



ANALYSIS & APPROACH – IAS ESSAY PAPER: MAINS 2010

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This year around UPSC has once again established itself to be an unpredictable service commission. The essay paper which was characterized with reduced number of options and unconventional choices has only reaffirmed it. One can argue about the paper being different i.e. very unconventional but as far as the subject matter of these essays is concerned, this is not true. This could be established with close analysis and deeper insight into the subject matter of these essays. They reveal the underlying co-relationship of 21st Century India, its people and the overall societal structure. They correlate with long lived spiritual heritage of this ancient, historically and culturally rich country.

Let us get into the heart of the matter that these essays incorporate in themselves and try to unravel those hidden secrets behind these essay topics in order to arrive at a general understanding of the subject themes of these essays. I am sure that this will be of great help to the candidates who have taken up main 2010 examination and attempted one of these essays and are awaiting either in oblivion or in stipulation or willing to evaluate as to how did they perform in the examination hall. Aspirants who are freshers and are curious enough to develop a strategic plan to tackle them in times to come or even the experienced fellows who want to probe deep into the matter can squeeze some benefits out of this write up.

They all can make an evaluation or at least give a rethinking to such interesting ideas of national and international importance with now available luxury of calm mind and plenty of time that was not at all the case with the poor fellows who were taking up the test in the examination hall. So, let us decipher the intricacies inherent in this year's essay topics one by one.

Following were the topics on which one had to write (on any of the four given essays topics in about 1500-2000 words ideally) to qualify for 2010-Main Examination.

- 1. Geography may remain the same, history need not.**
- 2. Should a moratorium be imposed on all fresh mining in tribal areas of the country?**
- 3. Preparedness of our society for India's global leadership role.**
- 4. From traditional Indian Philanthropy to the Gates-Buffett model - a natural progress or a paradigm shift?**

A General Understanding of the Subject Matter of these essays

The First essay demands a comparative and comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of geography as well as the philosophy of history. Those basic tenants that go on to constitute the discipline of Geography and that of the History i.e. the fundamentals of geography and fundamentals of history as well as the inside boundary that separates them should be well understood. For example, the evolution of the discipline of Geography took place in two dimensional framework - Spatial and Temporal. So geography which etymologically is the combination of two Latin terms namely - 'geo' & 'graphia', meaning 'earth' and 'description' respectively envisages to study earth's landscape, topography as well as the structural outlook, which change with time and space. So, geographical changes are spatial as well as temporal.

Now, these changes happen in two ways: one through **tectonic activities** which is entirely a natural process and the other - with the **growth of civilizations**, hence is anthropogenic in nature. Of these two, the first one happens in geological time-scale, which is a very large time span to be comprehended by human experience. For example the landscape changes- like that of the drift of the continents propounded by the German geographer - Alfred Wegner or the evolution of the Himalayas etc. have taken place in geological time frame, which happens in billions of years therefore, they are not perceptible to the humans as the history of men is hardly 10,000 years old. While, the second change takes comparatively smaller time span for example- settlement patterns etc. So, the changes with human factor or what can be called as man-made geographical changes happen in geo-historical time (i.e. comparatively very short time span). But even this time span is not a perceptible one. Thus, in both of the contexts, geography may be said to have remained the same, which is stated by the first part of the essay topic.

Coming to the second portion of the topic i.e. 'History', this relates to a temporal study of human-kind, its evolution as well as the civilization. Therefore, the time frame of history happens to be very short as compared to the geological time stretch of geography. So, history inculcates perceptible changes and in fact does not remain the same. Thus historical changes are rapid which makes it more dynamic to the humans than what Geography does.

This is the inherent theme of this essay topic. One can argue the essay on the above explained direction with bringing up evidences to support the arguments that one chooses to incorporate. These evidences shall depend on ones vast reading, comprehensive understanding as well as on the technical knowledge of History and Geography. So, anybody equipped in such skills can come up with a good essay and can fetch marks ranging from 100-130.

While, the second essay-'**Should a moratorium be imposed on all fresh mining in tribal areas of the country?**' throws open a dichotomy and expects the candidates to solve the Puzzle of *Development* on the one hand and *Preservation of tribal culture*, on the other. On one hand, we have a much needed developmental imperatives to explore newer vistas for industrializations that are based on cheap and abundantly available raw materials which can enhance our production and hence the well being of the people, removing them from the vicious net of poverty and hunger. To give the 2/3rd Indian mass better

chances of life is a challenge which can only be taken when we have possibilities of rapid industrialization. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru-a great visionary, statesman and one of the founding fathers of our nation has envisaged it in the second five year plan. Thus fresh mining to the mineral-rich places that are often near plateaus and hilly areas becomes an inevitable imperative. But at the same time, these places are the homes of our primitive tribes. They hold and carry the scarce heritage of our ancient culture, values and practices that have become so vulnerable today and are at the verge of extinction. Therefore, saving them is our national, moral and humane responsibility.

Moreover, they do not have to do much about our ambitious developmental aspirations as the fruits of development are hardly shared by them. So, within this paradoxical situation one has to come up with mature, balanced, intelligent and innovative ideas that can take care of both of these critical and equally important issues. At the same time, a high degree of care has to be taken in taking a stand or suggesting means in favour or against of any of these two needs, as they both happen to be very delicate, fragile and sensitive. So, the need is to arrive at what Buddha would call a middle path or Aristotle's golden mean of the two i.e. permission of mining can only be granted to those areas where there is less mobilization and displacement of these naturally habituated tribes and where there is a possibility of providing similar alternate habitat to the displaced people so that after displacement they can feel at home.

Though our past experiences of displacement have not been good and went adverse to the interests of these tribes but we can identify the possible areas of their vulnerability. Three cases can be outlined- 1. Special case i.e. where tribals have a unique habitat which might not be changed 2. Where there lie options of displacement and 3. Where they are ready to mingle and mix in the mainstream development borne life style e.g. some areas of north eastern states. Areas falling in the first category may be avoided for mining considerations while in the second two cases; it may be permitted with due care and precaution. Thus a clear cut orders to stop all fresh mining in tribal areas of the country shall contradict the very premises of development on which all our planning and policies rest. Therefore, a middle path is to be argued and concluded very thoughtfully. A candidate well versed in above requirement can fetch marks ranging from 100-140 comfortably.

The 3rd Essay- ***'Preparedness of our society for India's global leadership role'*** is something that can be called as a favourite topic for all kinds of students - be it a history student, a sociology student, a public administration student or a student of literature and philosophy all have enough space to accommodate their ideas and bring out a newer dimension to it. So the scope is immense in this essay. I have personally surveyed this and found that over 80% students have preferred this essay as they felt that they can identify and connect their studies and understanding of India in this essay well.

Well, this essay demands understanding of Indian society and its progress and requires a vision of India as a global leader. Since the very ancient times, India was recognized as the 'World guru' or the 'World leader' because of its prosperity, spirituality, well-being and welfare based governance. India has a recorded history of over 5000 years old. So its societal structure can be divided into ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary periods. The development of our society during all these periods could be seen in three dimensions; namely- (a) Spiritual (b) Psychic or Attitudinal (c) Physical. Physically a society can be said to have developed when basic amenities of the people are fulfilled, there lies a decent standard of life and overall prosperity is reflected through its people. Today we have fast moving cars, computers, machines,

aero-planes, space shuttle, mobile and internet based satellite communication etc. which are good sign of our physical growth. Today we have plenty of Nobel prizes to win every year, mentally our children think far better than what our older generations did. So, mentally human society has taken a significant leap. Spiritually, a society can be analyzed with its openness, broad thinking and universalistic aptitude reflecting highest degree of human rationality and scientific temper rather than superstition, dogmatism and old conventions. People see themselves as part of one unified family. They get feelings of Brahman-hood and associate themselves with one universal god. Infact they feel the expressions of Brahman within themselves and do not discriminate one human with the other. In India the age old values of “*Vashudhaiv Kutumbkam*” and “*sarvam khalvidam brahamam*” etc. well incorporate such spiritual practices.

A society can only be said to have acquired an all round developed status when all these three dimensions are in a balanced state. As in the physical and psychic levels of development, there lies a risk which is very critical in nature. As in these levels of developments their negative counterparts too get evolved with each and every developmental attempt. For example - if we have developed fast moving cars in our physical level, than the risk of severe accidents too arise with it simultaneously. Similarly in the psychic level, on one hand we get plenty of Nobel prizes to win every year whereas on the other hand various mental disorders have also arisen. Today, frustrations, anxieties and suicidal tendencies have increased many folds. Thus, with physical and psychic levels of development their negative counterparts also evolve. Only in the spiritual development there is no negativity. Therefore, there lies an intricate relationship amongst these three levels, which have to be brought into harmony then only a society could be said to have been developed in true sense.

Indian society enjoys such status since the very ancient times. In the medieval time as well, people had a strong foundation in spirituality. They were enriched with higher standards of values, ethics and morality. The social consciousness was characterized with confidence, people believed in themselves; in this way psychically the society was strong. Physically too the society had enough wealth to fulfill the needs and requirements of its people. Their overall status had been remarkably good and satisfactory.

In the medieval times i.e. the period of Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals, Indian society though saw little deterioration in their physical well being but overall the society had managed the intricate balance amongst the three levels.

It was the modern period i.e. the period of European invasion that culminated into British rule and colonization which caused a great deal of harms to the societal structure of India. This happened in two levels – physical level and psychic level. Physically - following the policy of ‘Drain of Wealth’ the Britishers did all their bits to exploit, extract and export Indian wealth to England. In this process they did not care about the long term destruction that followed with such crazy exploitation of the very structure of Indian economy, trade, commerce and occupation of the people. Psychically too they have destroyed the attitude of the society to an extent that Indians lost their faith and belief in themselves. This was in fact a great deal of loss to Indian society, which shall take time to get revived.

Thus, the contemporary Indian society comprised with the people who were physically and psychically exploited for over two and half centuries. But spiritually they could not have been affected much by the alien intrusions. Hence, spirituality is the base of Indian society which remained firm and Unshakable during all these periods of crisis.

After the Independence, the visionary leadership of Pandit Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Ballabh Patel, Dr. Ambedkar etc. provided a strong foundation in shaping the present form of governance which is based on modern principles of democracy, socialism and secularism. All of these have been very well incorporated in our constitution, which enjoys the privilege of being one of the largest written constitutions that the world ever saw.

Such solid foundations that are reflected in our constitution have provided Indian society a strong and much needed foundation standing on which today India is self reliant in Food grain production and most of our basic needs. Today India is recognized as one of the fastest growing economy and leader on many fronts. That is why even President Obama, the World's most powerful man said: "When India speaks, the World Listens".

In 1960s our late P.M. Smt. Indira Gandhi went to USA for help i.e. to seek food grains and other economic needs followed by series of famines during that decade and before. She had to wait half an hour in the presidential corridor to meet the President. Today, the scenario has changed to a level in which U.S. President comes to India and seeks employments for the American people. In the international organizations like - ASEAN, SAARC, G-20, BASIC, IBSA etc. India is playing a leadership role. While, in other organizations like G-8, SCO, EU etc. India has been given an observer status which signifies India's role, participation and respect in the International Forums. The harmonious and peaceful coexistence principles of NAM which is based on India's ancient value system of "Sarva Jan Hitaya cha" and "Vashudhaiv Kutumbakam" has been evolved from Indian societal structure which has provided the world an alternate to the immature and sentimental principles of polarization during 2nd World War. India even before achieving independence have played very significant role in the formation of the U.N. India is a founding member of many other institutions of the UN which are based on Indian's age old lived principles of Humanism and Universalism.

Thus, Physically India has strengthened itself back within very short span of time i.e. just in 63 years and so. Today, India is the 2nd fastest growing economy of the world. This has boosted the psychological status of the people of India who constitute together a confident social consciousness. Today, Indians have started believing in themselves and feel proud of being an Indian. This is a great sign of improvement of Indian society.

The preparedness of Indian society is reflected through its economic development, prosperity of the people and international position. Indian society has a good status on all these fronts. Though there still exist some

social evils in the present Indian society like - poverty, mass scale hunger, unemployment, mal nourishment, illiteracy, ignorance and other forms of evil practices. But, with good development figures, successful working of democracy, education and good governance they all shall vanish with time. The day is not very far when Indians shall once again reassume its position of global leader. As we are the only society which has got a harmonious balance in all the three above mentioned fundamental pillars on which a society stands.

Some, of these aspects can well be elaborated with logical arguments and thus a good essay shall come out. A student refined into these basic aspects of society should get marks ranging from: 100 to 145 in this essay. So, this becomes a good choice.

The 4th essay topic: ***“From traditional Indian Philanthropy to the Gates-Buffett model – a natural progress or a paradigm shift?”*** is very philosophical in nature. In this, one has to be aware of the difference between the Indian practice of ‘paropkara’ and the contemporary western practice of ‘philanthropy’. Then, one is supposed to comment on whether today’s practice of philanthropy is a natural progress or a Paradigm shift?

Before taking a position I would like to elaborate upon these two practices then shall logically arrive to the conclusion. In India, the concept of philanthropy was called as ‘Paropkara’ i.e. ‘Par’ + ‘Upkara’ which means ‘service to others’. Thus, the philanthropy was seen as service or as a duty not only when one had enough wealth but also when one did not have much. The people who gave away their money or wealth used to consider themselves indebted to whom they paid. They never considered themselves obliging to the needy or the beneficiary. We have example of Harishchandra, Bharathari, Raja Bhoga, Ashoka etc. who testify this system of philanthropy that have been practiced since the time immemorial.

Today’s practice of philanthropy is a western adaptation. In this system most of our wealthy people (who have become billionaire very recently) are imitating the western philanthropists like- Bill and Milinda Gates, Warren Buffett etc. These multi billionaires are motivated by widespread fame and recognition that it brings with it. So, most of Indian philanthropists who are so eager to transform themselves as a modern western man gets trapped into the illuminating power of westernization and get confused between the two.

Modernization is not westernization. It is rather an outlook of mind which is based on the principles of democracy, secularism and freedom, socialism, equality and universalism. Therefore, today’s practice of philanthropy by recently-made-rich Indians cannot be called as a natural development it is rather a paradigm shift.

Now, I have put on enough light on the heart of the issues, one can always employ his/her vision and understanding to further elaborate upon it. You can make it more substantive by placing relevant facts and figures in a coherent way. Thus, this essay is more of philosophical in nature than being factual or something that you learn in your books. This should fetch you marks 100-140, provided written well.

In this way we have seen that today's main examination has become very competitive like things in every other walk of life that we undertake presently. One needs to have a comprehensive understanding of Indian society, culture, people, practices, and philosophies. The best way to prepare essay writing is to actually write it on some of these topics or on similar issues and get oneself evaluated. **Essays should be taken seriously as they shall not only change your rank and portfolio but also can be decisive in the making of the final list of successful candidates.**

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