**1.1 IDIOMS AND PHRASES**

**Introduction to the Topic**

Idioms and Phrases are basically the English idiomatic expression which give some underlying ideas, principles and values of a given culture or society.

**Relevance in CAT**

Idioms and Phrases can be asked in CAT exam as one of the questions of Reading Comprehension or apparently wherein, a sentence is given and an idiom or phrase is being bolded or highlighted and you have to choose the correct meaning of it from the four options given.

This chapter contains the most important idioms and phrases that are indispensable for a CAT exam aspirant.

**Practice Exercise – Easy**

**Directions for question 1 - 50:** *In each of the following questions an idiomatic phrase is given in bold followed by four alternatives. Choose the alternative that best expresses the meaning of the expression.*

1. Both the parties had chances to break the **deadlock** inside

the first 20 minutes.

a. open the lock of the door

b. silence

c. a position when no progress can be made

d. come to conclusion once for all

2. The attempt to suppress the agitation of the union only **added fuel to the flame**.

a. to lit the candle

b. to calm the situation

c. brought ray of hope

d. to make matter worse

3. There was a robbery in our neighbour's factory last night and when I entered their factory to inquire, everything was **at sixes and sevens**.

a. in disorder

b. perfectly placed

c. very expensive

d. torned off

4. I don't like to talk to those who are always **blowing their own trumpet**.

a. talking rubbish

b. loquacious

c. to praise oneself

d. spreading rumours

5. He **broke the news** of her brother's death very gently so as to lessen the intensity of the shock.

a. to hide the news

b. to disclose very late

c. to give good news

d. to give bad news

6. You should always come to the point and should not **beat about the bush**.

a. to talk politely

b. to talk in a roundabout manner

c. to talk straight forwardly

d. to talk suspiciously

7. My friend is good at **building castles in the air**.

a. to talk senseless

b. to be an extraordinary

c. to make visionary schemes

d. good at discoveries

8. She is recovering **by and by** after long illness.

a. frequently

b. rarely

c. rapidly

d. gradually

9. I don't know how they are living together as they are leading a **cat and dog life**.

a. life full of quarrels

b. life full of pleasures

c. interesting life

d. adventurous life

10. He started to tell some **cock and bull story** to the police officers about how he found a large bag containing 5 pounds of cocaine packets.

a. vague story

b. made up story that one should not believe

c. interesting story

d. mysterious story

11. The hope of winning the lottery amounting to 1 crore rupees is simply **crying for the moon**.

a. thing that is rare in the market

b. very expensive gift

c. to go to moon

d. to wish for something impossible

12. She often gets angry when someone **calls a spade a spade**.

a. to speak plainly

b. to speak abruptly

c. play cards

d. talks rudely

13. Careless boys often have to **cry over spilt milk** during the exams.

a. burden

b. anxiety

c. repent

d. course

14. A good teacher follows the **carrot and stick policy** towards her students.

a. detailed explanation

b. practical knowledge

c. interactive sessions

d. reward and punishment

15. Take some woollen clothes. They may **come in handy** in Mussoorie.

a. available

b. to be useful

c. drycleaned

d. bought

16. People in some remote areas are so poor that their sufferings are more than a **flesh and blood** can endure.

a. non vegetarian

b. barbaric scene

c. human nature

d. not worthy

17. He is the son of a famous actor but he is not **fit to hold a candle to** his father.

a. support

b. helpful

c. unmatched

d. equal in quality

18. As the loyal employee of his company he **gave a good account of himself** when calamity befell the company.

a. not responsible

b. to deny the fact

c. to accept the truth

d. to act creditably

19. Rohan's case is very weak and everybody knows that finally he will lose, but he is still **hoping against hope**.

a. hopeless

b. to cry for impossible thing

c. hope inspite of disappointment

d. to give up

20. It is a **Herculean task** to root out corruption in India.

a. very difficult

b. very easy

c. mystical

d. interesting

21. The days we spend in our school life are the **halcyon days** of our life.

a. meaningful

b. miraculous

c. melodious

d. peaceful days

22. Rahul is fickle minded and **has too many irons in the fire**.

a. get angry easily.

b. becomes anxious easily.

c. very easy.

d. doing many things at a time.

23. An employee is often **ill at ease** when he has to see the manager after he has done something wrong.

a. not well

b. calm and composed

c. angry

d. uncomfortable

24. After he lost the final match he is **in doldrums** these days.

a. unhappy

b. to be depressed

c. limelight

d. not socialising with anyone

25. Those who talk of non - violence as a useful tool in international politics live in **ivory tower**.

a. imaginary world

b. top of the world

c. confusing world

d. relaxing world

26. You must not evaluate the success of your enemies with a **jaundiced eye**.

a. defected

b. egoistic

c. prejudice

d. disease

27. These days because of inflation it is difficult **to** **keep body and soul together**.

a. to maintain life

b. unbalanced

c. to be calm

d. to be happy

28. Hypocrates should always be **kept at an arm's length.**

a. to be in touch

b. to keep at a distance

c. to be closer

d. not so far

29. You must not **leap in the dark** by entering the business without proper market survey.

a. unnecessarily

b. hit a bull's eye

c. to take a long jump

d. to take a risk deliberately

30. Priya has, at last, **let the cat out of the bag**, by confessing that she had stolen her brother's money.

a. to come out

b. to disclose

c. to open

d. to sharpen

31. Second world war proved to be the **last nail in the coffin** for many countries.

a. causing ruin

b. dead

c. last option

d. no alternative

32. In comparison to India, China has progressed by **leaps and bounds** in every field.

a. rapidly

b. oftenly

c. continuously

d. slowly

33. Students should **make the most of** their time if they want to get an admission in the top B-School.

a. to vile time

b. to utilize time

c. to enjoy

d. to study

34. Rakesh **moved heaven and earth** to gain his end but failed.

a. try hardly

b. hustle bustle

c. to try utmost

d. anxious

35. Tipu Sultan **met his Waterloo** in the fourth battle of Mysore.

a. win the battle

b. name of a place

c. to face final defeat

d. a watertank

36. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a **man of letters**.

a. a man of his words

b. truthful person

c. introvert person

d. literary person

37. The laws made by the British in India are not yet **null and void**.

a. vague

b. ineffective

c. effective

d. implemented

38. Reading novels is not my **cup of tea**.

a. of my category

b. someone's else belonging

c. to one's liking

d. prefer cup of coffee to cup of tea

39. Mohit is **on the carpet** these days for troubling her teacher.

a. decorative material

b. to be look down upon

c. to be under consideration

d. to hardly bother

40. Every man living in this world, must regard himself as **part and parcel** of a larger whole.

a. a gift

b. unimportant

c. tiny unit

d. inseparable part

41. My cousin is frugal and saves even out of **pin - money**.

a. reward

b. allowance given to housewife for personal use

c. pocket money to the son

d. pension money

42. You must always consider the **pros and cons** of any new project that you take in hand.

a. for and against a thing

b. all aspects

c. positive views

d. controversial views

43. **Red tapism** is a bane of Indian bureaucracy.

a. form of corruption

b. bribery

c. dishonesty

d. official delay

44.The demand of inquiry into his work is just a **red herring** as there is no truth in it.

a. something to distract attention

b. rumour

c. serious matter

d. routinue process

45.The mother **shed crocodile tears** on the death of her step son.

a. deeply hurt

b. got unconscious

c. to show false sorrow

d. out of senses

46. Continuous interrogation finally made the uncle **spill the beans** and the disaster was averted.

a. to give information

b. hide something

c. signing of important documents

d. accepting the crime

47.All the team members **turned a deaf ear** to their manager.

a. showing disrespect

b. not to pay attention to

c. very attentive

d. astonished expression

48. The problem of holding exams on time is an **uphill task** for the V. C. of ABC University.

a. easy task

b. climbing the hill

c. raising standard

d. difficult task

49.When the parents of Rohan did not agree to the marriage of their son, he married Rashmi **under the rose**.

a. secretly

b. openly

c. unethically

d. forcefully

50. He made a **wry face** when he was not allowed to go to abroad for further studies.

a. disappointed look

b. angry look

c. sarcastic looks

d. expressionless

**Practice Exercise – Medium**

**Directions for question 1 - 50:** In each of the following questions an idiomatic phrase is given in bold followed by four alternatives. Choose the alternative that best expresses the meaning of the expression.

1. As long as she is still **alive and kicking**, there is time that she'll experience stress.

a. exercising

b. active and healthy

c. happy and peaceful

d. working and earning well

2. In CAT interview we must reply **at the spur** of the moment.

a. without delay

b. think before speaking

c. apt answer

d. continuously

3. This dress is **an apple of discord** between two sisters.

a. cause of quarrel

b. strong connection

c. nostalgic

d. meaningless

4. My sister is **quite at sea** in Physics; she cannot solve a single numerical.

a. intelligent

b. applied to a confused person

c. very comfortable

d. uninterested

5. Many people can boast of their courage, but very few can **bell the cat**.

a. to take first step at personal risk

b. win the race

c. can succeed

d. actually implement the things.

6. Money given to a spendthrift only **burns a hole** in her pocket.

a. careless

b. spent wisely

c. money spent quickly

d. spend on unwanted things.

7. Since these two brothers have started living together, the ancestors property has been a **bone of contention** them.

a. cause of quarrel

b. strong bonding

c. backbone

d. supportive to each other

8. After the death of his wife he is **burning the candle at both ends**.

a. squander

b. feeling sad

c. in a great depression

d. throwing party

9. Inspite of his constant bragging he lost the competition and had to **eat humble pie**.

a. got second position

b. to apologize

c. pacified himself

d. accepted defeat happily

10. **To eke out** his income he also works as a part time type-writist in the evening.

a. supplement income

b. to spend

c. to increase

d. to spend wisely

11. His visits to his home country are **few and far between** because of his studies in abroad.

a. very rare

b. occasionaly

c. frequent

d. continuously

12. He always **flogs a dead horse** to insult his enemies.

a. use harsh comments

b. to revive interest in old matter

c. become violent

d. physical abuse

13. We should **give the devil his due** for her good qualities.

a. punishment

b. monetary incentives

c. give credit to a worthless person for his good qualities

d. authority

14. He never **gives his students a long rope**.

a. tells secret

b. change to play

c. to let someone commit mistakes.

d. a helping hand

15. She **hit the nail on the head** by resigning his job.

a. to do the right thing at the right time

b. got disappointed

c. hurt himself physically

d. took a wrong step

16. As a responsible captain of a team you must **hold** criticism of team members **in leash**.

a. to restrain

b. to make effective

c. to give liberty

d. limitless

17. Hindu Code Bill was passed **in the teeth of** opposition by various organizations.

a. mutual consent

b. inspite of bitter apposition

c. unanimously

d. in anticipation

18. As the flight got delayed she had to **kick her heels** at the airport.

a. fun at the airport

b. roaming here and there

c. to waste time in waiting

d. to organise

19. The students **laughed in their sleeves** at the professor ignorance of the subject.

a. pay no heed

b. creating disturbances

c. to laugh secretly

d. felt bored

20. It is high time for the two sisters to bury the hatchet and **mend their fences**.

a. to do their own work

b. to be together

c. to agree to one thing

d. to make peace

21. The government **made amends** to the family for the loss of their earning member in the natural calamity.

a. promises

b. to give compensation

c. special arrangements

d. consoled

22. My younger sister always **makes off with** my clothes, it makes me so mad!

a. to run away with

b. to make dirty

c. to tear off

d. to ride something

23. This man seems to be gifted with **Midas touch** because he is capable of selling every product.

a. soft touch

b. a touch which ruins everything

c. touch which turns anything into gold

d. a touch which is not liked by everyone

24. Our chairman is **a** **man of parts** and is respected by all and one.

a. talented person

b. educated person

c. practical person

d. a man of equalities

25. Tell the truth to your loved ones because it does not pay **to mince matters**.

a. any cost

b. hide the truth and pretend

c. no loss

d. not good at all

26. They made off with everything from the kitchen and there was **next to nothing** left.

a. not a penny

b. all dead

c. almost nothing

d. all stolen

27. Hunny is **over head and ears** in love with Megha.

a. scarcely

b. hardly

c. excessively

d. intentionally

28. I shall lend you books **over and above** what I have promised to give you in cash.

a. extra

b. inspite of

c. moreover

d. probably

29. Once a charming actor, he is **off colour** these days.

a. dead

b. not in usual form

c. grown old

d. not famous anymore

30. Rehan had been **out of sorts** the whole day and could not do his office work properly.

a. absent

b. not attentive

c. to be unwell

d. not in mood

31. The two managers of the company **pass the buck** on to one another for failure of the project.

a. to blame each other

b. took responsibility

c. to defend each other

d. amend the project

32. You must **pull your socks up** to get admission to top B school.

a. work hard

b. buy a pair of new socks

c. increase knowledge

d. exercise more

33. Ambitious persons never **rest on their laurels** because for them sky is the limit.

a. take rest

b. self satisfied

c. keen observer

d. restless

34.If his essay is **read between the lines**, we will find that he has made comments against the Government.

a. short handwriting

b. poor handwriting

c. to understand the hidden meaning

d. quality writing

35.I **smell a rat** in the bargain that my elder brother made with my father.

a. to be clear of face

b. got angry

c. to be suspicious

d. listening someone's conversation secretly

36. Seema could never see **eye to eye** with her elder sister.

a. to agree

b. embarrassed

c. defect in eye

d. dead

37. After long illness at last my cousin **turned the corner** and was completely out of danger.

a. to pass a critical stage

b. woke up

c. started walking

d. rest in peace

38. They were drenched in the rain **through and through**.

a. again and again

b. entirely

c. frequently

d. badly

39. My uncle doesn't want to retire - he'd rather **die in harness**.

a. be slave to someone

b. do work till the last day of one's life

c. boredom

d. die in embarassement

40. He is good at **killing two birds with one stone** in the office.

a. effective and efficient

b. confident

c. to achieve two results with one effort

d. laborious

41. He took my younger brother **to task** for not obeying his elders.

a. punish

b. to boycott him

c. physical abuse

d. appreciated

42. He never **threw up the sponge** and at last got over his problems.

a. tantrums

b. surrender

c. admit the mistake

d. lie

43.His secret connections with the underworld have brought him **under a cloud**.

a. in big trouble

b. in limelight

c. under great depression

d. to be under suspicion

44. Your speech was **upto the mark**.

a. inappropriate

b. as good as it should be

c. lengthy

d. out of the topic

45. Harivansh Rai Bachchan Sahab **won laurels** in the world of literature.

a. to win distinction

b. applauded

c. awards

d. stand in

46. One is always **well disposed** to those who are honest and hard working.

a. friendly or helpful to somebody

b. took for granted

c. not treat nicely

d. feels pity

47.I have **washed hands of** your affairs because you do not take me seriously.

a. cleared my doubts

b. to have nothing to do

c. proved innocent

d. not to be helpful

48. We should give a **wide berth** to bad characters.

a. teach lesson

b. be lenient

c. keep away

d. be ignore

49. Their long friendship ended because they **wrangled over an ass' shadow**.

a. to quarrel over trifles

b. big fight

c. moved to other country

d. ego

50. In recent times, there is a spurt of sensational newspapers making **yellow press** popular.

a. any yellow coloured book

b. name of a news channel

c. a sensational news

d. newspaper publishing sensational news.

**Practice Exercise – Difficult**

**Directions for question 1 - 50:** In each of the following questions an idiomatic phrase is given in bold followed by four alternatives. Choose the alternative that best expresses the meaning of the expression.

1. My school is **at a stone's throw** from my home.

a. far away

b. very close

c. secluded place

d. the next town

2. To visit a dentist is the result of a choice **between the devil and the deep blue sea** - as if you go you suffer, and if you don't go you suffer.

a. hide and seek game

b. between two danger

c. good and bad

d. successful and not successful

3. The accountant was **bought to book** for his negligence.

a. sent to jail

b. to punish

c. praised

d. given warning

4. She **bids fair** to be an excellent tennis player.

a. is unlikely

b. is ambitious

c. is confident

d. seems likely

5. The CEO of the company **carried matters with a high hand** and expelled two employees who were caught doing mischief in the company.

a. with extreme ego

b. to deal with a person strictly

c. loudly bothered

d. courageously

6. Govind tends to **chew the cud** before he answers.

a. seriously

b. pray alot to god

c. nervous

d. to discuss matters in ponderous manner especially reminiscing

7. You may commit mistake after mistake but **days of reckoning** are never far off.

a. devil day

b. won't be spared

c. time to answer for one's action

d. bad times are near

8. By disrupting Rajya Sabha Session the MLA is following a **dog in the manager** policy.

a. a person who prevents others from enjoying what he himself cannot

b. love for dogs

c. relaxed

d. strict

9. The corporate world is a shadowing world of rumours **double dealing** and half truths.

a. enjoyable

b. deceiving

c. diplomatic

d. sophisticated

10. The visit of our Foreign Minister to Pakistan proved **a damp squib** on border issue.

a. total successful

b. come to conclusion

c. waste of time

d. complete failure

11. I am in this office for **donkey's years**.

a. a very long time

b. just few days

c. part time

d. treated like a donkey

12. He spoke a lot about his new daily soap but in all **ended in smoke** and couldn't gain TRP at all.

a. ashes

b. sad ending

c. come to nothing

d. gone in vain

13. His visit to the city from village to earn money proved to be a **fool's errand**.

a. wise step

b. useless undertaking

c. correcting yourself

d. being on right path

14. A rapist can also very easily **get off scot free** for lack of evidence.

a. given bail

b. ran away from jail

c. to escape without punishment

d. punished badly

15. Now - a - days if you want to get your work done, you will have to **grease the palm** **of** someone or the other.

a. to be following them day and night

b. to bribe

c. to polish shoes

d. to praise someone

16. He is a **good Samaritan** because he always comes to the help of poor people.

a. good personality

b. good at heart

c. good human being

d. one who helps strangers

17. Instead of wasting time in discussion, please **get down to brass tacks**.

a. concentrate on work

b. to deal with the matter straight

c. not discuss at all

d. to everybody should do their work

18. Shreya is very selfish but the way she is being polite with everyone gives the impression that she **has an axe to grind**.

a. to have a selfish interest

b. some problem with her

c. she is unhappy from within

d. has some special quality

19. My cousin likes **to have her finger in everyone's pie** as she is in the habit of meddling with the affairs of others.

a. to eat from other's plate

b. to partake of something

c. always very hungry

d. can't sit alone

20. It is a pity that a handful of militants are **holding the nation to ransom**.

a. to demand concession by making someone captive

b. performing difficult task

c. putting things in difficult situation

d. not bothered at all

21. I have come to know of your **hole and corner** method of dealing with employees.

a. straight

b. generous

c. secret

d. biggest

22. She never leaves her best friend **in the lurch**.

a. alone

b. to leave a friend in difficulty

c. hide secret

d. in confusion

23. The guards are generally familiar with **the ins and outs** of the houses.

a. members

b. business

c. guests

d. secrets

24. My brother is in **a flutter** today because he is going for the interview.

a. nervous

b. restless

c. excited

d. anxious

25. Her father - in - law **knits the brow** at everything he does.

a. generous

b. never praises himself

c. very particular

d. to frown

26. Most of the politicians are more concerned with the **loaves and fishes** of office than the service of man.

a. material benefits

b. luxurious

c. comfort

d. cleanliness

27. We are bound to suffer if we **let the grass grow under our feet** by postponing action.

a. to delay the matters

b. complicate the matter

c. take the matter lightly

d. not consider it at all

28. Priya is always very uneasy **like a cat on hot bricks** whenever she is waiting to hear the results of the examination.

a. very annoyed

b. over excited

c. very nervous

d. kept quiet

29. The students can **make neither head nor tail** of what Mr. Karan teaches them.

a. not to understand

b. inefficient

c. incapable

d. not taking seriously

30. There is **no love lost** between the two brothers.

a. intense dislike

b. intense disliking

c. strong bonding

d. no connection

31. The evils of the society must be **nipped in the bud**.

a. to destroy in the very beginning

b. discussed seriously

c. taken as priority

d. be eradicated over the time

32. We should not help the persons who are **not worth their salt**.

a. clever

b. not deserving

c. not honest

d. selfish

33. It is difficult to get any work done without bribery because bribery is the **order of the day**.

a. essential thing

b. in fashion

c. reward

d. complimentary thing

34. He was debarred from appearing in the examination **on the score of** indiscipline.

a. poor scores

b. stage

c. report card

d. on the grounds of

35. He is not yet **off the hook** because Income Tax officials making a thorough enquiry into his financial status.

a. free from jail

b. at peace

c. out of trouble

d. totally set free

36. The way he is treating his elder brother makes it quite obvious that he is **paying off old scores**.

a. to take revenge

b. talking of past

c. sounding low

d. very upset

37. The speeches of our politicians are not sincere; they are intended to **play to the gallery**.

a. to have fun

b. to gain cheap popularity

c. to gain confidence of public

d. to win hearts of general citizens

38. The two cousins exchanged hot words but the intervention of their mothers **poured oil on troubled waters**.

a. make the matter more complicated

b. to destroy their efforts

c. to pacify the matters

d. make the matter more interesting

39. He managed his transfer by **pulling strings**.

a. flip of a coin

b. to exercise influence secretly

c. very easily

d. putting great efforts

40. He is always **picking holes** in every presentation.

a. to find fault with

b. not liking

c. very cautious

d. detailed explanation

41. One cannot make anything out of Mohan's attitude as he is such a **queer fish**.

a. strange person

b. irritating person

c. complex man

d. selfish man

42. Being not wise he wasted his money in **quixotic projects**.

a. cumbersome projects

b. expensive projects

c. out of the box projects

d. foolishly ideal

43.Everyone, if possible, should **steer clear of** selfish people.

a. be cautious

b. to avoid

c. be close

d. be nice

44.Being a **scarlet woman** she is looked down in the kitty party.

a. beautiful woman

b. a woman with loose morals

c. generous woman

d. intelligent woman

45.He is quite a wise man. There is always **something up his sleeve**.

a. something best inserted for him

b. a secret plan

c. a rich man

d. good proposal to discuss.

46. Ev erybody takes Rohit's problems with **a pinch of salt** because he is an unreliable person.

a. no attention

b. very lightly

c. to accept with doubt

d. very seriously

47. We need bureaucrats who are selfless **to the back bone**.

a. determined

b. quick

c. thoroughly

d. stand straight

48. Don't make a **pig of yourself**!

a. fun off

b. pity on oneself

c. to over - eat

d. sad

49. The young should **take leaf out of great men's books**.

a. to emulate

b. pluck the flower

c. respect elders

d. to inculcate

50.Many of our small scale industries have been **thrown out of gear** because of large scale industries.

a. scrapped

b. not working properly

c. sold in second hand market

d. thrown in garbage