



UPSC CIVIL SERVICES MAINS 2026 · SOLVED

General Studies Paper I

Model Answers

Every question of the paper written on 22 August 2026, answered in full: the examiner's demand decoded first, then a structured answer with dated figures and a source list in which each entry is marked primary or secondary.

20

QUESTIONS

20

ANSWERED

250

MARKS

3 hrs

DURATION

INSIDE

- The examiner's demand decoded before every answer
- A full model answer, with its real word count against the paper's limit
- Value additions that earn marks, and the mistakes that lose them
- Sources under every answer, each marked primary or secondary
- The dated current-affairs trail behind the question



Bharat Choudhary

Editor · BharatNotes and Ujyari



BharatNotes

Syllabus-wise notes,
solved papers, answer keys



Ujyari

Daily current affairs
and editorial analysis

FOREWORD

Why this document exists

On 22 August 2026 a few lakh candidates sat down to answer 20 questions in three hours. By evening the paper was everywhere and the answers were nowhere, because the Union Public Service Commission does not release model answers for the Mains examination and never has. What fills that gap is usually written fast, sourced thinly and never corrected.

This is the alternative I wanted when I was preparing. Every question in this paper is answered here in full. Each one opens with the examiner's demand decoded, because most marks are lost to a misread directive rather than to weak content, and *analyse*, *examine* and *comment* are not interchangeable. After the answer come the additions that earn marks and the mistakes that lose them.

On sourcing

Every source under every answer is labelled **primary** or **secondary**, so you can see at a glance whether you are reading the issuing authority or somebody's account of it. Where a document exists but its host could not be reached, it is cited in full rather than pointed at a URL that may not resolve. No link here was invented to satisfy a format. Where two official figures disagree, both appear with the basis of each. Where a widely repeated quotation could not be traced to a primary source, the page says so and tells you not to use it.

On length, honestly

These answers run longer than the exam allows, often two to three times longer on the 150-word questions, and each one prints its real word count against the limit so you can see by how much. That is deliberate. A study answer has to carry the reasoning, the alternatives and the sourcing that a three-hour answer leaves out. The exam-length answer is already inside it: the bold lead-in of each paragraph is the skeleton you would actually write, and the bullets under it are the material you would pick two of. Practise the compression. Do not reproduce the length.

On the two sites

This paper was written by an examiner reading the same year you were. Questions came from the Kalpakkam reactor, an amendment passed in March, a judgment delivered in May. So under each answer, where a question grew out of a story, you will find the dated coverage on **Ujiyari**, which is where the year is tracked, alongside the chapter on **BharatNotes**, which is where the syllabus lives. Static preparation without the year is out of date; current affairs without the framework is trivia. The two sites exist as a pair for that reason.

Use this to audit your own answer; not to replace it. Compare the structure, the sourcing and the balance of argument, then write your own and have it evaluated. That is the only part of this that actually raises a score.



Bharat Choudhary

Editor, BharatNotes and Ujiyari

27 August 2026

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Five things worth knowing before you read

1. **Read the demand line first.** Most marks are lost to a misread directive, not to weak content. Each question opens with what the examiner actually asked for.
2. **Treat the answer as a skeleton with muscle.** Copying it into a test verbatim will not help. Internalise the structure, the data anchors and the balance of argument.
3. **Mind the word count, ours and yours.** Every answer prints its real length against the paper's limit. They run longer on purpose; the bold lead-in of each paragraph is the exam-length skeleton.
4. **Follow the source links.** The Budget, Economic Survey, PIB, RBI and ministry documents named under each answer are where the numbers came from, and are worth reading on their own.
5. **Use the current-affairs trail.** Where a question grew out of a story from the year, the dated Ujjiyari coverage is listed so you can see how it built up.

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All 20 questions

Q	THEME	MARKS	WORDS
1	Ancient India — sources	10	150
2	Modern India — colonial education	10	150
3	Freedom struggle — Gandhian mobilisation	10	150
4	Physical geography — tropical cyclones	10	150
5	World geography — polar regions	10	150
6	Geomorphology — aeolian processes	10	150
7	Resource geography — transboundary water	10	150
8	Indian society — diversity and its stresses	10	150
9	Social justice — disability	10	150
10	Society — technology and empowerment	10	150
11	Medieval India — Vijayanagara art	15	250
12	Post-independence — states reorganisation	15	250
13	Post-independence — planning and regional balance	15	250
14	Climatology — local winds	15	250
15	Geography and technology — climate-smart agriculture	15	250
16	Economic geography — global trade shift	15	250

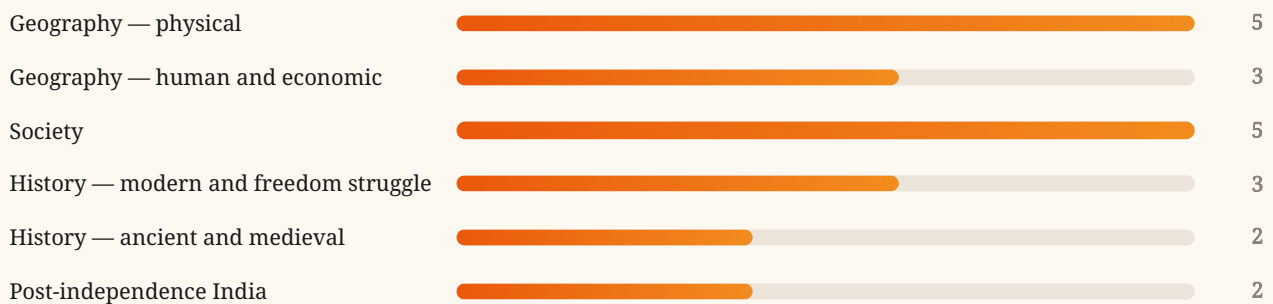
Q	THEME	MARKS	WORDS
17	Indian geography — land-use change	15	250
18	Indian society — caste and urbanisation	15	250
19	Population — demographic transition	15	250
20	Society — globalisation and youth	15	250

PAPER ANALYSIS

What this paper actually tested

GS Paper I in 2026 stayed close to its own precedent and away from the news. History ran on sources and interpretation rather than on event-recall: the evidentiary value of the Ashokan edicts, the administrative consequence of Macaulay's Minute, the social composition of the Gandhian movements, and a synthesis question on Vijayanagara building. Geography carried the heaviest load, with four questions on physical processes alone, and a noticeable preference for **mechanism** over description, the Fujiwhara effect and the comparison of the Loo with the Chinook and the Foehn being the clearest instances. Society was framed as argument rather than description, asking whether caste is disappearing, whether unity survives its challenges, and whether digital technology empowers. Only two questions, on satellite technology in agriculture and on the Indo-Pacific trade shift, rewarded current-affairs reading, and even those needed a geographical rather than a news answer. The paper's real filter was the directive verb: **analyze**, **examine critically** and **comment** appear repeatedly, and each demands a judgement that a well-informed descriptive answer will not supply.

WHERE THE 20 QUESTIONS FELL



1

10 marks

150 words

Ancient India — sources

Analyze the importance of Ashokan inscriptions for reconstructing Mauryan history.*Syllabus: Indian culture and history from ancient to modern times***WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR**

Analyze means take the evidence apart and weigh it, not describe the edicts. Two things must appear: *what* the inscriptions let a historian reconstruct, and *how far* that reconstruction can be trusted. An answer that only lists Major Rock Edicts I to XIV will read as recall.

- Open by fixing the evidentiary status of the edicts, that they are contemporaneous, official and datable, unlike every other Mauryan source.
- Organise the body by *category of evidence* — extent, administration, ideology, chronology, language — and anchor each to a named edict, not a general claim.
- Close with the limits. The examiner's word is *analyze*, so a paragraph on what the edicts cannot tell us is where the last marks sit.

MODEL ANSWER

247 words · paper allows 150

Ashoka's rock and pillar edicts, issued during a reign conventionally dated c. 268 to 232 BCE, and deciphered by James Prinsep in 1837, are the only body of Mauryan evidence that is at once contemporaneous, official and datable. Every rival source is later, foreign or sectarian: the Arthashastra is a normative text of uncertain date, Megasthenes survives only in fragments quoted by others, and the Buddhist chronicles were composed centuries afterwards.

What they allow us to reconstruct

- **Extent.** Their distribution, from Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra in the north-west to Maski, Brahmagiri and Yerragudi in Karnataka and Dhauli and Jaugada in Odisha, maps imperial reach without recourse to literature.
- **Administration.** The two Separate Kalinga Edicts address the *mahamatras* at Tosali and Samapa and prescribe the *anusamyana*, a periodic tour of inspection, evidencing provincial centres and supervision of judicial officers.
- **Ideology.** Rock Edict XII, urging restraint in praising one's own sect, establishes *dhamma* as an ethical programme rather than a sectarian one.
- **Absolute chronology.** Rock Edict XIII names five Hellenistic rulers, giving early Indian history its firmest datable peg.
- **Linguistic geography.** Brahmi, Kharoshthi, and the Greek and Aramaic bilingual at Kandahar record the empire's plural speech communities.

Their limits. These are royal proclamations, prescriptive rather than descriptive. They are silent on revenue, army and dynastic decline, and they speak of *Devanampiya Piyadasi*; the identification with Ashoka rests on the Maski, Gujarra and Nittur copies. Read alone they document intent, not outcome, and must be tested against archaeology and later texts.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Naming the five Hellenistic kings of Rock Edict XIII (Antiochus II Theos, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Antigonos Gonatas, Magas of Cyrene, Alexander of Epirus) shows why the edicts anchor Indian chronology to Mediterranean dates.
- Rock Edict XIII's own admission of remorse after Kalinga is the earliest instance of an Indian ruler recording a change of policy in his own voice.
- The Maski and Gujjarra Minor Rock Edicts are the ones that supply the personal name *Asoka*; everywhere else he is a title.
- The pillars are monolithic Chunar sandstone with a distinctive mirror polish, so the edicts are also evidence for Mauryan craft organisation and long-distance stone transport.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Reciting the contents of all fourteen Major Rock Edicts. The question asks about their *importance as evidence*, not their text.
- Treating *dhamma* as Buddhism. The edicts distinguish Ashoka's personal Buddhist affiliation from the public ethic he propagated.
- Omitting the limitations paragraph, which is the half of the answer that carries the word *analyze*.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

BOOK D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, Vol. I, 2nd edn, University of Calcutta, 1965 — edited texts of the edicts

BOOK Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, 3rd edn, Oxford University Press, 2012, Appendix V (translations)

BOOK Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India*, Pearson, 2008, Ch. 7

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Samrat Samprati, Jainism and the Mauryan legacy

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/04/03/samrat-samprati-jainism-mauryan-empire/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Maurya Empire — chapter

bharatnotes.com/subjects/history-culture/ancient-india/maurya-empire/

NCERT XII — Kings, Farmers and Towns

bharatnotes.com/ncert/class-12/themes-in-indian-history-1/kings-farmers-towns/

2

10 marks

150 words

Modern India — colonial education

Discuss the impact of Macaulay's Minute on colonial administration and education in India.

Syllabus: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Discuss both halves named in the question: the effect on *colonial administration* and the effect on *education*. Most answers write only about English education and forfeit half the marks. The administrative half is about how the Minute created the clerical apparatus the Company needed.

- Set the context in one line — the Anglicist-Orientalist controversy and the deadlock over the Charter Act of 1813's one-lakh grant.
- Split the body cleanly into an administrative effect and an educational effect, then add a paragraph of unintended consequences.
- Avoid a purely denunciatory conclusion. The strongest answers note that the same English education produced the vocabulary of nationalism.

MODEL ANSWER

226 words · paper allows 150

Macaulay's Minute of 2 February 1835, adopted by Lord William Bentinck in the Resolution of 7 March 1835, resolved the Anglicist-Orientalist deadlock over how the annual grant of one lakh rupees under the **Charter Act of 1813** should be spent, by directing it to English-medium instruction in European literature and science.

Effect on administration

- It supplied the Company with an inexpensive subordinate bureaucracy. Macaulay's stated object was a class "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" that would interpret between rulers and ruled.
- English became the language of record and of the higher courts, deepening the separation between the administration and the vernacular society it governed.
- Combined with the **downward filtration theory**, resources concentrated on a thin urban upper stratum, leaving mass and vernacular education unfunded until **Wood's Despatch of 1854** conceded a graded system and grants-in-aid.

Effect on education

- Traditional *tols*, *madrasas* and *pathshalas* lost patronage and declined, and Sanskrit and Persian scholarship lost state support.
- A literary and clerical bias took root; technical and scientific instruction lagged, a distortion the **Hunter Commission (1882)** later criticised.

The unintended consequence. The same schooling gave a rising Indian middle class access to Mill, Burke and Locke, and to the language in which the Congress would later frame its claims. Colonial education created both the clerk and the critic.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Quote the Minute precisely: Macaulay conceded he had “no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic” while judging their literatures — a line examiners recognise.
- Wood's Despatch, 1854, is the correct counterpoint: it is called the Magna Carta of English education in India and abandoned downward filtration in principle.
- The Hunter Commission (1882) and the Indian Universities Act, 1904 (Curzon) mark the later tightening of state control over the system Macaulay began.
- Raja Rammohun Roy's 1823 letter to Lord Amherst had already argued for Western science over Sanskrit scholasticism, so the Anglicist case was not only a colonial one.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing only about English education and ignoring the administrative half of the question.
- Dating the Minute to 1833 or 1813. It is 2 February 1835, given effect by Bentinck's Resolution of 7 March 1835.
- A one-sided condemnation with no account of how the policy fed Indian nationalism.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

BOOK H. Sharp (ed.), Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839), Superintendent Government Printing, Calcutta, 1920 — full text of the Minute

BOOK Bipan Chandra et al., India's Struggle for Independence, Penguin, 1989, Ch. 7

BOOK Sumit Sarkar, Modern India 1885-1947, Macmillan, 1983, Ch. 1

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Centralised education policy and federalism

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/ht-centralised-education-policy-federalism-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Modern India — colonial administration

bharatnotes.com/subjects/history-culture/modern-india/

Education policy and NEP

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/welfare-social-sector/education-nep/

3

10 marks

150 words

Freedom struggle — Gandhian mobilisation

The significance of the Gandhian movements lay in the masses they mobilized. Elucidate.

Syllabus: The Freedom Struggle — its various stages and important contributors

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Elucidate a given proposition: that the *significance* of the movements lay in *whom they brought in*, not in what they immediately won. So organise around social groups mobilised, and use the failure of the movements to achieve their stated aims as evidence for, not against, the claim.

- State the yardstick in the first line: judged by stated objectives the movements largely failed, so their significance must lie elsewhere.
- Move movement by movement, naming the specific new constituency each one drew in — peasants, women, students, traders, workers.
- Add a paragraph of qualification on the groups that stayed outside, then conclude on the transformation of the Congress from a petitioning body to a mass organisation.

MODEL ANSWER

249 words · paper allows 150

Measured against their declared aims, the Gandhian movements fell short. Non-Cooperation did not bring *swaraj* within a year, Civil Disobedience did not end the salt tax, and the Cripps and Quit India phase ended in mass arrest. Their significance therefore lies where the statement places it: in the constituencies they drew into politics.

- **Champaran (1917), Kheda (1918) and Ahmedabad (1918)** established the method on local grievances, and brought indigo raiyats, revenue-paying peasants and mill workers into a nationalist frame for the first time.
- **Non-Cooperation with Khilafat (1920-22)** made the Congress a mass organisation. The Nagpur Session (1920) reorganised it on linguistic provinces with a low membership fee, and it drew in students, lawyers who surrendered practice, and ulema.
- **Civil Disobedience (1930-34)** carried the movement to women in unprecedented numbers, to coastal and small-town India through salt manufacture, and to merchants through the boycott of foreign cloth. Sarojini Naidu at Dharasana and the picketing campaigns are the visible markers.
- **Quit India (1942)** demonstrated that mobilisation had outrun the leadership itself: with the entire high command imprisoned, students and local cadres sustained parallel governments at Satara, Talcher and Ballia.

Qualification. Mobilisation was uneven. Ambedkar argued the movements did not confront caste, the industrial working class often followed communist rather than Congress leadership, and Muslim mass participation contracted after 1922.

The lasting achievement was structural: a petitioning elite became an organisation with a village presence, which is what made the transfer of power a negotiation between mass forces rather than between notables.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The Nagpur Session, 1920, is the institutional hinge — linguistic Pradesh Congress Committees, a working committee, and a four-anna membership fee that made mass enrolment possible.
- Gandhi's own conception of mobilisation as moral training, not headcount, is worth a line: *satyagraha* required a disciplined participant, which is why Chauri Chaura (Feb 1922) led him to withdraw.
- Bardoli (1928) under Vallabhbhai Patel shows the method working at district scale between the two national movements.
- Contrast with the Moderates' method of prayer and petition to sharpen the argument that the change was one of scale and social depth.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Narrating the movements chronologically without ever naming the social groups. The statement is about masses; the answer must be about *which* masses.
- Ignoring the counter-evidence on caste and on Muslim participation after 1922, which a good *elucidate* answer acknowledges.
- Confusing the dates of Civil Disobedience (1930-34, with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 1931 in between) with Quit India (1942).

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

- BOOK** Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin, 1989, Chs. 14-18, 33
- BOOK** Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Macmillan, 1983, Chs. 5-7
- BOOK** Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge University Press, 1972

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Tagore at 165 and the Gandhi charkha debate

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/05/09/tagore-165-anniversary-gandhi-charkha-debate/>

Tagore, Gandhi, nationalism and humanism

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/05/1e-tagore-gandhi-nationalism-humanism/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Gandhian era — Champaran, Kheda, Rowlatt

bharatnotes.com/subjects/history-culture/modern-india/gandhian-era-champaran-kheda-rowlatt/

Gandhi and the early movements

bharatnotes.com/subjects/history-culture/freedom-struggle/gandhi-early-movements/

4

10 marks

150 words

Physical geography — tropical cyclones

What is the Fujiwhara effect? Explain its impact on the movement and intensity of tropical cyclones.

Syllabus: Important geophysical phenomena; salient features of world physical geography

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Two parts, both compulsory: a **definition** of the Fujiwhara effect, then its **impact on movement and on intensity** — treat those as two separate outcomes, because a cyclone pair can change track without changing strength, and the question names both.

- Define with the threshold conditions: two cyclonic vortices within roughly 1,400 km, rotating about a common centroid.
- Split the effect into track consequences (erratic path, looping, mutual orbit, merger) and intensity consequences (shear and moisture competition weaken; merger can strengthen).
- Give at least one Indian Ocean or named example, and end with the forecasting implication, which is what makes the phenomenon consequential for disaster management.

MODEL ANSWER

236 words · paper allows 150

The **Fujiwhara effect**, described by the Japanese meteorologist Sakuhei Fujiwhara in 1921, is the mutual interaction of two cyclonic vortices that come within roughly 1,400 km of each other. Rather than moving independently, they begin to rotate cyclonically about a common centroid located between them, weighted towards the stronger system.

Impact on movement

- The paired systems orbit each other, producing an erratic, looping or sharply recurving track that departs from the steering flow.
- The weaker system is typically drawn around and towards the stronger one; where the disparity is large, the smaller vortex is absorbed.
- If the two are comparable in strength, they may execute a partial orbit and then separate on altered headings, which is the hardest case for forecasters.

Impact on intensity

- Interaction usually **weakens** both. Each system's outflow imposes vertical wind shear on the other, they compete for the same reservoir of warm, moist air, and subsidence between them suppresses convection.
- **Merger** is the exception: if two systems combine, the resulting single circulation can consolidate and intensify, since latent heat release is concentrated in one core.

Why it matters. Track uncertainty translates directly into evacuation error. The North Indian Ocean, being a small basin with a short season, sees binary interaction less often than the western Pacific, but simultaneous Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea systems complicate IMD landfall guidance, and the phenomenon is a standing caution against reading a single deterministic track.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The threshold is usually cited as about 1,400 km (roughly 750 nautical miles) between centres; naming a number shows precision.
- The effect is not confined to tropical cyclones — extratropical lows and even Great Red Spot-type vortices show the same binary interaction, which is worth a closing line.
- Link to disaster management: erratic tracks are why IMD issues cone-of-uncertainty guidance rather than a single line, and why cyclone shelters are pre-positioned along a coastal stretch, not a point.
- Distinguish it from the Coriolis-driven poleward drift (beta effect), which also curves cyclone tracks but is not an interaction between two systems.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Answering only the definition and skipping the intensity half.
- Asserting that the Fujiwhara effect always intensifies cyclones. The usual outcome is mutual weakening; intensification requires merger.
- Inventing a named Indian cyclone pair. If you are not certain of an example, describe the mechanism and the basin conditions instead.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY India Meteorological Department, Cyclone Warning Division — Frequently Asked Questions on tropical cyclones
https://mausam.imd.gov.in/imd_latest/contents/cyclone.php

PRIMARY NOAA National Hurricane Center, Glossary of NHC Terms — Fujiwhara Effect
<https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutgloss.shtml>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Monsoon, jet streams and tropical cyclones

bharatnotes.com/subjects/geography/physical-geography/monsoon-jet-streams-tropical-cyclones/

Floods, droughts and cyclones

bharatnotes.com/subjects/disaster-management/dm-framework/floods-droughts-cyclones/

5

10 marks

150 words

World geography — polar regions

“Tundra regions are ecologically fragile but economically important.” Examine this statement critically.

Syllabus: Salient features of world physical geography; distribution of key natural resources

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Examine critically a two-clause statement. You must substantiate *both* clauses — fragility and economic importance — and then take a position on the tension between them. A one-sided answer, however detailed, cannot score at the top.

- Establish fragility through mechanism, not adjectives: short growing season, low species redundancy, slow recovery, permafrost carbon feedback.
- Establish economic importance through named resources and routes, with figures where you are sure of them.

- Resolve the tension explicitly through the governance layer — Arctic Council, UNCLOS, and India's own Arctic Policy — so the answer ends somewhere rather than trailing off.

MODEL ANSWER

278 words · paper allows 150

The fragility is structural, not rhetorical. Tundra ecosystems combine a growing season of six to ten weeks, low primary productivity, and food webs of very few species, so the loss of a single link, lichen for caribou, lemming for the Arctic fox, propagates through the whole system. Recovery is measured in decades: vehicle tracks on the Alaskan North Slope remain visible for a generation. Most consequentially, permafrost stores vast quantities of frozen organic carbon; thaw releases carbon dioxide and methane, making the biome a positive feedback in global warming rather than a passive recipient of it. The Arctic has been warming several times faster than the global mean, a phenomenon termed Arctic amplification.

The economic importance is equally real. The USGS Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal (2008) estimated roughly 90 billion barrels of undiscovered oil and about 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas north of the Arctic Circle, much of it offshore. Add nickel and palladium at Norilsk, iron ore at Kiruna, Arctic fisheries, and the shrinking of sea ice that has opened the Northern Sea Route, shortening Europe to East Asia voyages substantially against the Suez route.

The critical judgement. The two clauses are not in balance, because the damage is irreversible on human timescales while the gains are extractive and finite, and they accrue to states and firms while the costs fall on indigenous communities and on the global climate. The answer is not prohibition but conditionality: strict environmental impact assessment, the Polar Code for shipping, indigenous consent through Arctic Council permanent participants, and treating the region as a scientific commons, which is the premise of India's own **Arctic Policy (2022)** and its Himadri station at Ny-Alesund.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Name India's stake precisely: the Himadri research station at Ny-Alesund, Svalbard (2008), observer status on the Arctic Council since 2013, and the Arctic Policy released in March 2022 by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- The Svalbard Treaty of 1920, to which India is a party, is the legal basis for Indian presence in the archipelago.
- Note that the USGS figures are *undiscovered technically recoverable* estimates from 2008, not proven reserves — flagging the nature of a number is itself a mark of quality.
- Distinguish tundra from taiga and from ice cap; the question is about the tundra belt specifically.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Listing tundra characteristics from a textbook without addressing the economic clause at all.
- Quoting resource figures as proven reserves. They are appraisal estimates.
- Ending without a judgement. *Examine critically* requires you to weigh, not merely to present both sides.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY U.S. Geological Survey, Fact Sheet 2008-3049, Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal: Estimates of Undiscovered Oil and Gas North of the Arctic Circle

<https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2008/3049/fs2008-3049.pdf>

PRIMARY Ministry of Earth Sciences — India's Arctic Policy (March 2022)

<https://www.moes.gov.in/arctic-policy>

PRIMARY Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) — Arctic climate assessments

<https://www.amap.no/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Oslo summit, India and a Nordic Arctic strategy

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/05/hindu-oslo-summit-india-nordic-arctic-strategy/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

World geography — chapters

bharatnotes.com/subjects/geography/world-geography/

Climate diplomacy and the global commons

bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/climate-diplomacy-global-commons/

6

10 marks

150 words

Geomorphology — aeolian processes

Discuss the role of aeolian processes in desertification and land degradation.

Syllabus: Important geophysical phenomena; changes in critical geographical features

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Discuss the role of a specific process family. Keep the answer mechanistic: deflation, abrasion, transport and deposition, each tied to a degradation outcome. Indian data converts a generic geomorphology answer into a GS1 answer.

- Define aeolian processes and state the precondition, that wind becomes geomorphically effective only where vegetation cover and soil moisture are low.
- Take each sub-process in turn and name the degradation it causes, rather than describing landforms for their own sake.
- Ground it with the ISRO desertification atlas figure and Indian examples, then close with the feedback loop between degradation and further wind erosion.

MODEL ANSWER

282 words · paper allows 150

Aeolian processes are the erosion, transport and deposition of sediment by wind. They become geomorphically dominant where vegetation cover is sparse, rainfall is low or erratic, and soils are loose and dry, which is why they concentrate in arid and semi-arid tracts and in the degraded margins of cultivated land.

How they degrade land

- **Deflation** lifts and removes fine silt, clay and organic matter, the very fractions that hold nutrients and moisture. What is left behind is a coarse, stony **desert pavement** or lag deposit of low fertility. This is the single largest pathway of wind-driven productivity loss.
- **Abrasion** by saltating sand grains sandblasts standing crops, seedlings and protective crusts, and sculpts ventifacts and yardangs. Crop damage occurs well before landform change is visible.
- **Transport** through suspension, saltation and surface creep moves material out of the system entirely, so degradation at the source is permanent on human timescales.
- **Deposition** buries the productive land downwind. Encroaching barchans and transverse dunes silt up canals, tanks, roads and rail lines and take cultivated fields out of use.

The Indian picture. The **Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India** (Space Applications Centre, ISRO, 2021) found that 97.85 million hectares, about 29.7 per cent of the country's geographical area, underwent land degradation in the reference year 2018-19, with wind erosion a leading process in western Rajasthan, Kachchh and parts of Gujarat and Haryana. PIB restated these figures on 8 August 2026, and no newer national assessment has replaced them.

The feedback. Vegetation loss increases wind erosion, which strips the topsoil that vegetation needs, which further exposes the surface. Breaking that loop is what shelterbelts, sand-dune stabilisation and the **Aravalli Green Wall Project (2023)** are designed to do.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Give the Atlas figure with its reference year and its publisher, and note that PIB reiterated it on 8 August 2026 without a fresh survey — that is the honest way to date a stale-looking number.
- The Indira Gandhi Nahar Pariyojana is the classic double-edged example: it greened parts of the desert but raised waterlogging and salinity, showing that anti-desertification measures can create their own degradation.
- India's Bonn Challenge pledge and the land degradation neutrality target of restoring 26 million hectares by 2030 give a policy anchor.
- Distinguish desertification (land degradation in drylands, per the UNCCD definition) from desert expansion, which is a common conflation.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing a landform catalogue — zeugen, yardang, barchan, seif — without connecting any of it to degradation.
- Claiming the Thar is advancing at some specific rate per year. That figure is not supported by the national atlas.
- Missing the deposition pathway. Burial of fertile land downwind is degradation just as much as erosion upwind.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Space Applications Centre, ISRO, Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, 2021 (reference year 2018-19)

[https://vedas.sac.gov.in/en/Desertification_Status_Mapping_\(DSM\)_Atlas.html](https://vedas.sac.gov.in/en/Desertification_Status_Mapping_(DSM)_Atlas.html)

PRIMARY PIB, Government releases Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India (release on the Atlas)

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1727987>

PRIMARY UNCCD, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification — text and definitions

<https://www.unccd.int/convention/overview>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas, restated Aug 2026

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/08/09/desertification-land-degradation-atlas-2026/>

Desertification Day 2026 and climate risk to children

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/06/17/desertification-day-2026-children-climate-risk/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Soil degradation and desertification

bharatnotes.com/subjects/environment/ecology-environment/soil-degradation-desertification/

7

10 marks

150 words

Resource geography — transboundary water

“Water resources are both an asset and a source of conflict in South Asia.” Examine this statement giving examples.

Syllabus: Distribution of key natural resources; South Asia

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Examine giving examples a paradox statement. The examples are not decoration here, they are the marks. Every claim about asset or about conflict should carry a named basin or treaty, and the answer must cover both faces rather than becoming a list of disputes.

- Frame the paradox physically: the same Himalayan cryosphere feeds every major basin, so water is simultaneously the region's shared endowment and its shared vulnerability.
- Do the asset side first with named projects and treaties that worked; then the conflict side, internal as well as international.
- Be careful and current on the Indus Waters Treaty, which has been in abeyance since April 2025. Say so with the date, and do not describe it in the present tense as a functioning arrangement.

MODEL ANSWER

309 words · paper allows 150

South Asia's rivers rise largely in one cryosphere and cross many jurisdictions, which makes the same resource an asset held in common and a standing source of dispute.

As an asset

- Irrigation from the Indus and Ganga systems underpins the food security of a quarter of humanity; the Green Revolution was, in practice, a canal and tubewell revolution.
- Hydropower is the export base of Bhutan's economy, and Indian purchases from Chukha, Tala and Mangdechhu are the region's most successful example of water cooperation.
- Treaty-making has genuinely worked. The **Ganga Waters Treaty (1996)** with Bangladesh has governed Farakka dry-season sharing for three decades, and the **Mahakali Treaty (1996)** with Nepal covers Sarada, Tanakpur and Pancheshwar.

As a source of conflict

- **Indus.** The **Indus Waters Treaty, 1960**, brokered by the World Bank, survived three wars, but India placed it **in abeyance on 23 April 2025** after the Pahalgam attack, and the Ministry of External Affairs reaffirmed that position on 3 July 2026. Pakistan maintains the treaty is fully operational, and India has rejected the Court of Arbitration's award of 15 May 2026 as null and void. This is the region's sharpest current water dispute.
- **Teesta.** The India-Bangladesh sharing agreement has remained unsigned since 2011 because of West Bengal's objection, showing how federal politics constrains foreign policy.
- **Brahmaputra.** Chinese upstream construction on the Yarlung Tsangpo, with no comprehensive treaty and only limited hydrological data-sharing arrangements, leaves India a lower riparian without legal protection.
- **Internal disputes.** Cauvery, Krishna and Ravi-Beas show that the conflict dimension is domestic too, and that tribunal awards are slow and imperfectly complied with.

Judgement. Water is an asset wherever an institution exists to share it and a source of conflict wherever one does not. The variable is not hydrology but governance, which is why basin-level institutions, transparent data-sharing and dispute-resolution machinery matter more than any single allocation formula.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Get the Indus allocation right: eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej) to India, western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab) to Pakistan, with limited Indian non-consumptive, agricultural and hydroelectric use on the western rivers.
- The Permanent Indus Commission and the treaty's graded dispute mechanism (Commission, Neutral Expert, Court of Arbitration) is the structure now in contention.
- Article 262 and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, as amended in 2002, is the domestic counterpart worth one line.
- The UN Watercourses Convention, 1997, codifies equitable and reasonable utilisation and the no-significant-harm rule; neither India nor China is a party, which is precisely the gap.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Describing the Indus Waters Treaty as currently operating. It has been in abeyance since 23 April 2025 and that must be stated with the date.
- Writing only about conflict. The statement has two clauses and the asset half is the easier half to evidence.
- Confusing the Ganga Waters Treaty (1996, Bangladesh, Farakka) with the Mahakali Treaty (1996, Nepal).

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs, India — official statements on the Indus Waters Treaty and its abeyance
<https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm>

PRIMARY World Bank, The Indus Waters Treaty 1960 — treaty text and fact sheet
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/sar/brief/fact-sheet-the-indus-waters-treaty-1960-and-the-world-bank>

PRIMARY Ministry of Jal Shakti, Treaty between India and Bangladesh on sharing of Ganga waters at Farakka, 1996
<https://jalshakti-dowr.gov.in/international-cooperation/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Chenab hydropower and the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/05/21/chenab-hydropower-indus-waters-treaty-abeyance-2026/>

Kirthai-II on the Chenab and the Treaty

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/06/08/kirthai-2-hydro-chenab-indus-waters-treaty/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Water resources and irrigation in India

bharatnotes.com/subjects/geography/indian-geography/water-resources-irrigation-india/

India and its neighbours

bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/india-and-neighbours/

8

10 marks

150 words

Indian society — diversity and its stresses

Unity in diversity remains the defining feature of Indian society despite the challenges from communalism and regionalism. Comment.

Syllabus: Salient features of Indian society; diversity of India; communalism, regionalism, secularism

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Comment on a claim that contains a concession (*despite the challenges*). The answer must do three things: show what sustains unity, show the seriousness of the two named challenges, and then say whether the claim still holds. A celebratory answer with no engagement with communalism and regionalism misreads the question.

- Avoid the tourism-brochure opening. Begin by defining unity in diversity as a *political achievement* that has to be renewed, not a natural condition.
- Give the sustaining mechanisms in institutional terms — constitutional design, linguistic federalism, syncretic cultural practice, shared economic life.
- Treat communalism and regionalism as real, with concrete instances, then conclude with a qualified affirmation.

MODEL ANSWER

292 words · paper allows 150

Unity in diversity in India is best read not as a natural harmony but as a **constitutional achievement that each generation has to renew**. India recognises 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule, and Census 2011 recorded 121 languages and 270 identifiable mother tongues, alongside every major world religion. That such a society has held together as a single democratic polity is the fact the statement is pointing at.

What sustains it

- **Constitutional design.** Single citizenship with federal power-sharing; Articles 29 and 30 protecting the cultural and educational rights of minorities; a secularism that treats the state as equidistant rather than absent.

- **Linguistic federalism.** Accommodating language demands through states, rather than suppressing them, defused the most dangerous fault line of the 1950s.
- **Syncretic practice.** Sufi dargahs and Bhakti shrines with plural congregations, shared festival economies, and a popular culture that circulates across regions.
- **Economic interdependence.** Migration, national markets and remittances tie regions together materially, not only symbolically.

Where the claim is under strain

- **Communalism.** Recurrent polarisation, the politics around religious sites, and the long shadow of Partition, the 1984 and 2002 violence, show the fault line is live rather than historical.
- **Regionalism.** Sons-of-the-soil movements against migrants, the persistence of the Naga and other autonomy demands, and disputes over river waters and Finance Commission devolution show that federal accommodation is contested, not settled.
- **New pressures.** Caste enumeration in **Census 2027**, the first since 1931, and social-media-driven identity mobilisation will test the settlement in the coming decade.

Comment. The claim holds, but conditionally. What holds India together is not the absence of conflict, it is the presence of institutions that convert conflict into negotiable political demands. Unity survives to the extent that those institutions, elections, courts, federal bargaining and a rights-based civil society, keep working.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Census 2011's language data is the correct citation for the 121 languages and 270 mother tongues figures, and the Eighth Schedule count is 22.
- Census 2027 will be the first Indian census since 1931 to enumerate caste, with population enumeration in February 2027 and a reference moment of 00:00 hours on 1 March 2027 — a dated, checkable fact.
- Distinguish communalism (political mobilisation on religious identity) from religiosity; the question is about the former.
- The Punjab and Assam settlements of the 1980s are useful as evidence that even armed regional movements have been absorbed through accord and election.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- A descriptive tour of India's festivals, cuisines and dances with no analysis of the two named challenges.
- Treating secularism as the Western wall-of-separation model. The Indian variant permits principled state engagement with religion.
- Alarmism in the other direction, declaring unity a failure, which the electoral and institutional record does not support.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Census of India 2011 — Language Atlas and Paper 1 of 2018 on language

<https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/census-tables>

PRIMARY Cabinet approves scheme of Conduct of Census of India 2027 (with caste enumeration and phase dates)

https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/cabinet-approves-scheme-of-conduct-of-census-of-india-2027/

PRIMARY Constitution of India, Articles 29, 30 and the Eighth Schedule

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Secularism, pluralism and living with difference

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/ie-secularism-pluralism-living-with-difference-2026/>

Concept page — Secularism

<https://ujiyari.com/terms/secularism/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Communalism and secularism

bharatnotes.com/subjects/society/indian-society/communalism-secularism/

Regionalism and linguistic identity

bharatnotes.com/subjects/society/indian-society/regionalism-linguistic-identity/

9

10 marks

150 words

Social justice — disability

How do you understand disability? Substantiate the need for inclusive policy framework in India in this regard.

Syllabus: Salient features of Indian society; social empowerment; vulnerable sections

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

The first sentence, *how do you understand disability*, is asking for a **model**, not a definition of impairment. Name the shift from the medical or charity model to the social and rights-based model. Only then does the second half, the case for an inclusive policy framework, have a foundation.

- Answer the conceptual question first and explicitly — disability as the interaction between impairment and disabling barriers, per the UNCRPD and the RPwD Act's own language.
- Substantiate the need with data, with the enforcement gap, and with the intersectionality of disability with poverty and gender.
- Point to what an inclusive framework requires beyond a statute: universal design, data, budget lines and grievance redress.

MODEL ANSWER

305 words · paper allows 150

How disability should be understood. The older **medical model** locates the problem in the individual body and prescribes cure or care; the **charity model** makes the disabled person an object of benevolence. Both are displaced by the **social and rights-based model**, which the UNCRPD (2006), ratified by India in 2007, adopts: disability arises from the interaction between long-term impairments and *attitudinal and environmental barriers* that hinder full and effective participation on an equal basis with others. On this view a stairway, not a spinal injury, is what disables. The **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** carries this framing into Indian law and expands the recognised conditions from 7 to 21, with power to add more.

Why an inclusive policy framework is needed

- **Scale.** Census 2011 counted 2.68 crore persons with disabilities, 2.21 per cent of the population, a figure widely regarded as an undercount because of stigma and narrow question design. Census 2027 is an opportunity to correct it.
- **The gap between right and access.** The RPwD Act mandates 4 per cent reservation in government employment and 5 per cent in higher education, and the **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, 2015)** set accessibility targets for buildings, transport and ICT; audit after audit finds compliance patchy, and enforcement machinery under-resourced.
- **Intersectionality.** Disability compounds poverty, and disabled women face a double disadvantage in schooling, work and safety, which single-axis schemes do not reach.
- **Beyond the ramp.** Digital services, OTT platforms, examinations and courts raise fresh accessibility questions that a built-environment framework never contemplated.

Conclusion. An inclusive framework must therefore move from entitlement on paper to enforceable standards: mandatory and audited accessibility norms, disability-disaggregated data, universal design in all new public procurement, and effective Commissioners with the power to act. That is what treating disability as a question of rights, rather than of welfare, actually requires.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The RPwD Act, 2016, replaced the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, and was enacted to align Indian law with the UNCRPD, which India ratified on 1 October 2007.
- The quota figures are checkable and specific: 4 per cent in government jobs (Section 34) and 5 per cent in higher educational institutions (Section 32).
- Census 2011's 2.21 per cent is far below the WHO global estimate of around 16 per cent, and saying so demonstrates you know the number is contested rather than simply repeating it.
- Universal design, which the Act defines and mandates, is the concept that converts accessibility from a retrofit into a design standard.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Beginning with a list of the 21 disabilities. The question asks how you *understand* disability, which is a conceptual question about models.
- Using the language of the disabled as beneficiaries of state kindness, which contradicts the rights framing the question invites.
- Citing the 2.21 per cent figure without flagging that it is an undercount.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

- PRIMARY** The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 — bare Act (India Code)
https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/15939/1/the_rights_of_persons_with_disabilities_act%2C_2016.pdf
- PRIMARY** United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, Article 1 — ratified by India on 1 October 2007
- PRIMARY** Census of India 2011, Data on Disability
<https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/census-tables>
- PRIMARY** Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities — Accessible India Campaign
<https://depwd.gov.in/en/accessible-india-campaign/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

- Disability rights and the expansion of Article 21
<https://uiyari.com/daily/2026/01/31/disability-rights-article-21-expansion/>
- OTT accessibility and disability
<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/ie-ott-accessibility-disability-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Children, the elderly and persons with disability

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/vulnerable-sections/child-elderly-disability/

10

10 marks

150 words

Society — technology and empowerment

Do you think digital technology promotes social empowerment? Explain with examples.

Syllabus: Effects of globalization on Indian society; social empowerment

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Do you think invites a **position**, and *with examples* makes the evidence compulsory. The strong answer says yes-but: digital technology enables empowerment where access, literacy and grievance redress exist, and reproduces exclusion where they do not.

- Take a clear position in the opening line rather than sitting on the fence.
- Give empowerment examples across distinct domains — financial, informational, political, social — so the answer is not all about payments.
- Devote a real section to the conditions under which technology disempowers, with the digital divide and exclusion errors as the mechanism.

MODEL ANSWER

301 words · paper allows 150

Digital technology is an **amplifier rather than an equaliser**: it empowers where access, literacy and redress already exist, and it can deepen exclusion where they do not. Both halves are visible in India.

Where it has empowered

- **Financial agency.** Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and mobile telephony have moved subsidy directly into accounts, cutting intermediaries; UPI has made a small vendor a merchant with a payment identity, and India's digital public infrastructure is now studied internationally as a model.
- **Informational power.** The Right to Information, filed online, and portals that publish beneficiary lists and tender data shift the balance of information towards the citizen.
- **Livelihoods and markets.** e-NAM lets a farmer see prices beyond the local mandi; ONDC and marketplace platforms give artisans and self-help groups access to buyers a district trader would never have offered.
- **Voice.** Movements have used social media to force official response, and video evidence has changed the accountability equation in cases of custodial and caste violence.
- **Learning and health.** DIKSHA, SWAYAM and telemedicine through eSanjeevani reach places where the specialist or the teacher does not.

Where it has not

- **The divide is gendered and spatial.** Internet use remains substantially lower among women and in rural India, so a service delivered digitally is a service delivered unequally.

- **Exclusion by authentication.** Biometric failure denies rations to exactly the people the system exists for — worn fingerprints, poor connectivity, the elderly. Convenience for the state can become denial for the citizen.
- **New harms.** Misinformation, doxxing and online abuse fall hardest on women, minorities and Dalits; algorithmic opacity in credit and policing reproduces existing bias at scale.

Position. Digital technology promotes empowerment only when it is paired with universal connectivity, digital literacy, a non-digital fallback for every entitlement, and an accessible grievance mechanism.

Without those, the same infrastructure becomes a more efficient gatekeeper.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Pair each claim with a named platform rather than the abstract noun: DBT, UPI, e-NAM, DIKSHA, SWAYAM, eSanjeevani, ONDC.
- The offline fallback principle is the sharpest policy point available here, and it connects directly to the PDS case study in the same year's GS4 paper.
- The Puttaswamy judgment (2017) on informational privacy and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, give the rights framing for the harms paragraph.
- Self-help group federations under DAY-NRLM using digital bookkeeping is a good non-obvious example of collective, not just individual, empowerment.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing an unqualified celebration of Digital India. The question says *do you think*, which expects judgement.
- Reducing the whole answer to UPI transaction counts.
- Quoting precise usage percentages you cannot source. Say lower and cite the survey family rather than inventing a decimal.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Ministry of Electronics and IT, Digital India — programme documents

<https://www.digitalindia.gov.in/>

PRIMARY Supreme Court of India — official judgment search

<https://www.sci.gov.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

India's DPI and Aadhaar at 144 crore

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/05/24/india-dpi-aadhaar-144-crore-global-leader-2026/>

Concept page — Digital Public Infrastructure

<https://ujiyari.com/terms/digital-public-infrastructure/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Digital public infrastructure, UPI and India Stack

bharatnotes.com/subjects/economy/indian-economy/digital-public-infrastructure-upi-india-stack/

IT sector and the digital divide

bharatnotes.com/subjects/science-tech/science-technology/it-sector-digital-divide/

11

15 marks

250 words

Medieval India — Vijayanagara art

Vijayanagara architecture exemplifies the amalgamation of past traditions with contemporary practices. Elucidate with examples.

Syllabus: Indian culture — art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Elucidate with examples an argument about *synthesis*. Every paragraph should show one inherited element and one contemporary innovation working in the same building. Naming monuments without identifying what in them is old and what is new does not answer the question.

- Name the two inheritances explicitly — the Dravida temple tradition of the Cholas, Hoysalas and Chalukyas, and the Deccani Islamic idiom of the sultanates Vijayanagara fought and traded with.
- Work through temple architecture, then secular and courtly architecture, since the synthesis is sharpest in the second.
- Close on why a warrior state on a sultanate frontier produced a hybrid style, which converts description into explanation.

MODEL ANSWER

282 words · paper allows 250

Vijayanagara building, at its height under Krishnadevaraya (r. 1509-1529) and visible today across the Hampi group of monuments (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), is the clearest instance in Indian architecture of a style that keeps an inherited grammar while inventing a new vocabulary.

Inherited from the past

- The Dravida temple plan is carried over intact: garbhagriha, antarala, mandapa, prakara walls and axial approach, in continuity with Chola and later Chalukya practice.
- Sculptural programmes remain iconographically orthodox, and the choice of Virupaksha at Hampi as the dynastic deity ties the empire to a much older Shaiva sacred site.
- The Hoysala inheritance shows in the dense figural carving and in the ornamented pillar.

Innovations of their own time

- The **raya gopuram** grows into the dominant vertical element, so the visual climax shifts from the shrine to the boundary gateway.
- The **kalyana mandapa** for the ritual marriage of the deity, and the separate **amman shrine** for the consort, become standard, reflecting new ritual practice.
- The composite pier appears: a monolithic block cut into clustered colonettes with rearing *yali* brackets, at its most virtuosic in the Vitthala temple complex, whose stone chariot shrine to Garuda is the empire's signature object.

The Islamic borrowing

Secular architecture is frankly hybrid. The so-called **Lotus Mahal** and the **Elephant Stables** in the royal centre use pointed and cusped arches, vaults, domes and plaster finish drawn from Deccani sultanate practice, executed by Hindu craftsmen on Hindu-plan buildings.

Why. The empire sat on a frontier of constant war and constant exchange with the Bahmani successor states. Its architecture registers exactly that condition: sacred space conservative and legitimising, courtly space cosmopolitan and current. The amalgamation was not accidental eclecticism but a political style.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Distinguish the sacred from the secular building: Islamic forms appear overwhelmingly in the royal centre, not in the sanctum, which is the sharpest single observation available on this question.
- The stone chariot at the Vitthala temple is a shrine to Garuda, not a decorative object, and its wheels were once capable of rotating.
- Vijayanagara was founded in 1336 by Harihara and Bukka of the Sangama dynasty; the capital was sacked after the Battle of Talikota in 1565, which is why Hampi survives as ruins rather than as a living city.
- Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz, Portuguese visitors of the early sixteenth century, give contemporary descriptions of the capital and are the accepted textual evidence.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Listing Hampi monuments without ever saying which feature is inherited and which is new. The word in the question is *amalgamation*.
- Calling the Lotus Mahal a Mughal building. Its idiom is Deccani sultanate, and the Mughals were not a presence in the Deccan at that date.
- Confusing Vijayanagara temple architecture with the later Nayaka style, which pushes the same gopuram and mandapa tendencies further.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Archaeological Survey of India — Hampi, World Heritage Site
<https://asi.nic.in/world-heritage-sites/>

BOOK George Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India: Vijayanagara and the Successor States*, Cambridge University Press, 1995

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Vijayanagara trilingual inscriptions at Seshachalam
<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/06/24/vijayanagara-trilingual-inscriptions-seshachalam/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Vijayanagara and the Deccan Sultanates
bharatnotes.com/subjects/history-culture/medieval-india/vijayanagara-deccan-sultanates/

12

15 marks

250 words

Post-independence — states reorganisation

Linguistic reorganization of Indian States was driven by popular pressure from below. Comment.*Syllabus: Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country***WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR**

Comment on a directional claim: that the drive came *from below*. The answer must weigh popular pressure against the leadership's own preferences, and the decisive evidence is that the national leadership resisted first and conceded later.

- Establish the leadership's initial position through the Dar Commission and the JVP Committee, both of which rejected linguistic states.
- Show the pressure that overturned it, agitation by agitation, with dates.
- Concede the counter-argument, that the Congress itself had organised on linguistic lines from 1920, and that the final map was drawn by a commission, not by the street. Then take a position.

MODEL ANSWER

306 words · paper allows 250

The claim is largely, though not wholly, correct, and the proof lies in the sequence: the national leadership examined the demand, rejected it twice, and then conceded it under agitation.

The leadership resisted. The **Dar Commission (1948)** held that reorganisation on language would endanger national unity so soon after Partition. The **JVP Committee (1949)** of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya endorsed that view, allowing only that a strong popular demand might be considered. Nehru's own instinct was that language was a divisive principle of administration.

Popular pressure overturned it.

- **Potti Sriramulu** began a fast unto death for a separate Andhra on 19 October 1952 and died on 15 December 1952 after 58 days. The riots that followed forced the Centre's hand, and **Andhra State was created on 1 October 1953**, before any commission had reported.
- Only after that concession was the **States Reorganisation Commission** appointed, on 29 December 1953, under Fazl Ali with K. M. Panikkar and H. N. Kunzru. It reported on 30 September 1955 and the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** took effect on 1 November 1956.
- Pressure continued after 1956. The **Samyukta Maharashtra** and **Mahagujarat** movements split Bombay State on 1 May 1960; the Punjabi Suba agitation produced the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966.

The qualification. The impulse was not purely spontaneous. The Congress had itself organised its provincial committees on linguistic lines from the **Nagpur Session of 1920**, and had promised linguistic provinces well before independence, so the demand invoked a commitment the leadership had made. And the final boundaries were drawn by an expert commission balancing language against administrative and financial viability, not by plebiscite.

Comment. Popular pressure supplied the timing and the compulsion; the leadership supplied the caution and the method. That combination is why linguistic reorganisation strengthened the Union instead of

fragmenting it, as the Dar Commission had feared.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The 1956 Act produced 14 states and 6 union territories, and also abolished the Part A, B, C and D classification of the original Constitution.
- Article 3 of the Constitution is the enabling provision, and it makes states creatures of Parliament, which is why reorganisation never required a constitutional amendment of the ordinary kind.
- Later linguistic and sub-regional reorganisations (Nagaland 1963, Haryana 1966, Himachal 1971, the north-eastern states 1972, and Telangana in 2014) show the process is continuous rather than closed.
- Selig Harrison's *India: The Most Dangerous Decades* (1960) is the classic contemporary text predicting that linguistic states would break India, and quoting it sharpens the conclusion.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Getting the order wrong. The SRC was appointed *after* Andhra was conceded, and that sequence is the entire argument.
- Attributing the Andhra fast to 1953. Sriramulu died on 15 December 1952.
- Writing only the agitation narrative and never addressing whether the claim is fully true, which is what *comment* asks.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

BOOK Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, 1955 — Government of India

PRIMARY The States Reorganisation Act, 1956 (Act 37 of 1956) — bare Act

BOOK Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi*, Picador, 2007, Ch. 9 (Redrawing the Map)

BOOK Granville Austin, *Working a Democratic Constitution*, Oxford University Press, 1999

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Concept page — States Reorganisation Commission

<https://ujiyari.com/terms/states-reorganisation-commission/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Linguistic reorganisation of states

bharatnotes.com/subjects/history-culture/post-independence-india/linguistic-states-reorganisation/

13

15 marks

250 words

Post-independence — planning and regional balance

The model of planned economy was adopted in India to address the regional imbalances left behind by colonial rule. Comment.

Syllabus: Post-independence consolidation; effects of colonial rule on the economy

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Comment on a claim about *motive*. Two moves are needed: establish that correcting colonial regional imbalance really was a stated objective of planning, and then test the claim against outcomes. A verdict on whether planning succeeded is where the answer earns its marks.

- Describe the colonial inheritance concretely — port-centred development, presidency capitals, an interior left without industry.
- Show the intent in the policy documents themselves, especially the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 and the location of public sector plants.
- Assess outcomes honestly: some convergence in the planning decades, divergence after liberalisation. End with the current instruments.

MODEL ANSWER

312 words · paper allows 250

The inheritance was genuinely lopsided. Colonial investment followed the export trade: railways ran from the interior to Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, modern industry clustered in the presidency towns and the Jamshedpur belt, and vast tracts of central and eastern India were revenue territory with almost no manufacturing. Correcting that was, on the record, an object of planning.

The intent is documented.

- The **Industrial Policy Resolution, 1956**, which framed the Second Plan, stated the aim of balanced regional development and of bringing industry to backward areas.
- The **Mahalanobis strategy** of the Second Plan put heavy industry in the public sector, and the steel plants at Bhilai, Rourkela and Durgapur were deliberately sited in mineral-rich but industrially empty interior districts, along with fertiliser, heavy engineering and coal projects.
- The **Gadgil formula (1969)** made central plan assistance to states partly a function of backwardness, and successive backward-area schemes offered fiscal and licensing incentives for industry to move inland.

The outcome was mixed, and after 1991 it worsened.

- The interior did acquire a public-sector industrial base and the beginnings of a technical workforce; states such as Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand exist industrially today because of these plants.
- But the plants often became enclaves, generating displacement without diffused local growth, and the licensing regime that was meant to steer investment inland was frequently gamed.
- After liberalisation, private capital chose states with better infrastructure, ports and governance, and inter-state per capita income differences widened rather than closed. Planning's redistributive lever was removed before the imbalance had been corrected.

Comment. The claim is accurate about motive and only partly accurate about achievement. Planning was designed against the colonial map and did redraw parts of it, but convergence never became self-sustaining. That is why the instruments have shifted from plant location to fiscal transfer and targeted governance, through the Finance Commission's equalising devolution and, since 2018, the **Aspirational Districts Programme**.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The Planning Commission was created by a Cabinet Resolution of 15 March 1950, not by statute or by the Constitution, and was replaced by NITI Aayog on 1 January 2015.
- Regional imbalance was also addressed through the Finance Commission's horizontal devolution formula, where income distance carries the largest weight, a point most answers miss.
- The First Plan followed the Harrod-Domar model and prioritised agriculture; the pivot to heavy industry and regional dispersal comes with the Second Plan (1956-61).
- Naming the colonial diagnosis, the drain of wealth and deindustrialisation argument of Dadabhai Naoroji and R. C. Dutt, connects the question back to its historical premise.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing a general essay on the Five Year Plans. The question is specifically about *regional* imbalance.
- Claiming planning failed entirely, or succeeded entirely. Both are contradicted by the record.
- Confusing the Planning Commission with the National Development Council or with the Finance Commission, which are distinct bodies with distinct functions.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Industrial Policy Resolution, 1956 — Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry

PRIMARY NITI Aayog — Aspirational Districts Programme

<https://www.niti.gov.in/aspirational-districts-programme>

PRIMARY Finance Commission of India — reports and devolution criteria

<https://fincomindia.nic.in/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Post-independence India

bharatnotes.com/subjects/history-culture/post-independence-india/

Finance Commission and devolution

bharatnotes.com/subjects/polity/constitutional-polity/finance-commission/

14

15 marks

250 words

Climatology — local winds

Compare the Loo, Chinook and Foehn winds with respect to their regions of prevalence, their nature and climatic impacts.

Syllabus: Salient features of world physical geography; important geophysical phenomena

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Compare on three stated parameters: region, nature and climatic impact. A table is the efficient form. The examiner has bundled two katabatic warm winds with one that is not, and noticing that distinction is what separates a good answer from a competent one.

- Answer in a table on the three named parameters, then add a short paragraph the table cannot carry.
- Explain the Foehn mechanism once, properly — moist adiabatic ascent, precipitation on the windward slope, dry adiabatic descent — since it accounts for both the Foehn and the Chinook.
- Make the analytical point that the Loo is not a Foehn-type wind at all, and say why.

MODEL ANSWER

347 words · paper allows 250

	Loo	Chinook	Foehn
Region	Indo-Gangetic plain, from Punjab and Rajasthan east to Bihar, and adjoining Pakistan	Eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains: Alberta, Montana, Wyoming	Northern and southern slopes of the Alps; Austria, Switzerland, northern Italy
Season	May and June, before monsoon onset	Winter and early spring	Chiefly late winter and spring
Nature	Hot, very dry continental wind blowing from the west and north-west out of the Thar and the arid Iranian and Baluchistan plateau; strong daytime heating, temperatures commonly 45 to 50 degrees Celsius	Warm, dry downslope wind produced by adiabatic descent on the lee of the Rockies; can raise temperature by tens of degrees within hours	Warm, dry downslope wind of the same adiabatic origin on the lee of the Alps; gusty and abrupt in onset
Climatic impact	Severe heat stress, heat stroke and mortality, soil moisture loss, wilting of standing crops, dust storms and <i>aandhi</i>	Melts and sublimates snow cover, exposing winter pasture, which is why it is called the snow eater and why it supports ranching	Advances the spring, melts Alpine snow early, extends the growing season for vineyards and orchards, but triggers avalanches and raises fire risk

The mechanism the Chinook and the Foehn share. Moist air forced over a mountain barrier cools at the lower saturated adiabatic rate, roughly 5 to 6 degrees Celsius per kilometre, and precipitates its moisture on the windward slope. The now-dry air descends the leeward slope warming at the dry adiabatic rate of about 10 degrees Celsius per kilometre. The air therefore arrives at the foot of the range warmer and drier than it left the other side. A rain shadow on the windward-to-leeward transition is the same phenomenon seen from the ground.

The distinction worth making. The Loo is *not* a Foehn-type wind. Its heat is continental and radiative, generated over a hot dry land surface and advected across the plain, not produced by orographic

descent. Grouping all three as mountain winds is the commonest error on this question. What they share is only the outcome, hot and desiccating air, arrived at by different physics.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The Loo is associated with the seasonal low over north-west India that precedes monsoon onset, and it ends abruptly when the monsoon trough advances, which ties the wind to the larger circulation.
- Foehn and Chinook are locally credited with health effects, the so-called Foehn sickness, and with rapid rises in fire danger, which are legitimate climatic impacts to mention.
- Heat wave and severe heat wave are formally defined by IMD thresholds, and heatwave has been added to the list of notified disasters by some states for SDRF assistance.
- Other comparable local winds worth a passing mention: the Harmattan of West Africa, the Sirocco of the Mediterranean, the Santa Ana of southern California.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Calling the Loo a Foehn wind or a katabatic wind. It is neither.
- Reversing the lapse rates. Saturated ascent is the slower cooling; dry descent is the faster warming, and that asymmetry is the whole mechanism.
- Writing three separate descriptive paragraphs with no comparison. The directive is *compare*, and the parameters are given.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY India Meteorological Department — heat wave criteria and pre-monsoon conditions
<https://mausam.imd.gov.in/>

PRIMARY NOAA National Weather Service, Glossary — Chinook and Foehn winds
<https://forecast.weather.gov/glossary.php>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

IMD heatwave alert and monsoon onset, 2026

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/05/17/imd-heatwave-monsoon-onset-2026/>

Heatwave and lightning as notified calamities under SDRF and NDRF

<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/08/06/heatwave-lightning-notified-calamities-sdrf-ndrf-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Atmosphere, layers and winds

bharatnotes.com/subjects/geography/physical-geography/atmosphere-layers-winds/

15

15 marks

250 words

Geography and technology — climate-smart agriculture

Analyze the role of satellite-based technologies in achieving climate-smart agriculture and food security in India.

Syllabus: Changes in critical geographical features; effects on flora, fauna and agriculture

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Analyze the role of one technology family against two goals, climate-smart agriculture *and* food security. Named Indian programmes are what turn this from a general science answer into a GS1 answer, and the analysis has to include what satellites cannot do.

- Define climate-smart agriculture by its three pillars — productivity, adaptation, mitigation — and map satellite capability onto each.
- Name real Indian systems with dates: Krishi-DSS, FASAL, NADAMS, the Digital Agriculture Mission, PMFBY's technology components.
- Add the limitations paragraph, because *analyze* requires it: resolution, cloud cover, smallholding size, and the last-mile problem.

MODEL ANSWER

330 words · paper allows 250

Climate-smart agriculture rests on three pillars: raising productivity, adapting to a more variable climate, and reducing emissions. Earth observation contributes directly to the first two and indirectly to the third.

What satellites actually do

- **Forecasting output.** The **FASAL** framework, run through the Mahalanobis National Crop Forecast Centre, uses multi-date optical and radar imagery with agro-meteorological and ground data to issue in-season crop forecasts, replacing estimates that once arrived after the market had already moved.
- **Integrated decision support.** **Krishi-DSS**, the geospatial decision support system launched on 16 August 2024 and built on RISAT-1A and the Department of Space's VEDAS platform, brings satellite imagery, weather, reservoir storage, groundwater and soil health onto a single map for crop mapping, condition monitoring and early warning of pest and weather events.
- **Drought and water.** NADAMS provides agricultural drought assessment, and reservoir and soil-moisture monitoring supports sowing advisories and irrigation scheduling.
- **Insurance.** Under PMFBY, remote sensing has been introduced to support yield estimation and to speed claim settlement, reducing dependence on crop-cutting experiments alone.
- **Institutional backbone.** The **Digital Agriculture Mission**, approved by the Cabinet on 2 September 2024 with an outlay of Rs 2,817 crore, funds AgriStack, Krishi-DSS and soil fertility mapping as digital public infrastructure, so these tools are becoming a permanent layer rather than pilots.

How this serves food security. Earlier and more accurate production estimates improve procurement, buffer stocking and import decisions; drought detection triggers relief before distress sale; site-specific advisories raise yield per unit of water and fertiliser, which matters more than area expansion in a country with almost no cultivable frontier left.

The limits. Optical sensors are defeated by monsoon cloud, which is precisely when kharif needs watching, and radar only partly compensates. Indian holdings are small and fragmented, so pixel resolution often cannot resolve a single farm. Above all, an advisory is worthless unless it reaches a farmer in a usable form and in time. The binding constraint on climate-smart agriculture in India is extension and connectivity, not orbital capability.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Give Krishi-DSS its exact provenance: launched 16 August 2024, built on RISAT-1A imagery and the VEDAS platform of the Department of Space.
- The Digital Agriculture Mission's stated target is digital identities for 11 crore farmers, phased across 2024-25 to 2026-27 — a checkable, dated figure.
- Bhuvan, the NRSC geoportal, is the public-facing delivery layer and is worth naming alongside the analytical systems.
- The mitigation pillar is where satellites help least directly; methane monitoring from paddy and stubble-burning detection are the two genuine contributions.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- A generic essay on remote sensing with no Indian programme named. The programmes are the marks.
- Claiming satellites solve food security. They improve information; distribution, buffer stocks and purchasing power determine food security.
- Skipping the limitations. The directive is *analyze*.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY PIB, MoS Bhagirath Choudhary launches the digital geo-spatial platform Krishi-Decision Support System, 16 August 2024

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2045987>

PRIMARY PIB, Cabinet approves the Digital Agriculture Mission with an outlay of Rs 2,817 crore, 2 September 2024

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=2050966®=3&lang=2>

PRIMARY Mahalanobis National Crop Forecast Centre, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare — FASAL and NADAMS

<https://www.ncfc.gov.in/>

PRIMARY VEDAS, Space Applications Centre, ISRO — visualisation of Earth observation data

<https://vedas.sac.gov.in/>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Scheme page — PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana

<https://uiyari.com/schemes/prime-minister-dhan-dhaanya-krisi-yojana/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

e-technology for farmers and digital agriculture

bharatnotes.com/subjects/economy/indian-economy/e-technology-farmers-digital-agriculture/

Agritech and precision agriculture

bharatnotes.com/subjects/science-tech/science-technology/agritech-precision-agriculture/

16

15 marks

250 words

Economic geography — global trade shift

“The centre of global trade is gradually shifting from the Atlantic region to the Indo-Pacific region.”
Examine this statement.

Syllabus: Distribution of key natural resources; location of industries; world geography

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Examine a claim of a *gradual shift*. Two things must be tested: whether the shift is real, and whether it is as complete as the sentence implies. The strongest answers concede that the Atlantic retains the things that are hardest to move, capital markets, standards and currency.

- Establish the evidence for the shift — production, trade volume, shipping routes, growth contribution — with attributed figures rather than round assertions.
- Give the causes, so the answer explains rather than reports.
- Then give the counter-evidence and the vulnerabilities, and close with what it means for India specifically.

MODEL ANSWER

372 words · paper allows 250

The shift is real. The Indo-Pacific now accounts for the majority of global output on the broad definitions used in the official Indo-Pacific strategies of the United States and Australia, roughly 60 per cent of world GDP, and about half of world merchandise trade moves through it. Asia and the Pacific have contributed the larger share of global growth for most of the past decade. The busiest container ports in the world are almost all in East and South-East Asia, and the Malacca, Sunda and Lombok straits, with Hormuz feeding them, now carry the traffic that once made the North Atlantic the world's principal sea lane.

Why it has happened

- Manufacturing relocated to East and South-East Asia, and regional value chains deepened around China, ASEAN, Japan and Korea.
- Regional trade architecture followed: RCEP, the CPTPP, and ASEAN's own free trade agreements now bind the region internally.
- Consumption caught up with production. A large Asian middle class turned the region from a workshop into a market.
- Energy geography reinforced it: the dominant oil and LNG flows now run from West Asia and Australia eastwards.

Where the claim overstates

- Finance has not moved. New York and London still set the price of capital, the dollar remains the settlement currency, and the deepest bond markets are Atlantic.
- Technology frontiers, standard-setting, higher education and defence-industrial capacity remain concentrated in North America and Europe.
- The European Union and the United States remain each other's largest investment partners, and transatlantic services trade is enormous.

- The Indo-Pacific's centrality is also its fragility: chokepoint dependence, South China Sea disputes, Taiwan risk and tariff volatility mean the region carries more strategic risk per unit of trade than the Atlantic ever did.

What it means for India. The shift places India on the map rather than at its edge, which is the premise of the SAGAR vision, the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and India's maritime domain awareness partnerships. Converting geography into advantage still requires port capacity, logistics costs and trade agreements that India is only now negotiating.

Judgement. The centre of *production, trade and growth* has moved decisively to the Indo-Pacific. The centre of *finance, standards and technology* has not, or not yet. The word *gradually* in the statement is doing accurate work.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Attribute the headline shares rather than stating them flatly: the 60 per cent of global GDP and roughly half of world trade figures come from official Indo-Pacific strategy documents, which use varying definitions of the region.
- Note that the very definition of Indo-Pacific is contested — the US, Australian, Japanese, ASEAN and French definitions draw different western boundaries, which affects every statistic quoted.
- India's own instruments are worth naming: SAGAR (2015), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative announced at the East Asia Summit in 2019, and the Quad.
- The Red Sea disruptions and rerouting around the Cape are a live reminder that chokepoints, not distances, set shipping economics.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Quoting precise trade percentages without attributing them. Definitions of the Indo-Pacific vary and so do the numbers.
- Turning the answer into a Quad or China-containment essay. The question is economic geography.
- Ignoring the counter-evidence, which is what *examine* asks you to weigh.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Ministry of External Affairs, India — Indo-Pacific Division and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative
https://www.mea.gov.in/indo_pacific.htm

PRIMARY UNCTAD, Review of Maritime Transport — port throughput and shipping routes
<https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/review-of-maritime-transport>

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Indo-Pacific security and economy, 2026
<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/ie-indo-pacific-security-economy-2026/>

The Quad and the future of the Indo-Pacific
<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/th-quad-future-indo-pacific-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Indo-Pacific, Quad and ASEAN
bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/indo-pacific-quad-asean/

International trade and the WTO
bharatnotes.com/subjects/international-relations/global-relations/international-trade-wto/

17

15 marks

250 words

Indian geography — land-use change

Analyze the major drivers of human-induced land-use changes in India and their geographical consequences.

Syllabus: Changes in critical geographical features and the effects of such changes

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Two halves, both marked: the **drivers** of human-induced land-use change, and their **geographical consequences**. Keep them explicitly linked, so that each consequence is traceable to a driver rather than floating free.

- Group the drivers rather than listing them at random — agricultural, urban and infrastructural, extractive, and policy-driven.
- For consequences, move across spheres: hydrology, soil, climate and microclimate, biodiversity, and hazard exposure.
- Anchor with Indian data that you can source, and finish with the governance instruments that mediate land-use change.

MODEL ANSWER

336 words · paper allows 250

The drivers

- **Agricultural expansion and intensification.** Canal and tubewell irrigation converted dry land to double and triple cropping across the north-west; the Green Revolution changed not just yields but the water and cropping geography of Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh.
- **Urban and peri-urban expansion.** Cities are growing outward into farmland and floodplain faster than they grow upward, and land-value gradients make conversion at the fringe almost irreversible.
- **Infrastructure.** Highways, railways, ports, transmission corridors and hydropower fragment land and, more consequentially, open previously inaccessible tracts to further conversion.
- **Extraction.** Open-cast coal and mineral mining in the central Indian belt removes forest and soil profile together.
- **Policy and compensation.** Afforestation under compensatory schemes and plantation forestry change land cover but not always land function, since a plantation is not the ecosystem it replaces.

The geographical consequences

- **Hydrological.** Reduced infiltration and lost wetlands raise runoff and urban flood peaks; the extraction economy of the north-western aquifer is the largest groundwater depletion signal on the planet.
- **Pedological.** The **Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India** (SAC, ISRO, 2021) recorded 97.85 million hectares, about 29.7 per cent of the geographical area, as degraded in 2018-19 — the aggregate consequence of all these drivers.
- **Ecological.** Fragmentation severs corridors and raises human-wildlife conflict. **ISFR 2023** puts forest and tree cover at 25.17 per cent of geographical area, of which forest cover is 21.76 per cent, so the aggregate is stable while composition and quality shift towards open forest and plantation.

- **Climatic.** Urban heat islands intensify, and albedo and evapotranspiration changes alter local rainfall and temperature regimes.
- **Hazard exposure.** Construction on floodplains, steep Himalayan slopes and reclaimed wetland converts a hazard into a disaster, which is the common thread running through Kerala's landslides, Himalayan subsidence and repeated metropolitan flooding.

The mediating instruments. Coastal Regulation Zone rules, environmental clearance and EIA, the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, wetland rules and master-plan zoning are the levers. Their weakness is not usually the text but enforcement at the level where conversion actually happens, the district and the municipality.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Cite the two national datasets by name and reference year: the SAC-ISRO Atlas (2021, reference year 2018-19) and ISFR 2023, released 21 December 2024. Dating them shows you know they are the latest available and not fresher than they are.
- Note the distinction between land *cover* and land *use*: a plantation raises cover statistics without restoring ecosystem function, and this is the single most useful analytical point on the question.
- The Land Use Statistics published by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is the official nine-fold classification series behind any claim about net sown area.
- Add that land-use change is itself a driver of emissions and is accounted for under the LULUCF category in India's climate reporting.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Confusing forest cover (21.76 per cent) with forest and tree cover (25.17 per cent). The two figures are often swapped.
- Listing consequences without tying them to a driver, which loses the causal structure the question asks for.
- Assuming a newer forest or desertification assessment exists. As of August 2026 the latest are ISFR 2023 and the 2021 Atlas.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY PIB, Union Minister Bhupender Yadav releases India State of Forest Report 2023, 21 December 2024

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2086742®=48&lang=2>

PRIMARY Forest Survey of India, India State of Forest Report 2023, Volume 1, Dehradun (released 21 December 2024)

PRIMARY Space Applications Centre, ISRO, Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, 2021

[https://vedas.sac.gov.in/en/Desertification_Status_Mapping_\(DSM\)_Atlas.html](https://vedas.sac.gov.in/en/Desertification_Status_Mapping_(DSM)_Atlas.html)

PRIMARY Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare — Land Use Statistics

https://agriwelfare.gov.in/en/Agricultural_Statistics_at_a_Glance

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Kerala floods and land use, 2026

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/dte-kerala-floods-land-use-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Land use and regional planning

bharatnotes.com/subjects/geography/human-economic-geography/land-use-regional-planning/

Soil degradation and desertification

bharatnotes.com/subjects/environment/ecology-environment/soil-degradation-desertification/

18

15 marks

250 words

Indian society — caste and urbanisation

Is caste disappearing in urban India? Illustrate your answer with examples.*Syllabus: Salient features of Indian society; social empowerment; urbanization***WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR**

A direct question, *is caste disappearing*, with a compulsory evidence requirement. The defensible answer is that caste is not disappearing but changing form, and it must be argued with instances, not asserted.

- Answer in the first line, then structure as: what genuinely has weakened, what has survived, and what has taken new form.
- Use hard evidence where it exists — marriage data, residential segregation, untouchability practice — and named phenomena where it does not.
- Close on the conceptual point: the ritual hierarchy has weakened while caste as network and identity has strengthened.

MODEL ANSWER

353 words · paper allows 250

No. Caste in urban India is not disappearing; it is shedding its ritual skin and surviving as network, identity and political resource.

What has genuinely weakened

- The ritual order of purity and pollution cannot survive the physical conditions of a city — shared buses, canteens, offices and lifts make commensal restriction impractical.
- The *jajmani* system of hereditary service relations has no urban equivalent, and occupation is no longer formally ascribed.
- Anonymity gives individuals room to conceal or set aside caste in daily transactions in a way village life does not permit.
- A Dalit middle class has emerged through reservation, education and urban employment, and it has produced its own entrepreneurs, professionals and public voices.

What has survived intact

- **Marriage remains overwhelmingly endogamous.** The India Human Development Survey found only about 5 per cent of marriages to be inter-caste, with the urban figure no higher than the rural one. Matrimonial advertising remains organised caste by caste.
- **Residential segregation persists.** Urban neighbourhoods and housing societies sort by caste and community, and refusal of tenancy on caste and dietary grounds is routine and documented.
- The IHDS also recorded a substantial minority of urban households acknowledging the practice of untouchability, which is the clearest refutation of the disappearance thesis.

What has taken new form

- Caste operates as a **network** for capital, hiring referrals and business credit, so it shapes economic outcomes without ever being spoken.

- It has become a **political identity**, with caste associations, federations and vote-bank mobilisation strongest precisely where modern electoral competition is strongest.
- It travels: caste sorting appears in diaspora communities and in online matrimonial and social platforms, and algorithmic matching can encode it.
- The decision to enumerate caste in **Census 2027**, the first such count since 1931, is itself evidence that caste remains an operative category of Indian public life rather than a residue.

Conclusion. M. N. Srinivas's expectation was that modernity would erode caste; what it eroded was hierarchy's ritual justification, not its social substance. Andre Beteille's formulation is the more accurate one: caste has become less a system and more an identity, and identities in a democracy do not fade, they organise.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Attribute the inter-caste marriage figure properly: the India Human Development Survey (NCAER and University of Maryland) found roughly 5 per cent, and the urban share is not meaningfully higher than the rural.
- Srinivas's concepts of Sanskritisation, dominant caste and secularisation of caste are the standard vocabulary; using Beteille to correct him shows reading rather than recall.
- Census 2027 will enumerate caste for the first time since 1931, with population enumeration in February 2027 — a dated fact that anchors the conclusion.
- The rise of caste-based professional and business networks, and of caste in digital matchmaking, is the most contemporary evidence available and few answers will have it.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Answering yes because urban people eat together. Commensality is the weakest indicator of caste; marriage and residence are the strong ones.
- Writing about reservation policy instead of about caste as a social fact.
- Citing precise segregation percentages you cannot source. Describe the finding and name the survey family instead.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

SECONDARY India Human Development Survey (IHDS-II), NCAER and University of Maryland — inter-caste marriage and untouchability findings

<https://ncaer.org/publication/just-5-of-indian-marriages-are-inter-caste-survey/>

PRIMARY Cabinet approves scheme of Conduct of Census of India 2027, including caste enumeration

https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/cabinet-approves-scheme-of-conduct-of-census-of-india-2027/

BOOK M. N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press, 1966

BOOK Andre Beteille, Caste, Class and Power, University of California Press, 1965

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Caste census methodology, 2026

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/ie-caste-census-methodology-2026/>

The limits of a caste count

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/ie-caste-count-limits-2026/>

REVISE THE CONCEPT ON BHARATNOTES

Caste, tribe and minority dynamics

bharatnotes.com/subjects/society/indian-society/caste-tribe-minority-dynamics/

Dalit rights, SC and ST

bharatnotes.com/subjects/social-justice/vulnerable-sections/dalit-rights-sc-st/

19

15 marks

250 words

Population — demographic transition

Critically examine the challenges of demographic transition in contemporary India.*Syllabus: Population and associated issues; effects of policies on population*

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Critically examine the challenges, which means the answer is about problems, but a purely gloomy answer misses the *critically*. Show that India's transition is unusual — sub-replacement fertility with a young median age and sharp regional divergence — and that this creates opportunity and risk simultaneously.

- Fix where India actually is in the transition using NFHS-5, then move to the challenges it creates.
- Organise the challenges as: employment, regional divergence and its federal consequences, ageing without social security, and gender.
- End with the policy implication rather than a summary.

MODEL ANSWER

387 words · paper allows 250

India has already crossed the threshold most commentary still treats as distant. **NFHS-5 (2019-21) puts the total fertility rate at 2.0**, below the replacement level of 2.1, down from 2.2 in NFHS-4. The country is in the late stage of transition, with declining fertility and lengthening life expectancy, but with a population still growing through momentum and a median age under thirty. The challenges arise from that combination.

The employment challenge. A demographic dividend is a possibility, not an entitlement; it is realised only if the additional workers find productive employment. India's constraints are the low female labour force participation rate, a large informal sector, and a skills mismatch between what education produces and what employers require. If the working-age cohort enters an economy that cannot absorb it, the dividend becomes a liability, and the window is finite: the working-age share is projected to peak around the late 2030s.

The divergence challenge. The transition is not national but regional. Bihar's TFR is 3.0 and Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya and Manipur remain above replacement, while the southern and western states are well below it. This produces a north-to-south migration flow and a genuinely difficult federal question: **delimitation** and central tax devolution both use population, so states that succeeded at family planning risk losing representation and resources relative to those that did not. The freeze on seat allocation under Article 82 runs to the first census after 2026, so this becomes a live constitutional question within this decade.

The ageing challenge. The population aged 60 and above is projected to roughly double by 2050. India will grow old at a much lower per capita income than East Asia did, and its old-age security is thin: pension coverage is largely confined to the organised sector, geriatric care is undeveloped, and migration is dissolving the joint-family arrangement that substituted for the state.

The gender challenge. A historically skewed sex ratio at birth, though improving, has left cohort imbalances, and declining fertility has not by itself improved women's autonomy or workforce participation.

Critical judgement. India's problem is no longer population growth, and policy still framed around fertility control is fighting the last war. The binding constraints now are jobs, human capital, the fiscal and constitutional management of regional divergence, and building an old-age security system before the cohort that needs it arrives.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- Use NFHS-5 precisely: national TFR 2.0 (2019-21), down from 2.2, with Bihar at 3.0 and five states above replacement — this is the difference between a specific answer and a vague one.
- The Article 82 freeze on readjustment of Lok Sabha seats, extended by the 84th Amendment to the first census after 2026, is the constitutional hook that connects demography to federalism.
- The phrase to reach for is that India risks growing old before it grows rich, and it should be evidenced by per capita income at the point of ageing, not just asserted.
- Female labour force participation is the single largest untapped lever on the dividend, and PLFS is the correct data source to cite for it.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Writing about population *explosion*. With TFR at 2.0 that framing is factually out of date, and examiners notice.
- Treating the demographic dividend as automatic.
- Quoting projected elderly numbers as certainties. They are projections, and should be labelled as such.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) 2019-21, India Report — IIPS and MoHFW, full report

<https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-fr375-dhs-final-reports.cfm>

PRIMARY PIB, Update on Family Planning and Population Control in the country (TFR data)

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2086511®=48&lang=2>

PRIMARY Constitution of India, Article 82 and the Constitution (Eighty-fourth Amendment) Act, 2001

<https://legislative.gov.in/constitution-of-india/>

PRIMARY Periodic Labour Force Survey, National Statistical Office — labour force participation

<https://www.mospi.gov.in/publication/periodic-labour-force-survey>

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

World Population Day 2026 and India's demographic shift

<https://uiyari.com/daily/2026/07/11/world-population-day-2026-demographic-shift-2026/>

The demographic dividend and the jobs question

<https://uiyari.com/editorials/2026/07/bs-demographic-dividend-jobs-2026/>

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Demographic dividend and human capital

bharatnotes.com/subjects/economy/indian-economy/demographic-dividend-human-capital/

Population and migration geography

bharatnotes.com/subjects/geography/human-economic-geography/population-migration-geography/

20

15 marks

250 words

Society — globalisation and youth

Evaluate the impact of globalization on Indian youths with reference to social, political, economic and cultural spheres.

Syllabus: Effects of globalization on Indian society

WHAT THE EXAMINER IS ASKING FOR

Evaluate across four named spheres — social, political, economic, cultural. The four headings are the scaffolding, and an answer that omits one, usually the political, cannot reach the top band. *Evaluate* also requires a net verdict at the end.

- Use the four spheres as explicit headings, and within each give a gain and a cost rather than a one-sided account.
- Keep the subject on *youth* specifically, not on Indian society generally; aspiration, mobility and identity are the youth-specific mechanisms.
- End with a net assessment, and preferably with what would make the balance more favourable.

MODEL ANSWER

395 words · paper allows 250

India's young are the first generation to grow up entirely inside a liberalised, connected economy, so globalisation is not an external force acting on them but the medium they were formed in.

Economic. It opened careers that did not exist a generation ago: IT services, global capability centres, design, finance and a platform economy that lets a small-town graduate work for an overseas client. Against that, the gig and platform economy offers income without security, automation is compressing the entry-level roles that once absorbed graduates, and the gap between credential and employability has produced a large cohort of educated unemployed. The most visible symptom is the crush around competitive examinations, which is itself a statement about how few secure jobs exist.

Social. Mobility for work has accelerated the shift to nuclear and single-person households, delayed marriage and loosened kin control over life choices, which expands individual autonomy, particularly for young women. The cost is the loss of the support system that autonomy replaced, visible in rising reported anxiety and depression among students and young workers, and in the loneliness of migrant youth in unfamiliar cities.

Political. Global norms of rights, gender equality, climate justice and disability access have been absorbed and are now argued in Indian terms; young people have used digital tools to force official responses on issues from examination integrity to sexual harassment. The counter-tendencies are equally real: the same networks carry misinformation and polarisation, participation is often episodic

rather than organisational, and youth representation in formal politics remains far below the youth share of the electorate.

Cultural. What has occurred is hybridisation rather than replacement. Global consumption, English, streaming and sport sit alongside a strong revival of regional language content, festivals and traditional practice; Indian music, food and cinema now travel outward as much as inward. The costs are the homogenisation of taste, body-image and consumption pressure amplified by social media, and the marginalisation of languages and crafts that lack a market.

Net evaluation. Globalisation has expanded Indian youth's opportunity set and their sense of agency more than it has diminished either. But it has distributed those gains unequally, by class, gender, language and connectivity, and it has transferred risk from institutions to individuals. Whether the balance holds depends on things that are domestic, not global: employment creation, quality of education, social protection for informal and platform work, and mental health infrastructure.

VALUE ADDITION THAT EARNS MARKS

- The concept vocabulary that lifts this answer: glocalisation, cultural hybridisation, McDonaldisation, and Appadurai's idea of global cultural flows.
- Global capability centres are the sharpest economic example, because they represent globalisation locating high-value work in India rather than exporting Indian labour.
- The aspiration-opportunity gap, and the examination economy it produces, is a specifically Indian youth phenomenon and few answers name it.
- Note the digital divide as a distributional caveat: the benefits described accrue to connected youth, which is not all youth.

WHERE ANSWERS LOST MARKS

- Dropping the political sphere, which is the one most answers forget.
- Writing about globalisation and Indian society in general and losing the focus on youth.
- A moralising conclusion about Western culture corrupting Indian values, which is assertion rather than evaluation.

SOURCES · EACH LABELLED PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

PRIMARY Periodic Labour Force Survey, National Statistical Office — youth unemployment and employment status
<https://www.mospi.gov.in/publication/periodic-labour-force-survey>

PRIMARY Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports — National Youth Policy documents
<https://yas.gov.in/>

BOOK Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996

CURRENT AFFAIRS BEHIND THIS QUESTION · UJIYARI

Youth, the promise-delivery gap and exam integrity

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/ie-youth-promise-delivery-gap-exam-integrity-2026/>

Migration, skill upgrading and employment

<https://ujiyari.com/editorials/2026/08/bs-migration-skill-upgrade-employment-2026/>

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Effects of globalisation on culture in India

bharatnotes.com/subjects/society/indian-society/effects-globalisation-culture-india/

Globalisation and its social impacts

bharatnotes.com/subjects/society/indian-society/globalisation-social-impacts/

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