders and group awareness or group counseling sessions. Activities centered on older persons that involve their time and skills help to inculcate a feeling of inclusion. Some of these could also be directly useful for the families and the communities.

The elderly, especially those who are weak and/or dependent, require physical, mental and emotional care and support. When this is not provided, they suffer from neglect, a problem that occurs when a person is left uncared for and that is often linked with isolation. Changing lifestyles and values, demanding jobs, distractions such as television, a shift to nuclear family structures and redefined priorities have led to increased neglect of the elderly by families and communities. This is worsened as the elderly are less likely to demand attention than those of other age groups.

The best way to address neglect of the elderly is to counsel families, sensitise community leaders and address the issue at all levels in different forums, including the print and audio-visual media. Schools and work places offer opportunities where younger generations can be addressed in groups. Government and non-government agencies need to take this issue up seriously at all these levels. In extreme situations, legal action and rehabilitation may be required to reduce or prevent the serious consequences of the problem.

The elderly are highly **vulnerable to abuse**, where a person is willfully or inadvertently harmed, usually by someone who is part of the family or otherwise close to the victim. It is very important that steps be taken, whenever and wherever possible, to protect people from abuse. Being relatively weak, elderly are vulnerable to physical abuse. Their resources, including finances ones are also often misused. In addition, the elderly may suffer from emotional and mental abuse for various reasons and in different ways.

The best form of protection from abuse is to prevent it. This should be carried out through awareness generation in families and in the communities. In most

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## SOCIAL ISSUES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

cases, abuse is carried out as a result of some frustration and the felt need to inflict pain and misery on others. It is also done to emphasize authority. Information and education of groups of people from younger generations is necessary to help prevent abuse. The elderly should also be made aware of their rights in this regard.

Where necessary, legal action needs to be taken against those who willfully abuse elders, combined with counseling of such persons so as to rehabilitate them. Elderly who are abused also require to be counseled, and if necessary rehabilitated to ensure that they are able to recover with minimum negative impact.

Many older persons live in fear. Whether rational or irrational, this is a relevant problem faced by the elderly that needs to be carefully and effectively addressed.

Elderly who suffer from fear need to be reassured. Those for whom the fear is considered to be irrational need to be counseled and, if necessary, may be treated as per their needs. In the case of those with real or rational fear, the cause and its preventive measures need to be identified followed by appropriate action where and when possible.

**Boredom** is a result of being poorly motivated to be useful or productive and occurs when a person is unwilling or unable to do something meaningful with his/her time. The problem occurs due to forced inactivity, withdrawal from responsibilities and lack of personal goals. A person who is not usefully occupied tends to physically and mentally decline and this in turn has a negative emotional impact. Most people who have reached the age of 60 years or more have previously led productive lives and would have gained several skills during their life-time. Identifying these skills would be a relatively easy task. Motivating them and enabling them to use these skills is a far more challenging process that requires determination and consistent effort by dedicated people working in the same environment as the affected elders.

Many elderly can be trained to carry out **productive activities** that would be useful to them or benefit their families, communities or environment; activities that others would often be unable or unwilling to do. Being meaningfully occupied, many of the elderly can be taught to keep boredom away. For others, recreational

activities can be devised and encouraged at little or no additional cost.

Lowered self-esteem among older persons has a complex etiology that includes isolation, neglect, reduced responsibilities and decrease in value or worth by one-self, family and/or the society.

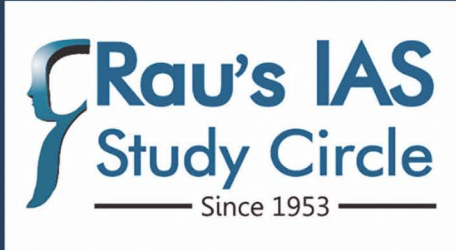
To **restore self-confidence**, one needs to identify and address the cause and remove it. While isolation and neglect have been discussed above, self-worth and value can be improved by encouraging the elderly to take part in family and community activities, learning to use their skills, developing new ones or otherwise keeping themselves productively occupied. In serious situations, individuals – and their families – may require counseling and/or treatment.

This problem of older persons has many facets. While self-realization and the reality of the situation is acceptable to some, there are others for whom life becomes insecure when they begin to lose control of their resources – physical strength, body systems, finances (income), social or designated status and decision making powers.

**Early intervention**, through education and awareness generation, is needed to prevent a negative feeling to inevitable loss of control. It is also important for society – and individuals – to learn to respect people for what they are instead of who they are and how much they are worth. When the feeling is severe, individuals and their families may be counseled to deal with this. Improving the health of the elderly through various levels of health care can also help to improve control. Finally, motivating the elderly to use their skills and training them to be productive will help gain respect and appreciation.

**CONCLUSION:** The problem of not being prepared for old age can only be prevented. Awareness generation through the work place is a good beginning with HR departments taking an active role in preparing employees to face retirement and facing old age issues. For the majority who have unregulated occupations and for those who are self-employed, including farmers, awareness can be generated through the media and also through government offices and by NGOs in the field. Older people who have faced and addressed these issues can be 'recruited' to address groups at various forums to help people prepare for, or cope with, old age.





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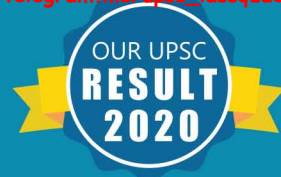


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