

UPSC Mains 2015 — All GS Questions

73 Questions across GS Paper I-IV

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GS-I

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W Medium
Q1. The ancient civilization in Indian sub-continent differed from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece in that its culture and traditions have been preserved without a breakdown to the present day. Comment.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W Medium
Q2. Mesolithic rock cut architecture of India not only reflects the cultural life of the times but also a fine aesthetic sense comparable to modern painting. Critically evaluate this comment.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W Medium
Q3. How different would have been the achievement of Indian independence without Mahatma Gandhi? Discuss.

2015 GS-I 12M • 200W Medium
Q4. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, despite having divergent approaches and strategies, had a common goal of amelioration of the downtrodden. Elucidate.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W Medium
Q5. It would have been difficult for the Constituent Assembly to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution for Independent India in just three years but for the experience gained with the Government of India Act, 1935. Discuss.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W Medium
Q6. Why did the industrial revolution first occur in England? Discuss the quality of life of the people there during the industrialization. How does it compare with that in India at present?

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W Medium
Q7. To what extent can Germany be held responsible for causing the two World Wars? Discuss critically.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W Medium
Q8. Describe any four cultural elements of diversity in India and rate their relative significance in building a national identity.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q9. Critically examine whether growing population is the cause of poverty OR poverty is the main cause of population increase in India.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q10. How do you explain the statistics that show that the sex ratio in Tribes in India is more favourable to women than the sex ratio among Scheduled Castes?

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q11. Discuss the changes in the trends of labour migration within and outside India in the last four decades.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q12. Discuss the positive and negative effects of globalization on women in India.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q13. Debate the issue of whether and how contemporary movements for assertion of Dalit identity work towards annihilation of caste.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q14. Explain the factors responsible for the origin of ocean currents. How do they influence regional climates, fishing and navigation?

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q15. Discuss the Namami Gange and National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) programmes and causes of mixed results from the previous schemes. What quantum leaps can help preserve the river Ganga better than incremental inputs?

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q16. India is well endowed with fresh water resources. Critically examine why it still suffers from water scarcity.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q17. The states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are reaching the limits of their ecological carrying capacity due to tourism. Critically evaluate.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q18. How far do you agree that the behaviour of the Indian monsoon has been changing due to humanizing landscapes? Discuss.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q19. Smart cities in India cannot sustain without smart villages. Discuss this statement in the backdrop of rural urban integration.

2015 GS-I 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q20. What are the economic significances of discovery of oil in Arctic Sea and its possible environmental consequences?

GS-II

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q1. Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q2. The concept of cooperative federalism has been increasingly emphasized in recent years. Highlight the drawbacks in the existing structure and the extent to which cooperative federalism would answer the shortcomings.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q3. In absence of a well-educated and organized local level government system, 'Panchayats' and 'Samitis' have remained mainly political institutions and not effective instruments of governance. Critically discuss.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q4. Khap Panchayats have been in the news for functioning as extra-constitutional authorities, often delivering pronouncements amounting to human rights violations. Discuss critically the actions taken by the legislative, executive and the judiciary to set the things right in this regard.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q5. Resorting to ordinances has always raised concern on violation of the spirit of separation of powers doctrine. While noting the rationales justifying the power to promulgate ordinances, analyze whether the decisions of the Supreme Court on the issue have further facilitated resorting to this power. Should the power to promulgate ordinances be repealed?

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q6. What are the major changes brought in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 through the recent Ordinance promulgated by the President? How far will it improve India's dispute resolution mechanism? Discuss.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q7. Does the right to clean environment entail legal regulations on burning crackers during Diwali? Discuss in the light of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution and Judgement(s) of the Apex Court in this regard.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q8. Examine critically the recent changes in the rules governing foreign funding of NGOs under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 1976.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q9. The Self-Help Group (SHG) Bank Linkage Programme (SBLP), which is India's own innovation, has proved to be one of the most effective poverty alleviation and women empowerment programmes. Elucidate.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q10. How can the role of NGOs be strengthened in India for development works relating to protection of the environment? Discuss throwing light on the major constraints.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q11. The quality of higher education in India requires major improvements to make it internationally competitive. Do you think that the entry of foreign educational institutions would help improve the quality of higher and technical education in the country? Discuss.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q12. Public health system has limitations in providing universal health coverage. Do you think that the private sector could help in bridging the gap? What other viable alternatives would you suggest?

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q13. Though there have been several different estimates of poverty in India, all indicate reduction in poverty levels over time. Do you agree? Critically examine with reference to urban and rural poverty indicators.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q14. In the light of the Satyam Scandal (2009), discuss the changes brought in corporate governance to ensure transparency, accountability.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q15. "If amendment bill to the Whistleblowers Act, 2011 tabled in the Parliament is passed, there may be no one left to protect." Critically evaluate.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q16. "For achieving the desired objectives, it is necessary to ensure that the regulatory institutions remain independent and autonomous." Discuss in the light of the experiences in recent past.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q17. Increasing interest of India in Africa has its pros and cons. Critically examine.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q18. Discuss the impediments India is facing in its pursuit of a permanent seat in UN Security Council.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q19. Project 'Mausam' is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of the Indian Government to improve relationship with its neighbours. Does the project have a strategic dimension? Discuss.

2015 GS-II 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q20. Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India-Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchanges could help generate goodwill between the two countries? Discuss with suitable examples.

GS-III

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q1. The nature of economic growth in India in recent times is often described as jobless growth. Do you agree with this view? Give arguments in favour of your answer.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q2. Livestock rearing has a big potential for providing non-farm employment and income in rural areas. Discuss suggesting suitable measures to promote this sector in India.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q3. In view of the declining average size of land holdings in India which has made agriculture non-viable for a majority of farmers, should contract farming and land leasing be promoted in agriculture? Critically evaluate the pros and cons.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q4. How can the 'Digital India' programme help farmers to improve farm productivity and income? What steps has the Government taken in this regard?

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q5. In what way could replacement of price subsidy with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) change the scenario of subsidies in India? Discuss.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q6. What are the impediments in marketing and supply chain management in developing the food processing industry in India? Can e-commerce help in overcoming these bottlenecks?

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q7. Craze for gold in Indians has led to a surge in import of gold in recent years and put pressure on balance of payments and external value of rupee. In view of this, examine the merits of the Gold Monetization Scheme.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q8. "Success of 'Make in India' programme depends on the success of 'Skill India' programme and radical labour reforms." Discuss with logical arguments.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q9. To what factors can the recent dramatic fall in equipment costs and tariff of solar energy be attributed? What implications does the trend have for the thermal power producers and the related industry?

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q10. There is a clear acknowledgement that Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are a tool of industrial development, manufacturing and exports. Recognizing this potential, the whole instrumentality of SEZs requires augmentation. Discuss the issues plaguing the success of SEZs with respect to taxation, governing laws and administration.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q11. What do you understand by 'Standard Positioning Systems' and 'Precision Positioning Systems' in the GPS era? Discuss the advantages India perceives from its ambitious IRNSS programme employing just seven satellites.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q12. What are the areas of prohibitive labour that can be sustainably managed by robots? Discuss the initiatives that can propel research in premier research institutes for substantive and gainful innovation.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q13. Discuss the advantages and security implications of cloud hosting of servers vis-a-vis in-house machine-based hosting for government businesses.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q14. India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), which has a database containing formatted information on more than 2 million medicinal formulations is proving a powerful weapon in the country's fight against erroneous patents. Discuss the pros and cons of making this database publicly available under open-source licensing.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q16. The frequency of earthquakes appears to have increased in the Indian subcontinent. However, India's preparedness for mitigating their impact has significant gaps. Discuss various aspects.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q17. Human rights activists constantly highlight the view that the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) is a draconian act leading to cases of human rights abuses by the security forces. What sections of AFSPA are opposed by the activists? Critically evaluate the requirement with reference to the view held by the Apex Court.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q18. Religious indoctrination via digital media has resulted in Indian youth joining the ISIS. What is ISIS and its mission? How can ISIS be dangerous for the internal security of our country?

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q19. The persisting drives of the Government for development of large industries in backward areas have resulted in isolating the tribal population and the farmers who face multiple displacements. With Malkangiri and Naxalbari foci, discuss the corrective strategies needed to win the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) doctrine affected citizens back into the mainstream of social and economic growth.

2015 GS-III 12.5M • 200W

Medium

Q20. Considering the threats cyberspace poses for the country, India needs a "Digital Armed Force" to prevent crimes. Critically evaluate the National Cyber Security Policy, 2013 outlining the challenges perceived in its effective implementation.

GS-IV

2015 GS-IV 10M • 200W

Hard

Q1(b). Differentiate between the following (200 words): (i) Law and Ethics (ii) Ethical management and Management of ethics (iii) Discrimination and Preferential treatment (iv) Personal ethics and Professional ethics

(a) What is meant by 'environmental ethics'? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics.

(b) Differentiate between the following: (i) Law and Ethics (ii) Ethical management and Management of ethics (iii) Discrimination and Preferential treatment (iv) Personal ethics and Professional ethics

2015 GS-IV 20M • 250W

Hard

Q2. Given are two quotations of moral thinkers/philosophers. For each of these, bring out what it means to you in the present context: (a) "The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." (b) "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light."

(a) "The weak can never forgive; forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

(b) "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light."

2015 GS-IV 10M • 150W

Hard

Q3(a). "A mere compliance with law is not enough, the public servant also has to have a well-developed sensibility to ethical issues for effective discharge of duties." Do you agree? Explain with the help of two examples, where (i) an act is ethically right, but not legally and (ii) an act is legally right, but not ethically. (150 words)

(a) "A mere compliance with law is not enough, the public servant also has to have a well-developed sensibility to ethical issues for effective discharge of duties." Do you agree? Explain with two examples, where (i) an act is ethically right, but not legally and (ii) an act is legally right, but not ethically.

(b) How do the virtues of trustworthiness and fortitude get manifested in public service? Explain with examples.

2015 GS-IV 10M • 150W

Hard

Q4(b). Some recent developments such as introduction of RTI Act, media and judicial activism, etc., are proving helpful in bringing about greater transparency and accountability in the functioning of the government. However, it is also being observed that at times the mechanisms are misused. Another negative effect is that the officers are now afraid to take prompt decisions. Analyze this situation in detail and suggest how this dichotomy can be resolved. Suggest how these negative impacts can be minimized. (150 words)

(a) "Social values are more important than economic values." Discuss with examples in the context of inclusive growth of a nation.

(b) Analyze the dichotomy arising from mechanisms like RTI, media and judicial activism which, while increasing transparency, sometimes lead to misuse and decision-paralysis. Suggest measures to resolve the situation and minimize negative impacts.

2015 GS-IV 10M • 150W

Hard

Q5. Two different kinds of attitudes exhibited by public servants towards their work have been identified as the bureaucratic attitude and the democratic attitude. (a) Distinguish between these two terms and write their merits and demerits. (b) Is it possible to balance the two to create a better administration for the faster development of our country? (150 words)

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- (b) Is it possible to balance the two to create a better administration for the faster development of our country?

2015 GS-IV 10M • 150W

Hard

Q6. Today we find that in spite of various measures like prescribing codes of conduct, setting up vigilance cells/commissions, RTI, active media and strengthening of legal mechanisms, corrupt practices are not coming under control. (a) Evaluate the effectiveness of these measures with justifications. (b) Suggest more effective strategies to tackle this menace. (150 words)

- (a) Evaluate the effectiveness of existing anti-corruption measures with justifications.
- (b) Suggest more effective strategies to tackle the menace of corruption.

2015 GS-IV 10M • 150W

Easy

Q7. At the international level, the bilateral relations between most nations are governed on the policy of promoting one's own national interest without any regard for the interest of other nations. This leads to conflicts and tensions between the nations. How can ethical consideration help resolve such tensions? Discuss with specific examples. (150 words)

2015 GS-IV 10M • 150W

Easy

Q8. Public servants are likely to confront with the issues of 'Conflict of Interest'. What do you understand by the term 'Conflict of Interest' and how does it manifest in the decision making by public servants? If faced with the conflict of interest situation, how would you resolve it? Explain with the help of examples.

2015 GS-IV 20M • 250W

Hard

Q9. A private company is known for its efficiency, transparency and employee welfare. The company employs nearly 700 personnel and they have voluntarily decided not to form a union. One day, about 40 men belonging to a political party gate-crashed into the factory demanding jobs in the factory. They threatened the management and employees. The employees feel demoralized. It was clear that those who gate-crashed wanted to be on the payroll of the company as well as continue as active members of the party. The company maintains high standards in integrity and does not extend favours to civil administration that also includes law enforcement agency. Such incidents occur in public sector also. (a) Assume you are the CEO of the company. What would you do to diffuse the volatile situation on the date of gate-crashing with the violent mob sitting inside the company premises? (b) What could be the long-term solution to the issue discussed in the case? (c) Every solution/action that you suggest will have a positive and a negative impact on you (as CEO), the employees and the performance of the employees. Analyse the consequences of each of your suggested actions.

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- (c) Every solution/action that you suggest will have a positive and a negative impact on you (as CEO), the employees and the performance of the employees. Analyse the consequences of each of your suggested actions.

2015 GS-IV 20M • 250W

Hard

Q10. You are the Sarpanch of a Panchayat. There is a primary school run by the government in your area. Mid-day meals are provided to the children attending the school. The Headmaster has now appointed a new cook in the school to prepare the meals. However, when it is found that the cook is from Dalit community, almost half of the children belonging to higher castes are not allowed to take meals by their parents. Consequently the attendance in the school falls sharply. This could result in the possibility of discontinuation of mid-day meal scheme, thereafter of teaching staff and subsequent closing down the school. (a) Discuss some feasible strategies to overcome the conflict and to create right ambience. (b) What should be the responsibilities of different social segments and agencies to create positive social ambience for accepting such changes?

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2015 GS-IV 20M • 250W

Hard

Q11. One of the scientists working in the R & D laboratory of a major pharmaceutical company discovers that one of the company's best-selling veterinary drugs, B, has the potential to cure a currently incurable liver disease that is prevalent in tribal areas. However, developing a variant of the drug suitable for human beings will entail a lot of research and development, having a huge expenditure to the extent of ₹50 crores. It is unlikely that the company would recover the costs as the disease is rampant only in poverty-stricken areas having very little market otherwise. If you were the CEO, then – (a) identify the various actions that you could take; (b) evaluate the pros and cons of each of your actions.

- (a) Identify the various actions that you could take.
- (b) Evaluate the pros and cons of each of your actions.

2015 GS-IV 20M • 200W

Hard

Q12. There is a disaster-prone State having frequent landslides, forest fires, cloudbursts, flash floods and earthquakes, etc. Some of these are seasonal and often unpredictable. The magnitude of the disaster is always unanticipated. During one of the seasons, a cloudburst caused devastating floods and landslides leading to high casualties. There was major damage to infrastructure like roads, bridges and power-generating units. This led to more than 100,000 pilgrims, tourists and other locals trapped across different routes and locations. The people trapped in your area of responsibility included senior citizens, patients in hospitals, women and children, hikers, tourists, ruling party's regional president along with his family, additional chief secretary of the neighbouring State and prisoners in jail. As a civil services officer of the State, what would be the order in which you would rescue these people and why? Give justifications.

2015 GS-IV 25M • 250W

Hard

Q13. You are heading a district administration in a particular department. Your senior officer calls you from the State Headquarters and tells you that a plot in Rampur village is to have a building constructed on it for a school. A visit is scheduled during which he will visit the site along with the chief engineer and the senior architect. He wants you to check out all the papers relating to it and to ensure that the visit is properly arranged. You examine the file which relates to the period before you joined the department. The land was acquired from the local Panchayat at a nominal cost and the papers show that clearance certificates are available from the three authorities who have to certify the site's suitability. There is no certification by the architect available on file. You decide to visit Rampur to ensure that all is in order as stated on file. When you visit Rampur, you find that the plot under reference is part of Thakurgarh Fort and that the walls, ramparts, etc., are running across it. The fort is well away from the main village; therefore a school here will be a serious inconvenience for the children. However, the area near the village has potential to expand into a larger residential area. The development charges on the existing plot, at the fort, will be very high and the question of heritage site has not been addressed. Moreover, the Sarpanch, at the time of acquisition of the land, was a relative of your predecessor. The whole transaction appears to have been done with some vested interest. (a) List the likely vested interests of the concerned parties. (b) Some of the options for action available to you are listed below. Discuss the merits and demerits of each of the options: (i) You can await the visit of the superior officer and let him take a decision. (ii) You can seek his advice in writing or on phone. (iii) You can consult your predecessor / colleagues, etc., and then decide what to do. (iv) You can find out if any alternate plot can be got in exchange and then send a comprehensive written report. Can you suggest any other option with proper justification?

(a) List the likely vested interests of the concerned parties.

(b) Discuss the merits and demerits of each of the given options and suggest any other option with proper justification.

2015 GS-IV 25M • 250W

Hard

Q14. You are recently posted as district development officer of a district. Shortly thereafter you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools. The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should be quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boys' exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst the male population. The younger generation feels that in the present era, girls should have equal opportunities for education and employment, and other means of livelihood. The entire locality is divided between the elders and the younger lot and further sub-divided between sexes in both generations. You come to know that in Panchayat or in other local bodies or even in busy crossroads, the issue is being acrimoniously debated. One day you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested when they were en route to schools. The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families which do not follow their dictate. (a) What steps would you take to ensure girls' safety without disrupting their education? (b) How would you manage and mould patriarchic attitude of the village elders to ensure harmony in the inter-generational relations?

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