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IAS SELF STUDY GUIDE

NOTE: Please remember that following '*answers*' are *NOT* '*model answers*'. They are NOT synopsis too if we go by definition of the term. What we are providing is content that both meets demand of the question and at the same time gives you extra points in the form of background information.

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GENERAL STUDIES - I

Topic: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues

Q1) Liberation of Goa was antithetical to Nehruvian approach to international affairs. Comment. (150 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- Nehru was himself faced with a dilemma in 1961: whether or not to use force to liberate Goa.
- It was an agonising decision for a person who adopted the Gandhian approach in international affairs.

It is antithetical to Nehru's approach of international affairs:-

- On India's policy with regard to Goa, Nehru was clear not to permit any degradation of identification with Goa under Portuguese rule, and did not want to adopt, advocate or deliberately bring about any situation of violence. However the ultimate use of force through military action his international image changed which was opposite to what was known earlier.
- He has always preached the need for peaceful settlement of international disputes but he expected international especially US support for condemning Portugal but by the end of 1961 it was clear for him that end of Portuguese control in Goa can be done only through Indian efforts.
- Nehru advocated Non-alignment movement & Panchsheel principles which underlined his non-aggressive international approach and his use of military action in Goa seemed to be contrary to it.

Not antithetical because:-

- It is not totally antithetical as he was always against anti colonialism.
- Also he tried to resolve the issue waiting patiently that Portuguese would withdraw .
- Also he acted according to the people's consent whose rights of self determination were not even considered as they wanted Indian government and not Portuguese
- What Nehru did then was the need of the hour and was the last resort as he tried even economic blockade but that did not help.
- After Britain and France left India, it was expected that Portugal would leave too. But Portugal refused. Emphasising that it had been in Goa for centuries, Portugal said that the Goan Catholics would not be safe if it left completely overlooking the fact that Goa had Hindu majority population and Christians were peaceful in south India
- Geography, language and nationality bound the people of India with the people of Goa. It was natural that Goa, which had seen a long indigenous freedom movement, should be a part of India.

Q2) The celebration of Bhima Koregaon Battle Victory not only challenges the conventional narrative of anti-colonialism, it also tells the story of the making of an autonomous culture of Dalits against the inferior culture of caste. Discuss critically. (250 Words)

[The Wire](#)

[The Indian Express](#)

Background:-

- Two hundred years ago, the last battle of the Anglo-Maratha war was fought at Koregaon village on the banks of Bhima river near Pune.
- The battlemarked the firm hold of the British Empire in India with the help of dalits.
- The recent violence at Pune was sparked by a disagreement over whether the bicentenary of the 1818 Battle of Bhima-Koregaon, between the British East India Company and the Peshwa rulers of the Maratha Confederacy, should be celebrated or not.

Challenges Anti colonialism notion because:-

- The conventional notion of anti colonialism is that of the colony fighting against the imperial power but in this case Mahars were with the British and fought against Peshwas, the dominate caste in the society.
- The memorial marking the Company's victory over Marathas at Koregaon in 1818 has now come to represent Dalit pride.
- Several Dalit activists see it as a victory of lower-caste Mahars against the upper-caste Peshwas.

Making an autonomous culture of dalits:-

- Peshwas were notorious for their oppression and persecution of Mahar dalits. The victory in the battle over Peshwas gave dalits a moral victory a victory against caste-based discrimination and oppression and sense of identity.
- The recent Dalit protests, be it after Una flogging, Saharanpur violence or Bhima Koregaon clashes, have gradually gained space in the political mainstream and signified the autonomous culture of dalits.

The divide and rule policy of the British created multiple fissures in Indian society which is even visible today in the way of excessive caste and religious discrimination which needs to be checked keeping in mind the tenets of the Constitution.

Q3) Critically analyse the significance and relevance of politics and ideals Mahatma Gandhi represented and sacrificed his life for. (250 Words)

The Wire

Gandhi politics and ideals:-

- The main pillars of Gandhi's philosophy were **non-violence, tolerance of others, respect for all religions and a simple life.**
- **If avenging ill-will is considered proper it can be done so only through the agency of the government** certainly not through individual interventions.
- **A civilised society should not need the protection of guns to uphold fundamental right.** But here even guns are failing to protect the fundamental rights of the minorities – not just the Muslims – and of the weaker sections of society.
- Mahatma Gandhi was one of the first leaders to have spoken out **against the general discrimination meted out to the people of lower castes.**
- **had wanted to avoid the country's partition.**

Significance and relevance of Gandhi ideals and politics:-

- Division of hearts has perhaps deepened in both India and Pakistan across the border and within the border as well. **People's hearts have experienced new divisions. Gandhi's warning has assumed greater relevance today compared to earlier periods.**
- **Indian democracy survived and became stronger over the years only because India had Mahatma Gandhi** and his message that the answer to violence does not lie in violence; that hatred should not be countered by hatred is applicable to India due to the harmony among different communities.
- Mahatma Gandhi and his values have become more relevant for today's society **which is under turmoil and suffering from social evils, corruption, terrorism and violence.**
- People have become so impatient with each other that we are trying to solve differences by using violence rather than through peaceful dialogue or logic. **People do not respect others views or feelings; it is either "my way or the highway".**
- **Jobless growth:-**
 - A **development path in the Gandhian mould** would undoubtedly have accorded top priority to eliminating this social scourge.
- **Love jihad and killing of lower caste people for marrying an upper caste girl, honour killings are still reality today in India.**
- **Non-violence is certainly not the term to be associated with the present day India, which is suffering from various forms of violence on a daily basis.**
- From Gandhi, **the youth can learn to be resolute and focused towards their purpose despite all hardships.**

- **Gandhian technique of mobilising people has been successfully employed by many oppressed societies around the world** under the leadership of people like Martin Luther King in the United States, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and now Aung San Sun Kyi in Myanmar, which is an eloquent testimony to the continuing relevance of Mahatma Gandhi.
- In India, economic development has been mostly confined to the urban conglomerates. In the process, the rural India that comprises 700 million people has been given short shrift. **Gandhi's philosophy of inclusive growth is fundamental to the building of a resurgent rural India**

Criticism:-

- A country that suffers from cross-border terrorism and the highest forms of crime on a regular basis, **cannot put the security of its citizens at stake by following the doctrine of "non-violence" or "patient dealings" in the long run.**
- Gandhi's principles may be apt for a personal and spiritual growth of an individual, but they certainly need modification according to the present nuclear age. **In fact, the very first step towards non-violence would be to disband the Indian army and to denuclearize India, which is undoubtedly impossible.**
- **More than one man leading the nation through his ideals**, present-day India is in need of leaders whose visions can match with those of the common man and especially the underprivileged ones leaders that can be benevolent and quick decision makers, who have the ability to transform and evolve at a quicker.
- **The path of ahimsa**, which Gandhi considered a difficult but the only straight and clear path, has **seemed increasingly impossible and impractical.**

Conclusion:-

- Gandhi's ideals and leadership hold an extremely relevant moral and social mirror to society. Thus, the Gandhian model and the modern economy seem to be getting closer to each other. Gandhi belongs to the humanity for eternity.

Q4) Sir Arthur Cotton is remembered less as a representative of the British Raj and more as a local saviour in certain parts of India. Examine why. (250 Words)

[The Wire](#)

[Livemint](#)

Background:-

- Arthur cotton known as the "Apara Bhageeratha" has roughly 3,000 statues of him gives a hint of the respect he still holds amongst farmers.

Work done by him and why he is considered as a local saviour:-

- He is the architect of some of the grandest river-based projects that were completed in the 19th century that continue to function to date.
 - Construction of anicuts to control the tumultuous Cauvery river and to boost life and prosperity in a decaying Tanjore district. The construction of canals helped in navigation.
 - Sir Cotton ensured the construction of Dowleshwaram Barrage before
 - The Prakasam Barrage constructed across the Krishna river in Vijayawada still caters to the irrigational needs of the region.
 - He had envisaged Polavaram or Indira Sagar major irrigation project proposed across the Godavari long time ago.
- The '**rice bowl**' of Andhra Pradesh – the Godavari region – is credited to his vision
- He had a **grander scheme of implementing such a large scale project across India, to connect all rivers.**
 - His vision extended beyond the Madras presidency that he served as **he wanted to connect India from Calcutta to Karachi and Indus to the Nilgiris.**
- He aimed to tame rivers so as to limit damage during floods and famines and create a **navigation system that would prove to be more cost effective.**
- He had **rallied against imperial overzeal for the railways.**
 - According to him, waterways were a doubly rewarding alternative to rail transport, simultaneously nourishing the farmlands of rural Indians.

- He is one of the few colonial administrators loved by the people and disliked by his own colleagues, taking stands that irritated his superiors.

Q5) What were the salient features of the Indian Independence Act of 1947? Examine how the process of construction of the Indian Constitution began. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Salient features of the Indian independence act of 1947 :-

- The Indian Independence Act was based upon the Mountbatten plan of 3rd June 1947 and was passed by the British parliament in 1947.
- **It provided for two dominion states** : India and Pakistan
- The boundaries between the two dominion states were to be determined by a **Boundary Commission** which was headed by Sir Cyril Radcliff.
- It provided for **partition of Punjab & Bengal** and separate boundary commissions to demarcate the boundaries between them.
- Pakistan was to comprise the West Punjab, East Bengal, Territories of the Sind, North West frontier provinces, Sylhet divisions of Assam, Bhawalpur, Khairpur, Baluchistan and 8 other princely states of Baluchistan.
- **The authority of the British Crown over the princely states ceased and they were free to join either India or Pakistan or remain independent.**
- Both the dominions of India and Pakistan **were to have Governor Generals to be appointed by the British King.** The act also provided for a common Governor general if both of them agreed.
- The constituent assemblies of both the states were **free to make constitutions of their respective countries.**
- For the time being till the constitution was made, **both of them would be governed in accordance with the Government of India act 1935.**
- **British Government would not continue any control** on any dominion.
- The Governor general was invested with adequate powers until March 1948 to issue orders for effective implementation of the provisions of the Indian independence act 1947
- Those **civil servants** who had been appointed before the August 15, 1947, will continue in service with same privileges.
- The Constituent Assemblies also **had the power to repeal any Act of the British Parliament**

How the process of construction of the Indian constitution began :-

- **Nehru report-**
 - In response to the Simon Commission a committee was appointed with **Motilal Nehru** as the Chairman in 1928 to determine the principles of the constitution for India. It was an outline of a draft constitution for India. Most of its features were later included in the Constitution of India.
- The demand for a Constituent Assembly was made back in 1934. M.N. Roy, a Communist party leader, was the first to moot the idea. This was then taken up by the Congress party and the British government accepted the demand in 1940. **The August offer, as it was known, allowed Indians to draft their Constitution.**
- The Constituent Assembly of India came into existence as per the provisions of Cabinet Mission Plan of May 1946. Its task was to formulate constitution/s for facilitating appropriate transfer of sovereign power from British authorities to Indian hands.
- The first sitting of the Constituent Assembly for the dominion of India took place on August 14, 1947. This Constituent Assembly, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, was a sovereign and a legislative body. **The seven-member drafting committee was set up on August 29, 1947, with B.R. Ambedkar as the Chairperson.**
- The motion and draft constitution was declared as passed on November 26th, 1949. 284/299 members affixed their signature to the constitution.
- On the same day the people of India in the constituent assembly adopted, enacted and gave to themselves this constitution. The original constitution which was adopted on November 26th, 1949 consisted of a preamble, 395 articles and 8 schedules.
- As per the provisions in the Constitution, it formally commenced on January 1950, bringing it in force in its entirety. This date was most probably chosen to commemorate the declaration of '*Poorna Swaraj*' (Total Independence) by Nehru at an annual session of the Congress in Lahore in 1929.

Q6) How did the three-language policy evolve and came to be accepted? In the light of recent accusation about imposition of Hindi, do you think English is key to deciding India's future language policy? Comment. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Three language formula:

- The 'Three Language Formula' was devised in the chief ministers conferences held during 1961.
- The National Commission on Education known as the Kothari commission examined and recommended a graduated formula which was recommended by the National Policy on Education, 1968.
- At the secondary stage, the State Governments should adopt, and vigorously implement, the three-language formula which includes the **study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking States, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking States.**
- **The First Language** that students should study- Mother tongue or the regional language
- **The Second Language**— In Hindi-speaking states, this would be English or some other language belonging to Modern India. In Non-Hindi states, this will be English or Hindi
- **The Third Language**— In Hindi-speaking states, this would be English or some other language belonging to Modern India, but the one that is not chosen as the second language. In Non-Hindi states, this will be English or some other language belonging to Modern India, but the one that is not chosen as the second language

Imposition of Hindi:-

- Committee of parliament on official language is accused of operating not only to promote Hindi everywhere but also banish English from the land. It appears to believe that Hindi cannot thrive as long as English survives.
- Also the recent proposal by Indian government to make Hindi as the official language of India in UN earned criticism.

English is the key:

- It is the common language through which non Hindi speaking and Hindi speaking people converse so removing this link would lead to imposition of Hindi over the other states .
- English is a global language and Indians have been very efficient in using it be it call centers, IT sector .Pushing English away would only complicate the employment status of these people in India.
- As the world is integrated the role of English has increased manifold.
- Some of the languages spoken in India are much older than Hindi and are seen as symbol of its rich culture and heritage. Hence imposition of Hindi on such people would be met with resistance.
- English can act as a link language without endangering the sentiments of any state.

However English should be constrained because:-

- Parents prefer English medium schools over vernacular language schools.
- In the modern Indian society speaking English is equated with higher status which means people who speak English are superior than one speaking mother tongue
- Quality of English education in rural areas is not very good and so it becomes difficult for the children there to compete with urban area students.

Conclusion:-

- It is time for India to relook its language policy under Part XVII which became obsolete more than 50 years ago.
- The nation must adopt mother tongue plus English, with Hindi accorded a pride of place for ceremonial occasions at national and international levels.

Q7) What was Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's vision of India? How did he strive to achieve his vision? Examine. (250 Words)

[The Wire](#)

Vision of Subhash Chandra Bose:-

- He wanted different communities in the country to enjoy basic human rights, good health, literacy, decent employment, and live together in peace and harmony.
- His fight was not only for political freedom but also social and economic freedom.
- The creative spirit must set to work the social, religious and commercial life.
- Society must be purged of narrowness and inequality.
- Religion must be freed from bigotry and superstition.
- The Indian business community must grow into a healthy self-conscious and public-spirited body corporate.
- In the domain of culture India wants genuine poets, painters, sculptors, historians, philosophers, economists imbued with the spirit of scientific research and endowed with a real creative talent.

How did he strive to achieve his vision:

- **Education:**
 - He believed that basic education should be grounded in one's own national and cultural context, which would then prepare students for higher education in a wider international environment.
- **Genuine nationalism must embrace all those who have made India their home.**
 - Tolerance of differences in terms of ethnicity, caste, gender, religion is the ultimate sign of maturity for a people and a nation.
 - How Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians could all unite under one banner and one slogan – Unity, Faith and Sacrifice.
- **Along with illiteracy, unemployment and poverty were to him the priority areas**
- He stood for necessary attention on **pro people economy and planning.**
 - He wanted **large scale industrialization and scientific agriculture** aided by the state to serve the problem of poverty and unemployment.
- He had been a strong proponent of **socialist reconstruction of the nation. He stood for increased national production and equitable social distribution**
- He made emphasis on **Panchayati Raj Institutions, radical land reforms, cheap credit to the peasant and likewise development of social forestry and cultivation**. This shows his determination of creating a modern and a socialist state based on economic regeneration to improve the lot of millions of down trodden masses,
- There was a Rani Jhansi regiment in his army showing **gender parity**.

He is right:-

- **School education in India suffers from serious systemic lacunae.**
- Poor education standards mean that many of them will not be employable.
- Cow vigilantes, Discrimination against Muslims and Dalits etc. are rampant in India

Conclusion:

- Netaji is an undisputed visionary and his valour, courage, patriotism and bravery were exceptional and will be remembered for times to come. Netaji's vision of equity and justice remain exemplary and profound today.

Q8) It seems that the three – fraternity, liberty and equality – can coexist only if one follows the way of the Buddha. Comment on the Dr Ambedkar's statement. (150 Words)

The Wire

Answer:-

- Ambedkar pointed out that exploitation had many dimensions, economic, social, religious and political. In the Indian context social or political exploitation is no less than economic
- As a relentless champion of democracy and human rights he was against dictatorship and said that society should aim at laying a new foundation on the basis of equality, liberty and fraternity. **He believed in democratic and constitutional provisions for social transformation.**
- According to him, the foundation of Hindu religion is based on Chaturvarna – the concept of inequality, injustice, discrimination and exploitation. But the religion he gave the depressed Classes is **Buddhism, which is based on universal brotherhood, justice, equality and fraternity and to serve the humanity.**

- According to Ambedkar, in Buddha's philosophy, Liberty and Equality had a place only as a safeguard against the breaches of liberty and equality; but he did not believe that the law can be a guarantee for breaches of liberty or equality. He gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty or equality or fraternity which was another name for brotherhood or humanity, which was again another name for religion.
- Buddhism teaches Pragna (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), Karuna (compassion), and Samata (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life.
- **Buddhism alone can solve the problem of social and natural suffering.** He wanted a religion that was clearly worldly in the sense of providing a morality that could have the potential of reconstructing the world on the basis of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.
- **The centre of Buddha's Dhamma is man; its base is morality, and its aim is the wellbeing of mankind.** The way of the Buddha is good for the downtrodden, good for the country, and good for mankind.
- **To follow this path means freedom from slavery, freedom from caste rigidity and freedom from graded inequality as it allows all to intermingle freely in all walks of life.**
- According to Ambedkar, society has been aiming to lay a new foundation and was summarised by the French revolution in three words, fraternity, liberty and equality. **But it failed to produce equality. Equality will be of no value without fraternity or liberty.**
- Ambedkar points out that Buddhism also emphasizes on other aspects, namely, social freedom, intellectual freedom, economic freedom and political freedom.
- To sum up, Buddhism is ideally suited for the purpose of egalitarian justice as it is based on the concept of liberty, equality and fraternity. It can elevate the downtrodden, oppressed and suppressed sections to the highest level and give them social equality along with spiritual solace what they want.

Q9) How did Mahatma Gandhiji's death affect the course of young India? Critically analyse.
(250 Words)

The Wire

Background:

- Mahatma Gandhi's reputation is one of the most sensible, humane and farsighted leaders in history.
- His ideas of non violence, tolerance for all religions etc. are still largely applicable in India and the world.

Positives:

- His death led to the end of communal riots and communities accepted living together
- Reservation for socio economic backward communities was given .
- Focus on education increased
- Cottage industries and MSME were established and agriculture was an important component in the first five year plan.
- India followed policy of non alignment ,Panchsheel were based on Gandhian ideals itself.
- Indian constitution was inspired by his teachings as many directive principles have Gandhian socialist ideals.
- The shock of Gandhi assassination strengthened role of secularists in the government

Negatives:

- Over a period of time the divisive forces which were there before and during independence came strong like the Khalistan movement, demands for secession, Communal riots, regionalistic tendencies started with demand for separate states etc
- Also Congress lost its base as a social entity and stayed predominantly as a political entity
- The values of truth enshrined by Gandhi reduced and corrupt behaviour largely took over the Indian society along with intolerance
- Failure to focus on agriculture led to rise in unemployment of the youth.
- Decentralisation and devolution of powers which was emphasized by Gandhi became a reality much later.
- His idea of non violence deteriorated over the period of time and India finally became a state with nuclear weapons.

Conclusion:-

- Gandhi proved that one man has the power to take on an empire, using both ethics and intelligence.

- Other peaceful resisters such as Martin Luther King Jr. during the 1960s civil rights movement and Tibet's Dalai Lama have emulated his methods in years since, shaking up the dynamic of world politics in the process.

Topic: Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

Q1) It makes no sense for India, which prides itself on its multilingualism, to make a case for Hindi at the UN. Comment. (150 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- Indian government is considering a case to make Hindi the official language of India at UN. So there is a need to analyse the necessity of such a move by India .

Positives :-

- According to the Constitution, Hindi is the official language of the Union of India for all official purposes, as also English .
- Even though English was to be used for just 15 years from the adoption of the Constitution, but Parliament provided for continued use of English in 1963.
- So, whether the head of state or the prime minister comes from a Hindi-speaking region or not, the official communication from him/her has to be in these two languages.
- If Hindi gets adopted as an official language at the UN this is more about India's soft power than anything else.
- For the Government of India, obtaining official language status for Hindi at the UN is an attractive way of enhancing its stature among languages and propagating the greater use of Hindi

Concerns:-

- The process of making an addition to the UN's official language list is an exacting one since it requires **a two-thirds majority of the total of 193 member countries**
- Not only these countries need to vote in favour of India but **also share expenditure**. Economically weaker countries that support India shy away with this clause.
- Even if the funding part was taken care of, **it will be a gross waste of resources** to spend millions of dollars every year to fund the required translation and interpretation work.
- The last General Assembly resolution on the status of multilingualism at the UN was concerned that the availability of official documents in all official languages was limited in some areas of Secretariat activity. **So expecting UN to include one more language may not be practical.**
- Many of Indian representatives can use English very well then what is the need for the introduction of **Hindi when it is not even the national language.**
- If Hindi becomes the official language India will give the impression on the global stage that it has one pre-eminent language and **compromise its identity of linguistic pluralism.**
- The **question is what purpose is being served by this** as there is no choice for India's future leaders who don't know Hindi in a difficult position.
- It goes **against the spirit of inclusiveness** propagated by the Constitution

Way ahead:-

- Since there aren't enough countries that have a Hindi-speaking population, intense diplomatic effort will be required to swing it for India.

Q2) Discuss the socio-cultural and other factors that make it difficult to regulate events such as jallikattu despite ban by the Supreme Court. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- Despite SC ban, the organising of Jallikattu held recently led to the death of two onlookers in Tamil Nadu raising concerns.

Socio cultural factors which people believe make it hard to regulate:-

- **Concern on preserving native breeds of bulls.** Few indigenous breeds which are known for their strength and ferocious nature are only used in this sport.
- **An age old tradition cannot be banned citing some odd cases.** Steps must be taken to enforce strict rules and regulate the event. With over 4000 years of recorded history, it is one of the oldest sport in the world.
- **Bulls are mostly not killed or tortured during Jallikattu in Tamilnadu.** Hurting a bull either by the owner or the player is a serious fault, which leads to disqualification.
- The Sport has become an **intrinsic part of the Tamil culture** that it has broken all religious and caste barriers. People of all religions, caste and creed participate in this sport.
- The participants and Jallikattu supporters consider it as **cultural right** enshrined in the constitution.

Other factors:-

- **District authorities have failed** to find better ways to regulate the events because the scale of the event is very challenging.
 - There are too many events in too many places with in a period of a few days.
- With change of office bearers, the **Animal Welfare Board of India** softened its stance towards this issue
- After last year's protests against the Supreme Court ban on Jallikattu, **the authorities have been wary of condemning bull-taming during Pongal.**
- **People started supporting it even after SC banned it.**
- If law enforcement agencies interfere during Jallikattu, law and order issues might arise.

Way ahead:-

- As Jallikattu enjoys popular support of the public and is associated deeply with their sentiments instead of totally banning it a concrete mechanism with effective safety measures need to be brought in to avoid further loss of life and not compromising animal rights as well.

Topic: Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc. - their forms and effect on the society.

Q1) What do you understand by instrumentalism in political philosophy? Is Tagore's non-instrumentalism the need of the hour? Examine. (150 Words)

[The Indian Express](#)

Instrumentalism :-

- **Instrumentalism** advanced by the American philosopher John Dewey says that concepts and theories are merely useful instruments, and their worth is measured not by whether the concepts and theories are true or false or whether they correctly depict reality, **but by how effective they are in explaining and predicting phenomena.**
- It maintains that the **truth** of an idea is determined by its success in the **active solution** of a problem, and that the **value** of an idea is determined by its function in **human experience.**

Tagore's non instrumentalism is necessary:-

- Tagore knew that excessive instrumentalism, where all aspects of life and society had to be justified on some altar of material purpose or the need to dominate, was destructive of life itself. It was that instrumentalism which made people forget real virtues of contentment, restraint, tranquillity, forgiveness which are all the features of higher civilization.
- The society around the world is losing grip over reality as instead of being the source of plenitude, comfort and life, air and water, ecosystems have become new self-inflicted hazards. The current age prides itself on its tough-minded realism and yet cannot get a handle on this basic truth so it is a flight from reality.
- Collective identities like Hindu, Muslim, Nationalism etc lead people to lose a sense of reality in three ways.
 - The more people identify these collective identities to the exclusion of all else, the more abstract people become.
 - Human hopes and wishes, joys and sorrows, quirks and interests, all get subsumed under the tyranny of a compulsory identity.

- Public relationships are mediated too much through collective nouns and pronouns, not enough through individual human sympathies.

Conclusion:-

- Today when materialism & consumerism are increasing at the high pace neglecting the reality of the plight of the 'nature', it has become important to rethink over Tagore's non-instrumentalism & create an environment of 'truth'.

Q2) How did the 1979 'Islamic Revolution' affect the Iranian polity and society? Examine the nature and causes of recent protests by working class people in Iran. (250 Words)

The Wire

Background:-

- Hundreds of people took to the streets of Iran's second city Mashhad in December 2017 recently.

Islamic revolution impact on polity and society :-

- After the system of despotic monarchy had been overthrown, the economy and the apparatus of government had collapsed, military and security forces were in disarray.
- Polity:-**
 - The Constitution provides political legitimacy to "God" and the divine law given in the Koran.
 - What began as an authentic and anti-dictatorial popular revolution based on a broad coalition of all anti-Shah forces was soon **transformed into an Islamic fundamentalist power-grab.**
- Society:-**
 - The Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979 brought a one hundred percent **reversal in the trend of secularization** which the country was experiencing. In fact, Islam became the official new state ideology of the clerical fundamentalist elites.
 - Such a clear emphasis on Islam as the centre of governance has profound effects on Iran's societal fabric. **The 1979 Islamic Constitution resulted in a shift of the legal system from a secular to religious orientation.**
 - Extra and Quasi Judicial Activity**
 - From 1979 to 1994 more than one thousand women have been stoned to death in Iran. This is just one example of the extra-or quasi-judicial activity taking place in the legal process.
 - In fact, when the new government achieved power, **women were once again subjugated and restricted to the confines of their homes.** In every aspect of their lives, women were discriminated against.
 - Marriage:-**
 - Men can legally have affairs through the institution of **sigheh** or **temporary marriage.**
 - Men can obtain a unilateral divorce from their wife or wives.
 - The marriage age for females has been lowered to nine and in some instances to seven.
 - The **reproductive policies** of the new regime declared contraception and any form of family planning as being against Islam.
 - Mothers no longer have equal rights in terms of child custody.
 - The religious edicts of the mullahs are enforced by an armed moral police who arbitrarily stop couples in the streets to make sure that no immoral act is taking place

Nature of recent protests:-

- The recent protests have **decentralized the dissent** and brought **marginal areas into the political and security equation.**
- While the recent protests have been more widespread and most of the gatherings have not gone beyond the thousands.**
- The Kurdish regions were also quiet in 2009, but this time it became a significant centre of the protests.
- Ethnic dimension is important:-**
 - Tabriz was again silent, but some other Azari towns such as Ardabil joined the protests which was not the case before.

- The recent dissent has been dubbed the '**uprising of the poor**', who have been hardest hit by the country's economic woes.
- Most of the slogans **were anti-establishment** and hardly any of the factions have benefited from the recent events.
- More importantly, reformist factional leaders like Muhammad Khatami seem to have very little influence over the angry protesters.
- Also unlike 2009, the recent unrest **has had no leadership and no sense of unified objectives**.
- **Neither the protests nor the subsequent crackdown have had an impact on Iran's relations with the outside world.**
- The **recent protests have not been as bloody as 2009**.
- The current protests seem **un-coordinated and mostly attended by lower classes members**.
- These protests represent a **return to the agenda of a democratic revolution**.

Causes of the recent protests:-

- They originated from the **protest against the budget law** (proposed a hike in gas prices)the government presented in early December of 2017
- **Rising prices and growing inequality** were the main instigators of the recent protests.
- **The protests have come about as a result of the frustration many of the population have with poor economic conditions..**
- **Privatisation, job casualisation** and the reform of the monthly cash transfers every Iranian is entitled to motivate popular rage.
- Population is so frustrated with **poor economic conditions**.
- **Iran's economy**, heavily focused on the oil industry, has been a mess for a long time which was marked particularly by high levels of **inflation, unemployment, and inequality**.
- **Prices of basic goods increased by roughly 40 percent** in 2017.
- The hen shortage due to bird flu **caused egg prices** to spike by **50 or even 100 percent**,
- The socioeconomic roots of the protests, in short, **have now linked up with deeper political dissatisfaction with a government** that has failed to deliver on its promises to make ordinary Iranians' lives better.

Conclusion:-

- Iran isn't on the verge of revolution yet. But things could still escalate an unpredictable way, leading to violent repression, bigger protests, and more serious political instability in the country.

Q3) What is secular nationalism? Why is it under threat lately? Is threat to secular nationalism a global phenomenon or unique to India? Examine. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Secular nationalism :-

- Nationalism is defined as a feeling of belongingness towards a particular nation. It is based on shared beliefs, history, shared political ideals, common political identity etc but not religion. This inclusive characteristic sums up to secular nationalism.
- It was in 1857 during the first war of Indian independence that secular nationalism was manifested when fighting the British ,Hindu soldiers had no hesitation in accepting the Muslim king as their supreme commander with no trace of any communal bias among the Hindu, Muslim or Sikh soldiers.
- Religious nationalism is an ideology that combines traditional religious beliefs in divine law and authority with the modern notion of the nation-state. Frequently associated with quests for ethnic autonomy, religious nationalism draws on a religion as a repository of powerful symbols, ready to be tapped and put into action, as politics come to be seen in religious terms.

Reasons why it's under threat and threat exists even in India:-

- **Rise of religious nationalism:-**
 - Indian nationalism became associated with superficial concerns for the cow
 - Muslim youth being radicalised by terrorist organisations in social media.
 - Love Jihad incidents.

- Trying to distort the history of India by glorifying it as a Hindu nation.
- A **culture of hate** that is being perpetrated in the name of nationalism is increasingly visible in India. The murders of journalists recently.
- The dictation of what nationalism consists of and what it does not.
- **Government's role:-**
 - Could not stop the incidents affecting the lives of the minorities
 - Haryana announced that the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu holy text, would become mandatory throughout the state.
 - A number of churches were vandalized etc.
- Laws were not applicable in a uniform manner.
- Radicalisation of youth by anti social elements and also social media.

Global phenomenon :-

- A disturbing aspect of the globalization of religion is taking place like the violent conflicts, worldwide that are rooted in religion or expressed in religious terms. For instance the religious persecution of Rohingya muslims.
- Nazism and fascism were both ugly manifestations of nationalism
- With rising protectionism countries are increasingly taking action against minorities to safeguard majority interests like Ban on immigration of muslims from some muslim countries in US.
- Some states even follow religion as part of state policy like Pakistan where minority communities are persecuted for blasphemy.
- Rise of Islamic fundamentalism in especially the middle eastern countries.

Conclusion:-

- Despite such instances around India and the world, society is progressing as the fundamentalist attitudes are checked by the constitution and judiciary in India. Similarly some countries are moving to promote harmony among different communities
- Indian nationalism must be reinvigorated by stressing on three pillars: Constitutionalism (respect for the Constitution, due process, and rule of law), pluralism (respect and preservation of India's diversity) and humanism (respect and promotion of insaaniyat).

Q4) What is populism and what are its consequences? Do you think it's the common man who's to be blamed for the rise of populism across the world? Critically analyse, especially in the light of Brexit and Climate change issues. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Populism:-

- **Populism** is a political philosophy supporting the rights and power of the people in their struggle against a privileged elite.
- Populism is the label political elites attach to policies supported by ordinary citizens that they don't like.
- **When important concerns of the people are not addressed by the elites, the populist movements tend to form to challenge the establishment.** Their ideas can rejuvenate democracy, bring new people into the political process, and adjust the political system to societal change.

Consequences:-

- **It addresses the issues of the common man**
- They are often based on a crude division between "us" (the pure people) and "them" (the corrupt elites and/or the foreigners). **They often claim absolute moral superiority and possession of the whole truth. That makes them reject the legitimacy of the opponent.**
- It's a movement, a revolt, that is rising throughout Europe. There is **re-emergence of state egotism and nationalism.**
- For many populist movements, national sovereignty is the highest good. **They are thus intrinsically mistrustful of international rules and tend to adopt aggressive "zero-sum" foreign policies.**

- By voting to leave the E.U., **the British people showed that the integration of the West is neither inevitable nor irreversible**, a message that US president's campaign **made U.S. to pull back from its commitments around the world** and to focus on "America first."
- **It is a world where the international agreements of the past are up for renegotiation** and the interests of the nation-state are not bound by an established global order.
- **Often results in a decline in rational debate about political issues.**
- Populist movements are often led by charismatic leaders and have little internal democracy and accountability. **These leaders tend to develop personality cults and, when they come to power, they often turn authoritarian. There is also a high risk of corruption and abuse of power.**
- **Populist movements often turn against representative democracy.**
- Populist parties have few convincing solutions to 21st century challenges. Many of these are intrinsically transnational in character, such as coping with climate change, migration, economic development, scientific and technological progress; and regional and global stability. **None of these objectives can be achieved by pulling up the drawbridge and withdrawing to behind fences or walls.**

Common man's mistake :-

- For more than a generation, the Western elites settled into a consensus on most major issues from the benefits of free trade and immigration to the need for marriage equality. Their uniformity on these basic questions consigned dissenters to the political fringe further **aggravating the sense of grievance that now threatens the mainstream.**
- In U.S and Europe population groups are suffering from stagnating incomes, job losses, and social insecurity ,rising inequality ,radicalisation, immigration issue leading to leaders taking populist decisions like Mexican wall, not allowing migrants in to a country etc.
- **Crisis of representative democracy.** For a number of reasons the bonds between the public and their political representatives have weakened. **Many people have lost trust in mainstream politics and have turned to alternative political offers.**
 - The 2008 financial crisis and the refugee crisis of 2015/16 acted as catalysts; they spread a sense of insecurity and loss of control that galvanized the already-present frustration and fuelled the rise of populist parties.

It's not common man mistake :-

- **Political parties and leaders:-**
 - Populist parties have grown by exploiting the idea that the EU is to blame for an economic crisis caused by the whims of the markets.
 - Vote for Brexit reflects rising general discontent by the excluded that is driving the rise of the likes of Donald Trump in the US, as well as of Italy's own populist Five Star Movement.
 - Similarly when leaders make promises to appease a particular group but not in national interest like loan waiver issue in India, freebies during elections etc.
 - **Fear of their populist competitors prompts mainstream politicians to prioritize national interests and adopt EU sceptical positions**, which weakens solidarity among member states.
 - Populist parties are also at least partly responsible for the growing demand for referenda on EU matters, **which for them are perfect instruments for mobilization.**
- **Technology:-**
 - The **speed, superficiality and interactive nature of social media make them very well suited to spread populist ideas.**
 - Phenomena like "post truth" and "fake news" present huge challenges to traditional representative democracy.

Conclusion :-

- The EU and its member states have to **pay more attention to the consequences of inequality and social injustice**, and take action to cushion the effects of global competition and asymmetric shocks on vulnerable citizens.
- **Apart from providing opportunities and assistance to these people, the EU also needs to tackle inequality by promoting fairer tax systems** that ensure multinationals pay their fair share, exposing tax havens, and preventing money laundering and corruption.

- **Managing migration well is another crucial challenge.** Europe needs immigration in view of its demographic decline, but the process needs to be handled in an orderly manner. This requires better control over the external border, better common rules in the areas of migration and asylum, and more effective institutions.
- EU institutions and the governments of member state should also explore new ways to **make politics more transparent**, participative, and democratic. If citizens felt more involved and consulted, they would regain confidence in their representatives and would be less attracted by the simplistic solutions of populist parties.

Q5) The latest asset price bubble of Bitcoin is another symptom of capitalism's inconsiderate pursuit of private wealth. Comment. (150 Words)

[EPW](#)

Background:-

- It is the very monetary policy of quantitative easing followed by central banks since the great financial crisis that has provided the unprecedented liquidity. This has been routed into speculative investment in the asset markets .This led to creation of Bitcoin.
- Bitcoin was created in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis to operate outside of central governments, banks and financial institutions. Bitcoin appears to be in **bubble territory** not only because of its price run-up but also given the speculation, volatility, and new players in the space.

It is another symptom of capitalism because :-

- With quantitative easing leading to easy liquidity, and with stagnation in the "real" parts of the developed capitalist economies, the competitive race to grab the hindmost of the impending capital gains naturally resumed.
- The idea that people invest in something not because of its value but instead because they assume they'll later be able to sell it to someone who is willing to pay a higher price.
- The futures markets are expected to draw more institutional investors into the Bitcoin space because it **lets them hedge their exposures** to protect themselves against Bitcoin's wild price swings
- Despite concerns about price volatility at one point bitcoin touched the \$20,000 mark in the third week of December from \$1,000 in January 2017.**Prices rise when demand exceeds supply, and more people wanting to buy Bitcoin explains its meteoric price rise.**
- That means you invest at your own risk, including and perhaps especially when it comes to Bitcoin and other crypto currencies.
- Bitcoin economy finds itself five years into this social experiment, with no central authority or backing, but nonetheless a growing global community guided by nothing but the collective belief that there is a better way for the world to go about the ordinary business of life. This is similar to capitalist where there is private control rather than the state.
- With bitcoin prices soaring, the large institutional investors have the opportunity of raking in huge capital gains.

However what Ethereum, Bitcoin and other experimental currencies want to prove is that money can *become* code, defined no longer by its financial value but by a kind of computational value. The deepest level of validation for Bitcoin and Ethereum transactions is not volume or exchange rates but the processor cycles required to compute the next bit of the block chain. **So Crypto currencies like Bitcoin pose a fundamental challenge to the notion of money itself and in extension to capitalism as well.**

Q6) The growing urban population creates deficiencies on the limited urban infrastructure. Critically examine how new migrants who are poor and belong to socially marginalised groups are affected vis a vis availability of urban basic services. (250 Words)

[EPW](#)

Background:-

- The pressure of population growth on urbanisation is visible from the data of Census 2011.

- About 17.4% of India's urban population lives in slums where housing conditions are inhuman, 5.49 million urban households in India do not have access to safe drinking water, 13% of the households have no bathing facilities within the home, and 2.9% of urban houses are in a dilapidated condition according to Census 2011.

Situation of migrants who are poor and belong to socially marginalised groups with respect to catering of urban basic services:-

- By 2030, India's urban population is set to reach 590 million, an addition of approximately 300 million to India's current urban population. Much of this growth will be due to rural-urban migration.
- While most migrants would qualify as lawful citizens of the land, in urban India, the rights of citizens get operationalised through a host of official documents, such as property lease or ownership papers, PAN cards, bank statements, bills, and voter IDs. **Bereft of these, the paperless migrant accesses basic goods and services at a premium in the black market economy**
- Issues with access to food entitlement under NFSA and PDS
- **Education and health benefits by government schemes are not implemented effectively for the migrants and with out of pocket expenditures for health services they stay poor.**
- In addition, **several structural issues**, such as the high gestation period of housing projects, limited and expensive capital, spiralling land and construction costs, high fees and taxes as well as unfavourable development norms are bottlenecks restricting the desired growth in housing stock in India.
- Disparities in access to basic amenities are also **noted by caste and class affiliation of urban dwellers and across migrant and non-migrant households.**
- Ration cards, insurance and pension schemes and education are luxuries they can only dream of.
- **With globalisation**, cities are less affordable for the poor. The processes of slum clearance and beautification of cities, and the development of infrastructural facilities under ongoing programmes have **marginalised the poor, especially the migrants**
- Poverty led migration has induced poor quality of urbanisation led by misery, poverty, unemployment, exploitation and the rapid growth of slums and inequalities. More often, **the poor migrants live in deplorable conditions, without any provision of basic services.**
- With enrolment of Aadhar compulsory, access to basic services is getting even more difficult for migrants.
- The socially marginalised group migrant households also reveal a gloomy picture, yet they are much better off in many respects as compared to the poor migrant households. **Thus, it can be argued that poverty largely determines the accessibility of basic indicators rather than marginalised-group and caste affiliations.**
- **Based on the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data:-**
 - **The SCs, STs and OBCs report much lower figures for households having toilets for exclusive use.**
 - **SC, ST have higher poverty head count ratio than average of entire urban population.**
 - Most of the ST, SC and OBC houses do not have access to safe drinking water as compared to overall urban households
 - More than half of the BPL households have no access to toilets as compared to urban India. **This shows that economic and social stratification exists in the access to basic amenities.**
 - The poor migrant households, **followed by marginalised group migrant households, have the lowest coverage of pucca houses** suggesting that poverty and marginalised-group and caste affiliations definitely influence the quality of housing.
 - **The provision of basic services like access to tap/standpipe water is influenced by the caste and class affiliation of households.** Data reveals that non-migrant, upper-caste and non-poor households have higher access as compared to those of migrant, marginalised-group and poor households
 - **Possession of own house is lowest among the migrant households as compared to any other categories.**

However the situation is undergoing change with government trying to streamline the households and make basic amenities access to all urban poor:-

- Also, **the government interventions in the past decade provided ownership housing to the poor.**
- Kerala is the first State in the country to enact a social security scheme for the migrant workers. The scheme provides a registered migrant four benefits:
 - Accident/ medical care for up to ₹25,000
 - In case of death, ₹1 lakh to the family
 - Children's education allowance
 - Termination benefits of ₹25,000 after five years of work.

- When a worker dies, the welfare fund provides for the embalming of the body and air transportation. Such schemes need emphasis.
- **Schemes like Housing for all, Smart cities, Swachh Bharat focus on inclusive development and would help in uplifting of migrant and socially backward population as well.**

Way forward:-

- A Government appointed Panel has recommended necessary legal and policy framework to protect the interests of the migrants in the country, stating that the migrant population makes substantial contribution to economic growth and their Constitutional rights need to be secured. Government needs to implement this.
- **Caste based enumeration of migrants, access to PDS anywhere, low cost money transfer, anti-discriminatory measures need to be implemented.**
- States need to work together to provide portability of identity proof and entitlements, as well as build support systems for families left behind.

Topic: Poverty and developmental issues;

Q1) What is inequality, and what role does it play in inhibiting or encouraging growth, or in undermining democracy? Critically examine. (250 Words)

[Livemint](#)

Inequality :-

- **Inequality** is the difference in social status, wealth, or opportunity between people or groups. Inequality can be multidimensional in the sense there can be political inequality, social and economic inequality.
- Given the absence of a singular measure, inequality is even more nebulous on account of the absence of data, and hence it is hard to calculate the Gini coefficient.
- Despite being among the richest countries in the world, India has attracted negative attention in recent years as the second most unequal country in the world, after Russia.
- The factors affecting wealth/income concentration include economic growth rate, demographic trends, savings rates, globalization, inheritance and government policies

Role of inequality in inhibiting growth :-

- Inequality **could impair growth** if those with low incomes suffer poor health and low productivity as a result the poor struggle to finance investments in education.
- Inequality could also **threaten public confidence in growth-boosting policies** like free trade.
- More recent work by Raghuram Rajan suggests that **inequality could lead to economic or financial instability** as governments often respond to inequality by easing the flow of credit to poorer households.
- Ben Bernanke argues that inequality may also contribute to the world's savings glut, since the rich are less likely to spend an additional dollar than the poor. As savings pile up, interest rates fall, boosting asset prices, encouraging borrowing and **making it more difficult for central banks to manage the economy.**
- **World inequality report 2018:-**
 - The benefits of growth have been extremely skewed towards the rich. 90 per cent of the population accounted for just a third of the growth taking place during the period 1980-2016.
- **Higher inequality comes in the way of demand creation.** Economic growth is sustainable provided the poor are also able to rise in the hierarchy and spend on goods and services. If these incomes do not rise, the demand cycle is interrupted
- The rising income inequality undermines sustainability of economic growth.

Role of inequality in encouraging growth :-

- Inequality and unfairness are different and it is the latter that has incited so much political turmoil in the rich world today.
- Some of the greatest inequalities today are a consequence of industrial and health revolutions that began around 1750. The inequalities stemming from these advances both within and between countries are beneficial and fair, and a key feature of progress generally.

- According to IMF estimate one percentage point increase in the income share of the top 20% will drag down growth by 0.08 percentage points over five years, **while a rise in the income share of the bottom 20% actually boosts growth.**
- Economists say that some inequality is needed to propel growth.

Role of inequality in undermining democracy :-

- Getting rich by bribing the state for special favours is clearly unfair.
- According to world inequality report 2018, inequality as a rule exists everywhere in the world where the rich have become proportionately richer than the other groups in the last three decades or so.
 - For example, in India the share of the top 10 per cent in total national income in 2016 in India was 55 per cent.
- Increasing wealth concentration is also reflected in income growth.
- **According to IMF**
 - **Higher income inequality impedes class formation and poverty reduction.** In particular, the growth of the middle class plays a significant role in strengthening democratic structures and cultures. **But rising income inequality in India is hampering the formation and growth of the middle class**
- Rising income inequality, **also adversely impacts social spending to reduce social inequalities** of health, education and employment.
- Economic inequality can adversely **exacerbate a range of social problems**, including inter-group relations and conflict, social cohesion and violent crime.
- In a range of indicators including mean years of schooling, gross national income per capital and labor force participation rates, Indian women lag significantly behind Indian men. **Cumulative effects of entrenched inequality will worsen their deprivations.**
- Inequality is also **affecting India's urban landscape**. Recent studies show that class, ethnicity and caste inequalities represent the growing axis of residential segregation in contemporary urban India.
- Extreme inequality **leads to political tensions**, social instability, frustrated aspirations, loss of trust in governments, breakdown of law and order, discouraged investors, charges of crony capitalism, and drying up of investment and eventually growth itself.

Suggestions to overcome inequality (Extra):-

- **China's case study:-**
 - Meta narrative for China's economic development, is that **its leadership combined the drive for growth with the spreading of human capital.**
 - As the human capital endowment was relatively equal, most people could share in this growth, which accounts for the relative equality of outcomes in China when compared to India.
 - The greater participation of women in the workforce of China
- There is **need to spread health and education** far more widely amidst the population. Then **there is also the expenditure strategy** of substantially enhancing the outlay on education and health.
- **Need to reorient public policy** so that the government is more enabling of private entrepreneurship while being directly engaged in the equalisation of opportunity through a social policy that raises health and education levels at the bottom of the pyramid.
- **The elimination of exemptions and tax loopholes** and a widening of the tax net.
- Income disparity can also be reduced by **increasing the participation of women and reducing the gender pay gap.**

Conclusion:-

- Therefore tackling inequality and reducing the gap between citizens is ironically a necessity to keep the economy ticking

Q2) We need to articulate why education is most crucial for removal of poverty, and for India's development. Why and how we need to articulate the role of education in development? Discuss. (250 Words)

[The Indian Express](#)

Background:-

Education plays a significant role in the overall development of a person so naturally it helps in the country's development with improvement in social indicators, reduction of poverty etc

Why Education is important for removal of poverty and India's Development:-

- Education is the tool which alone can **inculcate national and cultural values** and liberate people of false prejudice, ignorance and representations.
- Education provides them **required knowledge, technique, skill and information and enables them to know their rights and duties towards their family, their society and towards their motherland at large.**
- Education expands their vision and outlook, provokes the spirit of healthy competition and a desire to advance for the achievements of their consciousness regenerating truth, and thereby capability to **fight injustice, corruption, violence, disparity and communalism**, the greatest hazards to the progress of the nation.
- Quality education is today's need as it is the development of intellectual skills and knowledge which will equip learners to fulfill the needs of professionals, decision makers and trainers.
- Education provides many opportunities in various fields for the development of the country. Education makes people independent, builds confidence and self-esteem, which is very important for the development of a country.
- The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report and the Education Commission's Learning Generation Report:-
 - 171 million people could be lifted out of extreme poverty if all children left school with basic reading skills. That's equivalent to a 12% drop in the world total.
- **Education increases individual earnings**
 - Education increases earnings by roughly 10% per each additional year of schooling
- **Education reduces economic inequalities**
 - If workers from poor and rich backgrounds received the same education, disparity between the two in working poverty could decrease by 39%.
- **Education promotes economic growth:-**
 - No country in the world has achieved rapid and consistent economic growth without at least 40 percent of its adult population being literate.
- The creation of green industries will rely on high-skilled, educated workers. Agriculture contributes 1/3 of all greenhouse gas emissions. Primary and secondary education can provide future farmers with critical knowledge about sustainability challenges in agriculture.
- **Education benefits people's health** throughout their entire lives, from a mother's pre-birth lifestyle to the likelihood of developing diseases later in life.
 - Women with at least six years of education are more likely to use prenatal vitamins and other useful tactics during pregnancy, thus reducing the risk of maternal or infant mortality.
- Education has proven to benefit women and girls at a higher rate than boys. **The empowerment that girls receive from an education both personally and economically is unmatched by any other factor.**

How to do it:-

- Education is a means to secure employment hence there is need to encourage and expand avenues for vocational training.
- **Make the problem visible**
 - Regular assessments are needed to measure progress in learning .India should participate regularly in international assessments so as to set goals and benchmark its performance and progress.
 - The quality of national assessments should be improved and third party assessors like Annual Status on Education Report and Educational Initiatives should be encouraged to provide periodic feedback.
 - The District Information System for Education (DISE) system should be upgraded to a 'Student Progress Tracking System' which will track learning levels of individual children and provide diagnostic data to serve as a basis for improvement to schools and teachers.
- **Build systemic and institutional capacity** by strengthening research on learning and building teacher strength .

- The focus on students, parents and teachers is on maximising exam marks and not on learning, which needs to be corrected by having Board Exams that measure learning.
- Implement the recommendations of Subramanian report especially giving precedence to merit.

Conclusion:

In India schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, RTE, encouraging creative ability by Stand Up India etc are steps in the right direction to make education the tool which enables light for many.

Q3) Examine how can all the stakeholders work together more effectively to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). (250 Words)

[Livemint](#)

Background:-

- As the problems such as persistent poverty and inequality, poor health, and environmental degradation that the SDGs aim to solve are systemic issues, there is a need for effective collaboration from multiple stakeholders.

Issues with traditional approach:-

- One size does not fit all does not work.
- The many different capabilities that must be brought together to address systemic issues are unable to collaborate with each other easily on the ground.
- The people, have inadequate voices in the design and management of expert-driven, top-down programmes.

Solutions:-

- **Strong institutions founded on principles of partnership**, cooperation, and universal justice are essential.
- **People must have a much greater say in governance.**
 - Only if local people will take responsibility for implementing the SDGs in their community and their region do we have a realistic change of accomplishing the audacious task set by Agenda 2030.
- **Dedicating to a human-centric, rights-based approach** across all the sustainable development goals will not only end poverty but also bring dramatic improvements in quality of life, the environment and governance for everyone.
- **Hunger can be eliminated** better opportunities for farmers are created.
- **Technology can help us to fundamentally transform education delivery.**
 - There is a need to move beyond "first study, then work" to a model based on lifelong learning.
 - Content and quality must change, with the emphasis on critical thinking, collaboration and flexibility alongside "hard skills".
 - Business must play a critical role in the constant skilling, reskilling and upskilling of employees and broader communities and focus on the needs of undernourished groups.
- Sustainability means **using fewer natural resources to produce food** and reducing food waste and loss. **Improved nutrition means reducing both hunger and obesity through improved education, and access and availability of quality foods.**
- Tackle wastewater especially in towns and cities as 80% of it is currently not treated.
 - **Accelerating technology, partnership models and financing mechanisms to scale wastewater treatment solutions can create "new" reuseable sources of water** for industry and agriculture and free up lots more fresh water for humans and nature.
- **Well-functioning and transparent institutions that effectively protect property rights, reduce red tape, combat corruption and keep nepotism in check are essential.** Doing this will create a stable and predictable business environment, fuel investment, create jobs and facilitate the production of higher value goods and services in an economy.
- Through a resilient, trusted digital infrastructure 2 billion people could be added to the innovation process. So a collaborative innovation processes focused on eliminating waste of resources instead of replacing labour with technology is needed.
- **Healthy oceans :**
 - There is a need to form new partnerships for fishing, acidification, waste, marine transport
 - Forge new forms of regional and global governance to manage blue commons.

▪ **Agriculture needs:**

- sustainable intensification and climate-proofing of agriculture
- scaled land-use planning with satellite observation
- ecosystem economics and natural capital modeling
- empowering rural, indigenous and forest people
- sorting land tenure and enforcing law, including for trafficking endangered species.

Q4) According to the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) the landlessness and dependence on manual casual labour for a livelihood are key deprivations facing rural families in India today. In the light of this observation and latest trends in construction jobs, discuss the measures that are needed to address rural distress in India. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- There is increase in evidence that agricultural income for the marginal farmers is likely to fall and farmer distress has already been growing leading to rise in farmers protests in several states.

Observations and trends from socio economic and caste census:-

- The rural census mapped deprivation using seven indicators.
- 5% of all rural households suffer from at least one deprivation indicator but landless households engaged in manual labour are more vulnerable.
- Nearly 54 million households are in the landless-labourer category.
- Along with landless families, small and marginal farmers are getting pauperised and more engaged in manual labour.
- The overall farm size is down from the 2.25 hectares (ha) average to a 1.25 ha average in 2010 and will continue to become even smaller.
- **Construction boom:-**
 - Employment in construction sector increased rapidly in 2005 due to investment in infrastructure, booming real estate etc.
 - However construction jobs are growing more slowly since 2011-12, as both public investment and private investment has fallen so fewer workers have been leaving agriculture since 2011-12. This is hurting landless labour and small and marginal farmers the most.
- Government has taken various measures like PMFBY, PMKSY, E-NAM increasing, SAMPADA scheme etc but more needs to be done.

Measures needed for reducing rural distress:-

- **Economic:-**
 - **Reducing input costs:-**
 - Greater subsidies could be extended for the purchase of agricultural equipment, fertilizers and pesticides
 - Allowing marginal farmers to be paid for tilling their own fields. Such measures could also increase their net income.
 - The **scope of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act could be increased.**
 - **Enhance access to non-farm sources of income** and providing remunerative prices for farm produce.
 - **Strengthen the repayment capacity of the farmers** by improving and stabilizing their income.
 - Institutional financing is available and accessible and benefit provision is simplified while disbursed funds are effectively monitored
 - Creating an **vibrant food processing sector**
 - Increasing the investment in **allied sectors** such as livestock and dairy sector
 - **Reforms in APMC market** and efforts to eliminate middle men.
 - **Bridging the income-consumption gap** especially in the case of Landless labourers by introducing efficient methods of **price stabilization**

▪ **Social:-**

- The **medical insurance coverage could be expanded** through the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna.

▪ **Technological:-**

- Improved technology, expansion of irrigation coverage, and crop diversification towards high-value crops are appropriate measures for raising productivity and farmers income.

▪ **Political and governance :-**

- States must undertake and **sincerely implement long-pending reforms in the agriculture sector with urgency.**
- Agricultural reforms, such as in **irrigation and warehousing infrastructure**, can help increase farm productivity and therefore incomes.
- States should seek to establish **early warning signals**, monitoring farmers who go past set limits and seek unsustainable loans.
- **Village-wise lists of deeply indebted farmers** must be prepared annually to identify farmers on the flight path to penury and potential suicide.
- The **NABARD along with the local administration** should be tasked with analysing such village lists for macro and local policy interventions, along with devising timely loan restructuring initiatives, insurance claim settlements and better counselling.
- **Implement recommendations of MS Swaminathan Committee** on MSP reforms and **Arvind Subramanian Committee** on Increasing Pulse Production.

Conclusion:-

- With empathy for India's farmers and a truthful assessment of on-the-ground farming reality, India must make the right choices for Indian agriculture.

Q5) India figures among countries with rapidly increasing income inequality, a problem that urgently needs to be addressed through systemic transformations. Discuss what systemic transformations are required. (250 Words)

Frontline

Background:-

- According to the World Inequality Report 2018, the national income figures in 2014 show that the top 1 per cent earned 21.7%. This is an indication of the skewed earnings profile of working Indian population.
- Income inequality in India further increased due to failure of labour-intensive manufacturing which could not accommodate people who left farming. Sharp reduction in the top marginal tax rate, and transition to a more pro-business environment had a positive impact on top incomes, in line with rent-seeking behaviour.

Systemic transformations needed are :-

- Sustainable attack on mass poverty should be focused on **job creation in the modern sectors** of the economy rather than redistribution through fiscal spending.
- Indian government first needs to **set up strong agriculture-friendly policies** that benefit both small farmers and landless workers, in order to curb distressed migration from rural areas.
- Urban growth has to be based on **labour-intensive industrialization**, so that enough jobs exist for both people who leave rural areas and the millions working in the informal sector.
- **Moderating income inequality:-**
 - Moderating income inequality will be essential for closing gaps in education, health and nutrition outcomes.
- **Tackling social exclusion:-**
 - Tackling prejudice and social exclusion will require other fundamental interventions: strengthening the agency, voice and political participation of such groups so that they can be empowered to shape their environment, and the decision making processes that matter for their well-being.
- **Inclusive growth can be promoted through three principal routes:**
 - By changing the patterns of economic growth such that the incomes of low-income households grow more than the average

- Through redistributive measures that contribute to growth while reducing inequality
- By expanding opportunities for low-income households and disadvantaged groups to access employment and income generation options.
- **Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion:-**
 - To help small and medium enterprises adopt new technologies and access new markets, **governments can act as facilitators of information** on topics such as improved production methods, products and markets, technical support services and vocational training.
 - **Governments can also strengthen business links between small and medium enterprises, large enterprises and government** by providing incentives for contracting with small and medium enterprises.
- **Labour market policies**
 - In addition to employment creation, there is growing recognition that fostering inclusive growth requires stronger labour market institutions.
- While action to tackle inequality must be taken at country level, it should be emphasized **that decisive progress will be possible only in the presence of conducive international policy frameworks.**
- **Community-based programmes and social spending:-**
 - Interventions that support participatory, community-based programmes focused on improving outcomes in education, health and nutrition can also have an important impact in closing gaps in well-being.
 - Study from 150 countries show that overall, investment in public services and social protection can tackle inequality.

Q6) There is growing political support across the world for the idea that public investment in social security is critical to eradicate poverty, boost economic growth, and reduce inequality. Has this support translated into tangible outcomes in terms of better life for the targeted people? Critically examine. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Public investment needed in social security and tangible outcomes provided by it are:-

- **Social :-**
 - A well-coordinated regulatory approach by state and central governments can help channelise quality investment in **higher and primary education along with healthcare**, enabling citizens to have access to basic social opportunities at an affordable cost.
 - The central government programmes like Rashtriya swasthya Bhima yojana providing insurance cover has helped many families get quality healthcare.
 - Similarly with investment in primary education through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and mid day meals even the most neglected households are sending their kids to school.
 - **China** made a similar push towards its healthcare and education sector (from the mid 1980s) that allowed **better performance across all socio-economic indicators.**
- **Economic:-**
 - Public investments across all industries, with a policy focus on increasing **female labour force participation** can go a long way in improving India's economic growth performance while **strengthening its social capital.**
 - Public investments over the long run can help in **improving the poor domestic industrial growth performance and boost manufacturing sector**
 - It will boost **producer and consumer confidence in the domestic market**, similar to how the **East Asian economies** achieved a highly consistent and sustainable performance in their economic growth levels.
 - Public investments in sectors or industrial activities that involve a greater labour intensity may allow **opportunities for medium- to low-skilled labour, in turn boosting growth.**
 - Increase in public investment in small and medium industries, textiles, apparel, rubber products, electrical equipment, hardware etc
 - will allow most of the working labour to be absorbed in these industries
 - It will help in expanding the export-potential of these export-oriented primary goods that are higher in consumer demand across countries in South and Southeast Asia.

Public investment alone would not suffice as is seen below:-

- According to World Social Protection Report 2017-19, there has been only a 2% increase in social protection coverage in the last two years around the world which is inadequate given the magnitude of the challenge. **Major obstacles in this regard are fiscal austerity measures.**
- Nearly two-thirds of children are not covered by any form of social protection so their education is unlikely to rank as a priority among households.
- 41% of mothers of newborns receive no maternity benefits.
- Only 27.8% of persons with severe disabilities worldwide receive appropriate support.
- **Indian scenario:-**
 - The gender gaps in labour force participation and wages are both high, showing that India's women are not benefiting equally from economic opportunities.
 - India scores well in terms of access to finance for business development and real economy investment yet new business creation continues to be held back by administrative burdens.

Suggestions:-

- Private investment, especially from foreign firms, requires a favourable business environment, which includes **strong property rights protection and also fair and speedy trials in the case of disputes.**
- Increasing India's narrow tax base can also give India more fiscal space to make these much needed social expenditures, particularly in health.
- Reducing red tape and fostering formal entrepreneurship
- Making education more equitable and strengthen vocation training
- **Increase transparency of public administration to make investment more inclusive.**

Topic: Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

Q1) The new political articulation of the Dalits is a matter of concern for those forces which are divisive and polarising. Discuss critically source, inspiration and consequences of new Dalit assertion in India. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

[The Indian Express](#)

Background:-

- Dalits have been oppressed since historic times but with increasing mobility through good education, jobs and the growing urbanization the dalit youth is striving assert their position in the society.
- The recent violence at Bhima Koregaon got the issue of dalit assertion to the forefront again.

Sources and inspirations :-

- **Historic:**
 - Battle at Koregaon:
 - In 1818, Mahar soldiers of the East India Company defeated the Peshwa army in Koregaon. This battle has attained legendary stature in Dalit history
 - Battle came to be seen as a victory of the Mahars against the injustices perpetuated by the Brahminical Peshwas.
 - The pillar erected to respect mahars support is considered as a site of positive memory of their valour and a symbol of their renewed political aspiration. It helps them relate to their social and political marginalisation in contemporary times.
 - Similarly Shivaji son Sambhaji's memorial was said to have been erected by the Mahars but upper caste Marathas refuse to acknowledge this
 - Ambedkar's movement of Dalit liberation created a sense of confidence and assertion in the community, which in turn enabled it to overcome traditional feelings of defeatism.
 - Dalit literature played an important role in sharpening confidence.

▪ Causes which pushed Dalit youth:

- Maratha youth, who are **facing unemployment and a lack of educational opportunities, are now being easily pulled into these conflicts by Hindutva organisations** that are consequently built by invoking past Maratha glory. The violent clashes in Bhima Koregaon were an extension of the conflict in Wadhu Budruk.
- The effect of land reforms and agrarian transformation while reinforcing the hold of landed castes and communities in the countryside has pushed Dalits and social segments akin to them further to the margins.
- There is a new enslavement and recrudescence of gradation and ranking at the workplace rather than enablement and camaraderie. This triggered dalit youth to fight the hierarchy.
- The Hindutva agenda of assigning lower castes to their predestined places has further exacerbated the sense of being unwanted.
- The use of social media to network and communicate has proliferated
- Access to higher and professional education has enabled horizontal and vertical social and economic mobility for Dalits. This **new class has started to refuse the conventional social stigmatisation and subordination of the Dalits by the upper castes.**
- Protests by students at Hyderabad in the wake of the suicide of Rohith Vemula, who faced caste-based harassment, mobilisation of thousands of Dalits in Una, Gujarat, mobilisation at the Jantar Mantar in the national capital, are examples of Dalit assertion that seem to have upset casteist sections. These protests till now have been peaceful.
- **Political:-**
 - Constitutional protection given to Dalits in article 17 and other legislative provisions gave them support to fight for their rights
 - With reservation policy many dalits have gained mobility.
 - Dalit movements in the past like Dalit Panther movement, Kanshiram's role made dalits aware of their strength in political power as well.

Consequences:

- **Positives:**
 - This Dalit assertion has started posing a challenge to the age-old hierarchy-based supremacy of the upper and intermediate castes and even the OBCs.
 - Women and men are found shoulder to shoulder with one another in this 'long march',
 - Affirmative action has created a Dalit middle class
 - Dalit forums have cropped up in almost every university after Rohith Vemula's suicide. Dalit student politics will see a massive change and so will the politics at the state and national levels
- **Negatives:-**
 - Caste remains the most influential factor in India's electoral politics, particularly in rural areas, this reaffirms that caste constitutes the "basic structure" of Indian society.
 - There is a resurgence of folklore, sites of atrocities have become places of pilgrimage, evocative posters and imaginative slogans challenge dominant perception and sensitivity.
 - **Increasing Dalit rights assertions in India have unleashed a wave of backlash violence and abuse against Dalits. Official National crime statistics in India, showing a 19% rise in crimes against Dalits including violence, rape and murder committed by dominant caste members.**
 - Populist policies could be brought out by the political parties to grab dalit votes further.

Q2) Empowering women to make reproductive choices is the best way to address fertility, and its associated health challenges in India. Analyse. (250 Words)

The Hindu

Background:-

- The final report of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 4 showed that total fertility rate reduced to 2.2 children showing the success of family planning methods .

Empowering women necessary to address fertility because:-

- The **successful lowering of TFR** and 1 percent reduction in the unmet family planning needs, can be ascribed to **literacy, which has gone up among women**.
 - Where TFR numbers are high, such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar because of **lack of access and marriages of girls under the age of 18**.
 - **Women with 12 years or more of schooling have a fertility rate of 1.7**, while women with no schooling have an average rate of 3.1.
- **Has the positive impact on the health of the mother. It also encourages spacing between babies, which should ideally be 32 months or more.** This is also because of economic empowerment.
- With increasing literacy, the **resultant awareness is empowering women to make sexual health and reproductive choices**.
- There is a **high rate of teenage pregnancies in rural areas**. Though the number of teenage pregnancies is down from NFHS 3 – 16 percent to 8 percent there are still enough women without access to or a choice in safe reproductive healthcare.
- There is a need to treat women as autonomous beings able to take control over their sexual and reproductive lives and to make decisions on these matters on the basis of access to adequate information. **A woman's right to reproductive autonomy is often impaired because of her status in society**.
- **Data show that the higher the level of a woman's educational attainment, the fewer children she is likely to bear.** Given that fewer children per woman and delayed marriage and childbearing could mean **more resources per child and better health and survival rates** for mothers and children, this is an important link.
 - For example, an education reform in Kenya that **increased the length of primary education by a year resulted in increased female educational attainment, and delayed marriage and fertility**.
 - The data in India shows that the **number of children per woman declines with women's level of schooling**.
- The economic theory of fertility suggests an incentive effect: **more educated women have higher opportunity costs of bearing children in terms of lost income. The household bargaining model suggests that more educated women are better able to support themselves and have more bargaining power, including on family size**.
- More educated women may learn different ideas of desired family size through school, community, and exposure to global communication networks. **Finally, more educated women know more about prenatal care and child health, and hence might have lower fertility because of greater confidence that their children will survive**.
- Education levels are strongly correlated with another important aspect of the fertility rate. **Higher levels of schooling mean lower levels of teenage pregnancy**.
 - Teenage childbearing results in greater health risks. Birth intervals smaller than 24 months are associated with increased health risks for both mothers and newborns.
- **Lack of education robs women of reproductive control, feeding into India's maternal and child health problem.**
- **Combined with younger pregnancies and higher childbearing rates, it also constrains women's economic choices.** This, in turn, reinforces a lack of reproductive control
- **Staying in school provides a protective effect**.
 - Girls who stay in school are less likely to become pregnant, less likely to marry at a young age and more likely to use contraception. Staying in school also provides a protective effect against HIV acquisition
- **Misuse of sterilisation camps** is due to women's ignorance due to illiteracy and lack of awareness regarding reproductive rights.
- The vast majority of studies found some positive associations between women's empowerment and lower fertility, longer birth intervals, and lower rates of unintended pregnancy.

Way forward:-

- Laws protecting against child marriage and against rape and other forms of gender-based violence clearly need to be developed and implemented .
- Gender norms that accept gender-based violence are harmful to the lives and reproductive health of adolescents.
- Access to family planning, reduced child mortality, access to work opportunities may also influence the number of children a woman bears.

Q3) What do you understand by social innovation? Examine how digital technologies are redefining social innovation in India. (250 Words)

[Livemint](#)

Social innovation:-

- Social innovation is defined as the process of inventing, securing support for, and implementing novel solutions to social needs and problems.
- It is a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals.
- Social innovation is the best construct for understanding and producing lasting social change.

Digital technologies and social innovation:-

- Digital technologies have boosted growth, expanded opportunities, and improved service delivery.
- **Aadhar:**
 - A digital identification system such as Aadhaar helps willing governments to promote the inclusion of disadvantaged groups.
 - Aadhaar holds tremendous potential for unlocking the Indian economy by providing a common platform which can be integrated with a multitude of government programs such as financial and social inclusion programs, and a Public Distribution System monitoring, to name a few.
 - Introduction of Aadhaar can help plug duplicate and fake identities and generate huge fiscal savings for the government
- **Digital India** is an ambitious project centred around digital infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen, and governance and services on demand, and digital empowerment of citizens.
 - E-Sign, a facility that enables citizens to digitally sign documents and open bank accounts remotely
 - Digital Locker, which allows for authenticated storage and access of citizens' government records securely over the cloud.
 - Focus on cashless economy
- **E-governance solutions** are a great approach to ensure quick and hassle-free services for essential requirements.
 - For instance Punjab's E-sewa Kendra project. It has also generated jobs for around 130 people in Punjab. It is among one of the largest executions in terms of scale in the state of Punjab by any IT company in India.
- The government has announced a **slew of new initiatives**: Make in India; Start-up India, JAM trinity and Digital Lockers.
- **Jan-Dhan Yojana**: a program of financial inclusion through which 170 million bank accounts have been opened in a span of 100 days.
- **Mobile**: a program to leverage the nearly billion mobile phone connections through the creation of mobile IDs and mobile-based service delivery.
- **With respect to women empowerment, education, health, information seeking due to digital technology many apps are available for awareness.**
 - **E-way bill system for faster movement of goods.**
 - **E-NAM to make agriculture marketing easier**
- **Private sector contribution to digital innovation in India:-**
 - In India, Hitachi is playing a significant role in aiding the government in its Digital India drive, **which aims to digitalise government services so they can reach everyone seamlessly**
 - Currently, for example, the state of Punjab is leveraging Hitachi's IT solutions and technology for several of its e-governance functions.
 - **Hitachi** is using its expertise in agricultural information management systems to help farmers by aiding in crop damage assessments by using advance remote sensing and geospatial technology, services to farm management and planning, agricultural crop insurance, assessment of claims and management etc

Concerns of social innovation through digital technology are in India:-

- For digital technologies to confer their full benefit on society, **it is vital to close the digital divide, especially in Internet access.**
- The **digital divide** across age, gender, geography and income within India is significantly higher than in China.
- **India ranked 156th in the world in terms of broadband penetration** (at over 19%) as per the UN Broadband Commission report released in 2015.

- **Roughly nine out of 10 workers are informally employed and lack social protection.** Most workers lack adequate education or skills and the educated youth faces high unemployment rates
- Low pace of improvement of the quality of basic infrastructure expressways, logistics, storage, postal delivery system and reliable supply of electricity **have also hampered the growth of e-commerce in India.**
- A vast majority of its population still **lacks the skills to meaningfully participate in the digital economy.**

Way forward:

- Making the Internet accessible, open and safe for all Indians is an urgent priority.
- Supportive policy environment involving smart spectrum management, public-private partnerships, and intelligent regulations of Internet markets is needed.
- Zero-rated services for mobile data access could be an intermediate step to fully open and affordable Internet access for the poorest, provided that the choice of selecting services is transparent and inclusive.

Conclusion:-

- Social innovation is becoming a global phenomenon that concerns all countries. From Europe to the United States this new process has recruited politicians, entrepreneurs, civil talent and intellectuals.
- Social innovation, already an essential social movement in developed countries, is now gaining more attention in developing countries.

Q4) The Economic Survey presents the first ever estimate of the number of ‘unwanted’ girls in India at 21 million. Who are these ‘unwanted’ girls? Discuss the significance of this estimation. (250 Words)

The Indian Express

Unwanted girls :-

- Unwanted girls in India are the 21 million girls whose parents wanted a boy but had a girl instead .
- The number has been arrived at by looking at the sex ratio of the last child (SRLC) which is heavily male-skewed, indicating that parents keep having children until they get the desired number of sons.

Significance of this estimation:-

- It shows that there is the **‘son meta preference’ and patriarchal mindset** where parents do not stop having children after having a daughter in Indian society.
- The corollary is that **the girls receive fewer resources because their parents wanted a son** leading to girls suffering disproportionately from disease, neglect, or inadequate nutrition.
- Also shows **why there are less women in the workplace.**
- Also shows that not enough is being done to stop violence against women, **which is seriously limiting women’s labor participation.**
- Comparing data from 1991 and 2011, **the study also found that even as incomes rose across different states in India, the sex ratio declined.**
 - In northern Punjab and Haryana states, there are 1,200 boys under the age of seven for every 1,000 girls, though they are among the richest states.
- In some sense, once born, the lives of women are improving but society still appears to want fewer of them to be born.
- Deeply-ingrained preference for boys has led to a **massive gender gap in India.**
- The problem of female infanticide does not seem confined to smaller villages, contrary to common perception but **relatively large urban areas also have this problem.**
- The schemes undertaken by the governments have not had very significant impact for women.

What needs to be done ?

- Ensuring property rights for women
- Ending gender stereotyping in Indian popular culture can also help.
- Giving push to women for economic empowerment so that social empowerment would follow.
- Quality education should be provided with inclusive schemes like Dhanalaxmi, Save daughter educate daughter etc implemented effectively.

Q1) From fire safety to urban planning, why are Indian regulations not working? Critically analyse. (250 Words)

The Wire

Background:-

- According to National crime records bureau figures 17,700 Indians died and 48 people every day due to fire accidents in 2015.
- Maharashtra and Gujarat, the two most highly urbanised states, account for about 30% of the country's fire accident deaths.

Regulations are not working :-

- There is a close correlation between deaths due to fire-related accidents and population density associated with urbanisation.
- These are man made disasters with failure in urban planning manufactured by a mix of bad regulations and compromised enforcement machinery and powerful interest groups.
- The Chennai floods in 2015 was because of faulty urban planning with industrial complexes, educational institutions and housing estates ravaging the watershed areas filling up thousands of smaller ponds and streams and silting major tanks and increasing the surface water flow manifold.
- Urban areas alone require an additional 4,200 fire stations just to meet the minimum standard for response time.
- Buildings need in-built fire-fighting equipment like sprinklers and alarms that work. But there is hardly any attention.
- Regular inspections are supposed to ensure the presence of basic fire-fighting equipment as well as compliance with building norms. But there are enough loopholes, such as norms not applying for establishments with a seating capacity of less than 50 people.
- People also view inspections as a form of license raj. There is a lot of resistance
- **Technological issues:-**
 - urban cities have failed to invest in LIDAR-based (Light Detection and Ranging) technologies that can be used to aerially keep a track of setbacks and the presence of fire exits.
- Adequate space could have easily been retained for essential services like fire stations while redeveloping mill land, but urban cities don't do it.
- From fire safety to waste recycling, from energy efficiency to water supply, from housing to traffic safety, the organised interest groups have infiltrated the state machinery and have been successful in damaging public interests as a matter of daily existence.
- **Urban development is a state subject** so there is lack of coordination among multiple stakeholders involved.
- **Inspection authorities failure**

Suggestions:-

- There are LIDAR-based (Light Detection and Ranging) technologies that can be used to aerially keep a track of setbacks and presence of fire exists.
- There is a need to break the bureaucracy-real estate business nexus.
- Strict implementation of laws is necessary especially fire regulations
- There needs to be focus on holistic development which addresses economic growth, employment, social change. At the same time, it needs to deal with economic deprivation, environmental degradation, waste management, and proper utilisation of space.
- Multiplicity of authorities is a problem in metropolitan cities in India so a minimum organisational set-up as in Singapore is effective in bringing these multiple agencies on a common platform to determine a metropolitan-wide strategy for planning and implementation.

Q2) Are public transport policies in India consistent with good economics and the emerging concept of green mobility? Critically examine. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:

- The steep hike in bus fares in Tamil Nadu, nearly seven years after the last one, is a good moment to consider whether public transport policies are consistent with good economics and the emerging concept of green mobility.

Yes public transport policies are inconsistent with good economics and green mobility due to the following reasons:

- **Neglected reforms for expansion-**
 - Cities such as Chennai have for long tacitly encouraged unregulated growth of transport, by allowing share autos to operate along with buses on several routes.
 - No organised feeder service for the Chennai Metro, affecting both bus and Metro revenues.
- **Modernisation of services :-**
 - Mobile phone applications and geographical location features are lacking.
 - Government-owned corporations either do not possess real-time GPS data for buses in operation, or even if they do, are unwilling to share it with the open data community which is ready to build apps and make it accessible to the commute
- **Lack of investment:-**
 - Infrastructure investment was Rs. 31.6 per car trip while that for a bus user was Rs. 0.90 per trip.
 - According to NSSO data expenditure of urban households on bus/tram as a percentage of the total household travel expenditure was as high as 58%. **The emphasis on additional cost recovery from such users is debatable**
- **Acquisition of new technologies:-**
 - Personal mobility choices led by cars and two-wheelers have kept pace with global trends, adding features of comfort and convenience. **This has drawn several commuters away from ramshackle buses and unreliable services.**
- **Lacklustre design :-**
 - Most of India's buses operating in cities are obsolete
 - This is in contrast to initiatives such as the European Bus System of the Future, where the quest is to address the image problem and provide "social connectedness" to the vehicle through GPS and Wi-Fi.
- **Problem of supply:**
 - There are far too few buses.
- A KPMG study published last year forecasts that an additional **6 lakh buses are needed to achieve 50% of all urban transport trips by public modes by 2031**, at the present level of ridership per bus.

Government is taking action:-

- The Government has come up with numerous initiatives ranging from
- Make in India
- FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles)
- Green Mobility Fund
- Smart Cities
- To the recently announced projects in high speed mobility, namely high speed trains
- The proposed 'Hyper loop' connectivity.
- The Government is already working on the ₹10 lakh-crore National Transport Master Plan which aims to provide seamless movement of freight and passengers across multiple modes of transport.
- The shipping ministry's 'SagarMala project', which focuses on port-led development of the country, will have several such multi-modal hubs under it.
- The Centre has also indicated its aim to boost corporate investment in the sector by introducing business-friendly strategies that will balance profitability with effective project execution.
- India finally implemented a national bus code for quality and design overcoming prolonged resistance from transport lobbies. **Commuters now look to its strict implementation for better quality travel, although social connectedness remains distant.**

More reforms are needed like:-

- The **emerging paradigm is one of Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS):**
 - The commuter only wants a seamless travel experience. It is up to the operator to provide access to buses, trains and Metro rail, and use innovations in technology and ticketing to unify them
 - **Encourage the use of public transportation through new mobility business models such as on-demand and multimodal trip-planning applications.**
 - For instance, integrated payment systems such as London's Oyster and Singapore's EZ-Link allow users to opt for different modes of public transportation through a single smartcard
- **By shifting to electric vehicles India could save 64 per cent energy in 2030 by shifting to shared electric mobility. Further, there can be a drop in petrol and diesel consumption.** This would also result in a significant drop in carbon dioxide emissions.
- **Information sharing:**
 - Cape Town-based start-up has come up with an open platform providing a detailed look at formal and informal public transport options in African cities, thereby improving user-experience and provide emerging cities with crucial transportation data for better planning.
- **Technology-based solutions** can also be applied in areas such as 'fleet management'.
 - For example, a last-mile logistics provider helped a Delhi-based courier dispatch company track its fleets in real time. The company receives alerts every time its shipping trucks reach their destination, report to the warehouse or break down.
- Progress in reduction of travel-time and enhancing safety of passengers requires not just an upgradation of railway tracks, engines and coaches, but also an improvement in capacity utilisation is needed.
- **Based on the National Urban Transport Policy, 2006** the government can create higher-priced public transport options for the relatively affluent, in addition to a cheaper universal offering
- **A new law is needed** that mandates annual expansion of bus fleets in all million plus cities using tax funds and a congestion charge on cars
- **A new scheme will make it possible to purchase benchmarked services from cooperatives or private providers, paying for actual kilometres operated.** Share auto-style small entrepreneurs can enter such a scheme.
- **Transportation must be considered the collective responsibility of all stakeholders. The public and private sectors must work together to devise and develop India-specific solutions.** The private sector needs to take full advantage of the market opportunities and help transform India's transportation system.

Conclusion:-

- A smart transportation system involving GPS and digital technologies such as Cloud-based services, Big Data and Analytics, and Internet of Things (IoT) will be at the core of any such transformation.
- While global tie-ups will be enablers, IT companies and new-age technology start-ups must rise to the occasion and focus on solving the country's biggest problem that will not only support, but accelerate a nation on the move.

Q3) Indian cities are growing at rapid rates but without regard to quality of civic life and regard for lives of urban poor. What approaches would you suggest to revitalise Indian cities to make them more inclusive and enabling? Analyse. (250 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- India is one of the world's fastest urbanising countries.
- The number of Indian urban agglomerations with more than one million people has grown by more than 50 per cent over one decade alone, to 53 (the 2011 Census). Yet, most Indian cities are decaying rapidly and increasingly becoming unlivable.

Decline in urban life :-

- **Not one of India's major cities can provide even the bare minimum of water, sanitation, electricity, road space, affordable schooling or public transport etc .Only an affluent minority has all these.**
- **Glaring rich-poor inequalities are a constant** feature of the cities, manifested in deeply **inegalitarian provision of services, from roads to drainage, to water and electricity etc.**

- **Little effort has been made to redesign cities to adapt to climate change.**
 - The Sustainable Habitat Mission under the National Action Plan for Climate Change is poorly conceived and omits large components from its scope, **focussing narrowly on matters like “green buildings”**
- **Drainage problem:-**
 - Natural drainage is very bad in many major cities leading to floods and diseases. Now this is becoming an issue even in smaller cities.
- **A steady migration from rural to urban India has made many of its cities and towns burst at their seams, led to unchecked proliferation of slums, steady deterioration of city infrastructure and abject failure of municipal corporations to live up to the challenges**
- **Multiplicity of city authorities:-**
 - Victim does not know to which authority to turn to for a particular grievance, or whom to hold responsible or accountable when things go wrong with roads, pavements, infrastructure, gardens, power, water, drains or sanitation.

Initiatives are being taken :-

- However with Smart cities, AMRUT after long years of neglect and alienation, **cities are now vying for credit rating, which encompasses the entire gamut of urban governance, including the mindset of politicians and the city official**
- Some cities are issuing municipal bonds.
- Release of funds is now linked to progress of mandated governance reforms under all new urban missions including the housing mission.
- Online integrated single-window clearance for construction permits is being put in place to improve ease of doing business.
- Cities are now looking at public-private partnership and value capture financing with a changed mindset.

Approaches needed are:-

- **The city's overriding plan should be directed towards an accommodation of all migratory tasks home, employment, entertainment, and commerce in buildings and public facilities altered to suit their primary needs. This may radically change the overall structure of the city.**
- **Government must devise a development strategy for small Tier-3 towns that is itself a departure from conventional**
 - It must take into account new forms of public housing, regulate bye-laws that restrict commuting and delineate public space over private commerce.
- The process must simultaneously **relieve larger towns of the burden of new citizens**. The government's plans need to reverse the processes of long-range connectivity, **in favour of local outlooks that include**
 - **Pedestrianisation**
 - **Conversion to mixed-use streets**
 - **Reduction of commercial activity**
 - **Eradication of gated neighbourhoods.**
- Any new expansion of ideas on the ground needs to motivate all participants to live together in ways not imagined before, and **encourage a sense of community and inclusion that erodes differences of ethnicity, profession, caste, social and economic position.**
- **International experiences:-**
 - There are multiple agencies dealing with different subjects, but **they all work in perfect coordination under a single authority the city mayor**, an elected official who selects his own team of qualified administrators who are primed to deliver.
 - In London, the directly elected mayor takes charge when a crisis of any kind breaks and fixes issues.
 - **There are civic and city laws that are strictly implemented and respected by its citizenry. If anyone were to flout the law, the system comes down heavily on them.** So there is a need also for **more civic sense and awareness**
- Instead of rehabilitating the slum population who are not keen to be changed to other areas as cost of living in slums is very cheap it is better for **the government to develop slums itself.**

Conclusion:-

- So there is a need for a perceptible shift in government strategy geared to urban transformation, by overhauling urban governance and making it geared for better service delivery.

Q1) What do you understand by “bomb cyclone” or “weather bomb” ? Examine why Eastern parts in Norm America are experiencing unusually extremely cold conditions these days. (250 Words)

[BBC](#)

[NYT](#)

Bomb cyclone:-

- A “bomb cyclone” or “weather bomb” is an unofficial term for what is known as explosive cyclogenesis.
- it actually refers to an extratropical surface cyclone: a storm occurring outside of tropics, usually between 30 and 60 degrees latitude if it happens in the Northern Hemisphere
- This occurs when the central pressure of a low pressure system falls by 24 millibars in 24 hours and can result in violent winds developing around the system.
- The winds can be strong enough to bring down trees and cause structural damage.
- It resembles a winter hurricane which could be the eastern US’s most intense in decades.
- The major storm is expected to develop along the eastern seaboard of the US, bringing strong winds, rain, sleet and snow

Eastern parts of North America are experiencing extreme cold conditions because:-

- The occurrence and severity of “warm-West/cold-East” winter events, which is also called North American winter temperature dipole, increased significantly between 1980 and 2015.
- This is partly because **winter temperature has warmed more in the West than in the East.**
- It also has been driven by the **increasing frequency of a “ridge-trough” pattern**, with high atmospheric pressure in the West and low atmospheric pressure in the East producing greater numbers of winter days with extreme temperatures in large areas of the West and East at the same time.
- **Particular atmospheric configuration connects the cold extremes in the East to the occurrence of warm extremes ‘upstream’ in the West.** So Some regions can experience colder than normal temperatures associated with anomalous circulation patterns that drive cold air from the poles to the mid-latitudes
- **Human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases are likely driving this trend.**



Nor'easter:-

- A nor'easter is a storm that mainly affects the northeastern part of the United States. These storms form along the East coast as warm air from over the Atlantic Ocean clashes with arctic cold to the north and west. Hurricanes have a narrow field of strong winds with a concentration around the center, whereas a nor'easter's winds are spread out
- #### **Polar vortex:**
- Mass of air expands and gets pushed south, carried along with the jet stream, a stream of wind that extends around the hemisphere and divides the air masses in the polar region from those further south.
 - The air circulation coming with this imminent storm could help pull the jet stream and even more arctic air south, bringing temperatures to parts of the US that are simply too cold for people to safely be outside.

Q2) The rising rate of crimes against Dalits seems to be driven by rising impunity and changing economic equations in the countryside. Analyse. (250 Words)

[Livemint](#)

Introduction :-

- The violence on the 200th anniversary celebrations of the battle of Bhima-Koregaon has once again put the spotlight on violence against Dalits in India.
- Recent data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show that the rate of crimes against Dalits has risen in recent years, even as the conviction rate for such crimes has declined.
- In 2016, an estimated 214 incidents of crimes against scheduled castes (SCs) were reported per million SC population, up from 207 in 2015 according to the NCRB data

Rising rate of crimes against Dalits :-

- **Economic:-**
 - Rising living standards of Dalits appears to have led to a backlash from historically privileged communities.
 - In a study by Delhi School of Economics ,an increase in the consumption expenditure ratio of SCs/STs to that of upper castes is associated with an increase in crimes committed by the latter against the former
 - Rising income and growing educational achievements may have led many Dalits to challenge caste barriers, causing resentment among upper caste groups, leading to a backlash.
 - There is also a possibility of the rise due to high registration and recognition of such crimes
- **Political:**
 - Dalits are perceived as a threat to the established social, economic and political position of the upper caste. Crimes is a way to assert the upper caste superiority .
 - **Stasis in farm income over the past few years** caused disquiet among predominantly agrarian middle caste groups, who perceive their dominance in the countryside to be weakening.
 - The growing scramble for **Dalit votes by different political actors** has only added a fresh twist to a conflict that has been simmering for some time.
 - Constitutional protection given to Dalits in article 17 and other legislative provisions gave them support to fight for their rights
 - With reservation policy many dalits have gained mobility.
 - Dalit movements in the past like Dalit Panther movement, Kanshiram's role made dalits aware of their strength in political power as well.
- **Social:-**
 - With youth unemployment and distress migration on the rise and disillusioned young men being radicalized
 - Maratha youth, who are **facing unemployment and a lack of educational opportunities, are now being easily pulled into these conflicts by Hindutva organisations** that are consequently built by invoking past Maratha glory. The violent clashes in Bhima Koregaon were an extension of the conflict in Wadhu Budruk.
 - The effect of land reforms and agrarian transformation while reinforcing the hold of landed castes and communities in the countryside has pushed Dalits and social segments akin to them further to the margins.
 - There is a new enslavement and recrudescence of gradation and ranking at the workplace rather than enablement and camaraderie. This triggered dalit youth to fight the hierarchy.
 - The Hindutva agenda of assigning lower castes to their predestined places has further exacerbated the sense of being unwanted.
 - Access to higher and professional education has enabled horizontal and vertical social and economic mobility for Dalits. This **new class has started to refuse the conventional social stigmatisation and subordination of the Dalits by the upper castes.**
 - Protests by students at Hyderabad in the wake of the suicide of Rohith Vemula, who faced caste-based harassment, mobilisation of thousands of Dalits in Una, Gujarat ,mobilisation at the Jantar Mantar in the national capital, are examples of Dalit assertion that seem to have upset casteist sections.
- **Technology :-**
 - The use of social media to network and communicate has proliferated awareness among the dalit youth.

Conclusion:-

- So there is a need to create employment opportunities for the youth so that they are not disillusioned and contribute towards the harmony of the society.

Q3) What do you understand by El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)? Examine their impact on monsoon rains in India. (250 Words)

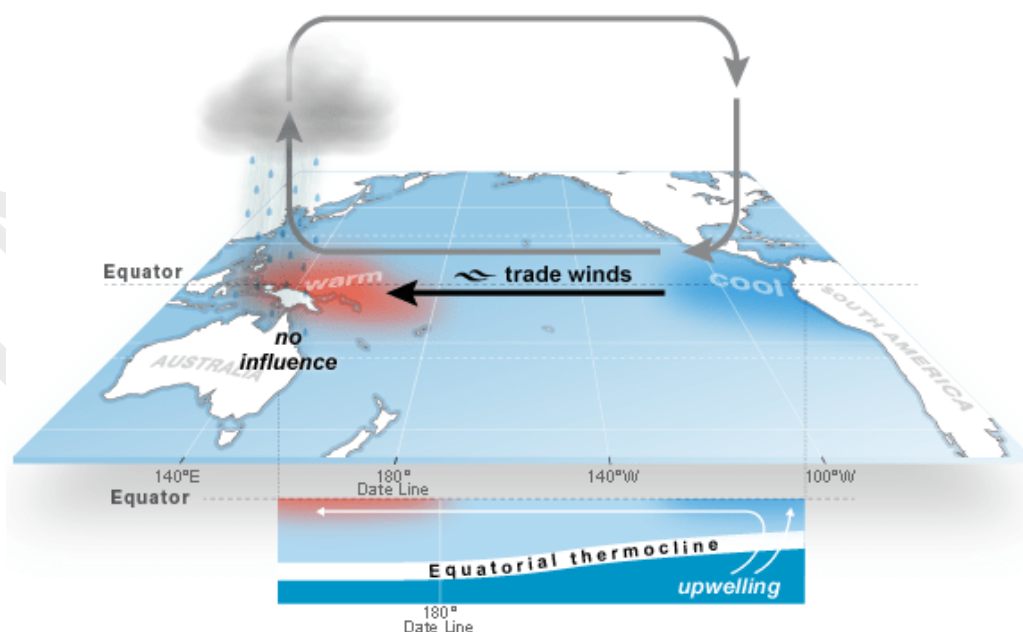
Down to Earth

ENSO:-

- ENSO is one of the most important climate phenomena on Earth due to its ability to change the global atmospheric circulation, which in turn, influences temperature and precipitation across the globe.
- El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is the term used to describe the oscillation between the El Niño phase and the La Niña, or opposite, phase.
- In the eastern Pacific, the northward flowing Humbolt current brings cooler water from the Southern Ocean to the tropics.
- Furthermore, along the equator, strong east to south easterly Trade winds cause the ocean currents in the eastern Pacific to draw water from the deeper ocean towards the surface, helping to keep the surface cool.
- However in the far western Pacific there is no cool current, and weaker Trades mean that this “upwelling” effect is reduced. Hence waters in the western equatorial Pacific are able to warm more effectively under the influence of the tropical sun.
- ENSO events are typically led and sustained by changes in the amount of heat held in the waters below the surface of the tropical Pacific Ocean.
- ENSO is composed of both El Niño and Southern Oscillation. Thus, the oceanic component called El Niño (or La Niña, depending on its phase) and the atmospheric component, the Southern Oscillation.
- Though ENSO is a single climate phenomenon, **it has three states, or phases, it can be in.** The two opposite phases, “El Niño” and “La Niña,” require certain changes in both the ocean **and** the atmosphere because ENSO is a *coupled* climate phenomenon. “Neutral” is in the middle of the continuum.

1. Neutral phase:-

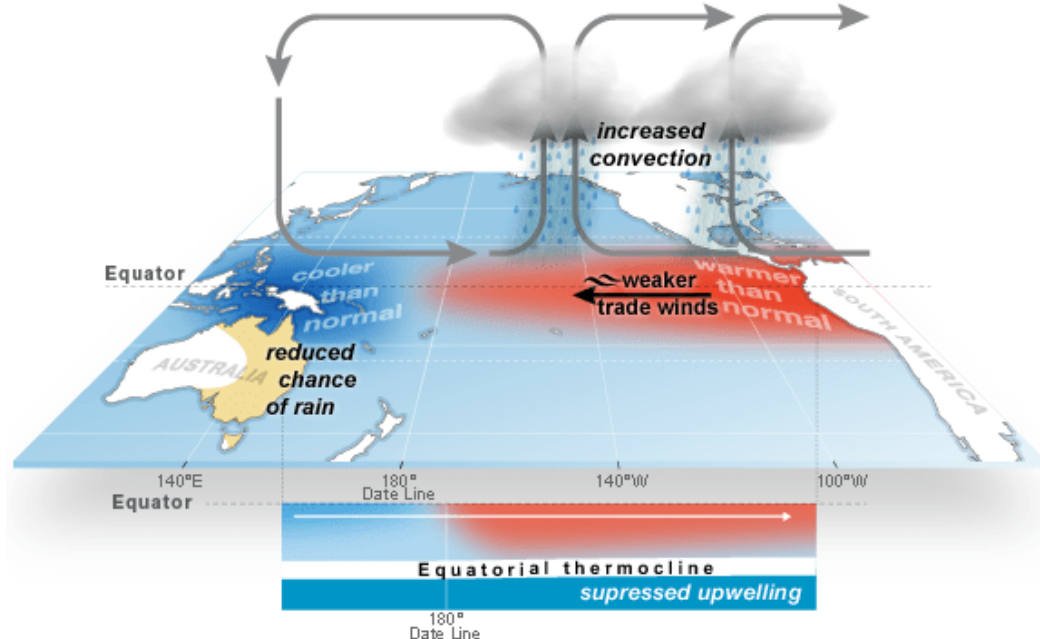
- In the neutral state (neither El Niño nor La Niña) trade winds blow east to west across the surface of the tropical Pacific Ocean, bringing warm moist air and warmer surface waters towards the western Pacific and keeping the central Pacific Ocean relatively cool. The thermocline is deeper in the west than the east.
- This means that under “normal” conditions the western tropical Pacific is 8 to 10°C warmer than the eastern tropical Pacific. This warmer area of ocean is a source for convection and is associated with cloudiness and rainfall.



El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO): **Neutral**

2. El Niño

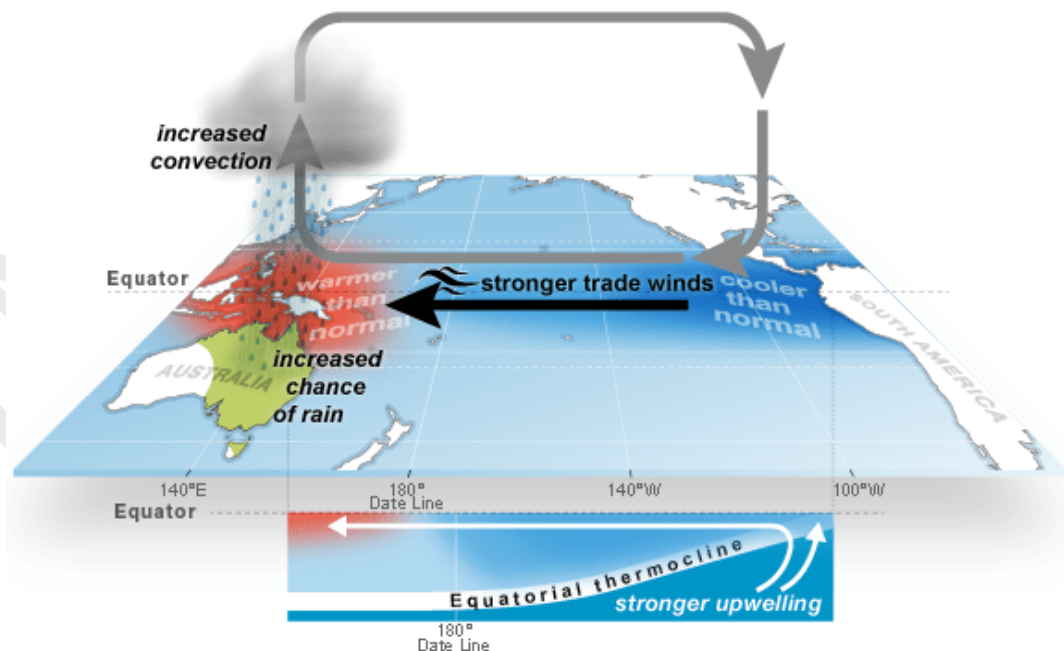
- However, during El Niño years, the trade winds weaken and the central and eastern tropical Pacific warms up. This change in ocean temperature sees a shift in cloudiness and rainfall from the western to the central tropical Pacific Ocean.
- Impact:-
- Warming of the Pacific results in weakening of these winds. Moisture and the heat content thereby, gets limited and results in reduction and uneven distribution of rainfall across the Indian sub-continent.
- The most prominent droughts in India since 1871 have been El Niño triggered droughts, including the recent ones in 2002 and 2009.
- During an El Niño, monsoon never witnesses excess rainfall barring few exceptions.



El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO): **El Niño**

3. La Niña

- During a La Niña event, the Walker Circulation intensifies with greater convection over the western Pacific and stronger trade winds.



El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO): **La Niña**

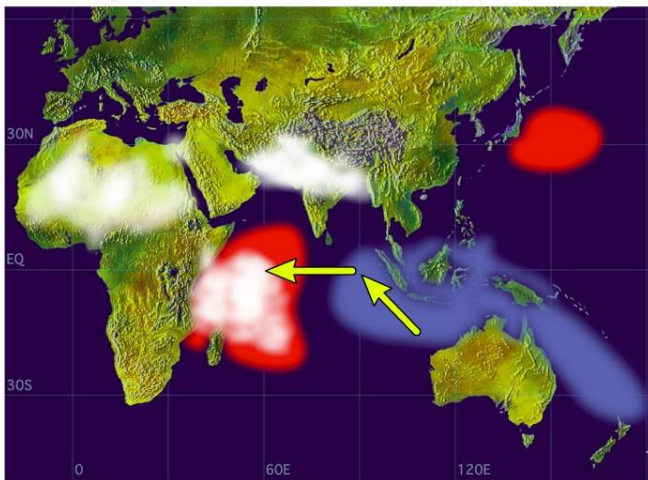
How does the ENSO affect monsoon?

- Heavy rain falls along the South American coast, and heavy rainfall also moves from the western to central Pacific, causing drier than normal conditions in Indonesia and nearby areas including India.

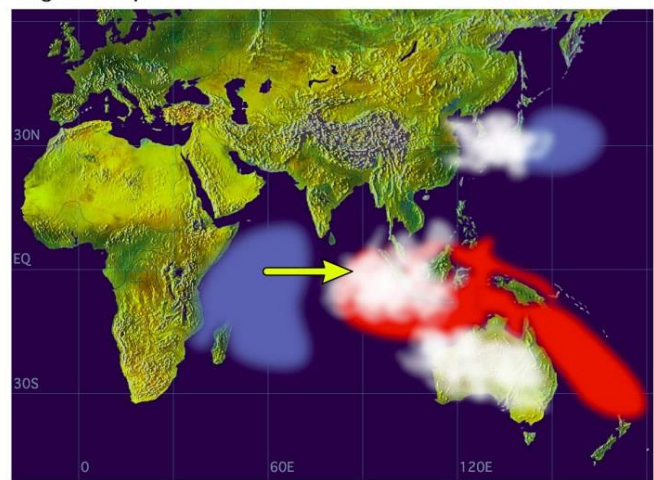
IOD:-

- The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is a coupled ocean atmosphere phenomenon in the Indian Ocean.
- It is normally characterized by anomalous cooling of Sea surface temperatures in the south eastern equatorial Indian Ocean and anomalous warming of Sea surface temperatures in the western equatorial Indian Ocean.
- Associated with these changes the normal convection situated over the eastern Indian Ocean warm pool shifts to the west and brings heavy rainfall over the east Africa and severe droughts/forest fires over the Indonesian region.
- A positive IOD occurs when sea surface temperature is higher than normal in the Arabian Sea and less than normal in the tropical eastern Indian Ocean. The opposite is true in case of a negative IOD.
- **Impact:-**
 - The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) also has a strong influence on the Indian summer monsoon.
 - An IOD can either augment or weaken the impact of El Nino on Indian monsoon.
 - While a positive IOD can bring good rains to India despite an El Nino year, negative IOD leads to more monsoon break days.

Positive Dipole Mode



Negative Dipole Mode



Q4) Examine why historians and archaeologists have expressed concern over amendments proposed to the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1958). (150 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Background:-

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced passed in Lok Sabha recently. The Bill amends the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

Amendments proposed are :-

- **Construction in prohibited areas:-**
 - An area of 100 meters around a protected monument or area is a prohibited area .
 - The Bill permits construction of public works in 'prohibited areas' for public purposes.
- **Definition of public works:-**
 - Public works include the construction of any infrastructure that is financed and carried out by the central government for public purposes.
 - This infrastructure must be necessary for public safety and security and must be based on a specific instance of danger to public safety.

▪ **Procedure for seeking permission for public works:-**

- The relevant central government department, that seeks to carry out construction for public purposes in a prohibited area, should make an application to the competent authority.
- If there is any question related to whether a construction project qualifies as 'public works', it will be referred to the National Monuments Authority which will make its recommendations to the central government whose decision will be final.
- If the decision of the central government differs from that of the Authority, it should record its reasons in writing.
- This decision should be communicated by the competent authority, to the applicant, within 10 days of receiving it.

▪ **Impact assessment of proposed public works:**

- The National Monuments Authority will make its recommendations to the Centre only after conducting an archaeological, visual and heritage impact assessment
- The Authority will make a recommendation for construction of public works to the central government, only if it is satisfied that there is **no reasonable possibility of moving the construction outside the prohibited area.**

Criticism:-

- A historical monument has to be conserved by leaving enough space around it otherwise the monument itself may decay once buildings come up next to it. This is neglected in the bill.
- The pressures of urban development have meant that more and more historical monuments are coming under threat due to development activities around them.
- In 2013, based on CAG report ASI found that 21 historical monuments had gone missing due to development activities around them.
- There are a mere 3,650 monuments which are nationally protected in a country so the bill need to promote protection rather than lessening safeguards.
- **Failure of national monuments authority:-**
 - A major task of this authority remains to be done, that of preparing heritage bye-laws for nationally protected monuments.
- Public works are more often than not very large infrastructure projects. Allowing these in the immediate vicinity of a protected monument will defeat the very purpose of the AMASR Act and will be a violation of Article 49 of the Constitution.

Positives:-

- Experts suggest that National Monuments Authority has been steadfast in refusing permission for construction within the prohibited areas despite tremendous pressure from private companies, and even the government.
- The government said amended is needed to allow construction works related to infrastructure financed and carried out by central government for public purposes is **necessary for the safety or security of the public at large.**
- Besides, such construction works would be taken up when there is **no possibility of any other viable alternative to such construction beyond the limits of the prohibited area.**

Suggestions:-

- Putting in place proper protection system for monuments is more critical .
- The CAG pointed to connivance by ASI officials with politicians in protecting those who have illegally occupied the prohibited zone around monuments. This needs proper accountability.
- **Strengthen capacity:-**
 - Due to lack of manpower, 546 of monuments whose records were scrutinised were encroached according to CAG.
- There should be proper rationalized criteria on issue of skyline.
- Public need to be made aware the necessity of conserving these monuments.

Conclusion:-

- India's monuments form an irreplaceable archive of its civilisational heritage. So there is a need for greater focus on this.

Q5) What are shola grasslands? Examine the their significance and the threats faced by them. (150 Words)

[The Hindu](#)

Shola grasslands:-

- Shola grasslands consist of dwarf trees growing 25-30 feet
- It is a stunted forest growths of diverse grass species
- Vegetation is double layered storey with closed canopy which hardly permits a single ray of sunlight to penetrate in the natural vegetation.
- Nilgiris upper region is classified as southern grassland mountain grassland.
- Between 1973-2014 Shola grasslands area had seen a 66.7% decline

Significance:-

- The Shola forests and associated grasslands store large quantities of water on the mountain ranges, thus serving as huge **water harvesting and storage structures**.
- Many of the rivers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu originate from the Shola grasslands and were perennial. With depletion of Sholas and other forests, **the streams that supply water to them dry up in summer**.
- They are **rich store houses of biodiversity** and also home to **extremely rich wildlife**.
- About a third of their species are estimated to be **rare and endangered**.
- The presence of an endemic and endangered **wild goat, the Nilgiri tahr** implies the grasslands are in need of study and conservation

Threats:-

- **Administrative issues:-**
 - The Forest Departments of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, besides private planters, were responsible for large-scale destruction of Sholas during the past two centuries
 - Shola grasslands which are critical habitats for many species, continue to be viewed as lower priority or grassy blanks
- As grasslands vanish or become more fragmented, local flora and fauna, particularly endemic species such as Nilgiri Pipit, may be under threat.
- In the Palani hill range of Western Ghats
 - **Timber plantations**
 - Expanding agriculture – agriculture and fallow land have increased three times to 100 sq.km. in the past four decades.
 - The spread of invasive species like acacia have eaten into as much as two-thirds of natural grasslands
- **Unlike the adjacent forests the grasslands have not received much attention from biologists and conservationists.** Research on these grasslands is scanty and highly dispersed
- The grassland is being **rapidly closed in by various woody exotic species** for example lantana camera, ulex europaeus, Acacia mearnsii, Schoch broom and wattle
- **Fire is also one of the major factor** which not only depletes undergrowth but also facilitates the seed germination of fast invading, weed plants by breaking seed dormancy.
- Shola is a very sensitive type of vegetation. Once it vanishes from its original habitat, it is **very difficult to make it reappear in view of the change in climate which** does not allow shola seedling to grow in open grasslands.
- **Deforestation** for purpose of agriculture has sounded the death knell for Shola and grasslands
- **Development of tourism** in places such as Udthagamandalam, Ponmudi (Thiruvananthapuram district) and Munnar is also leading to destruction of Shola grasslands

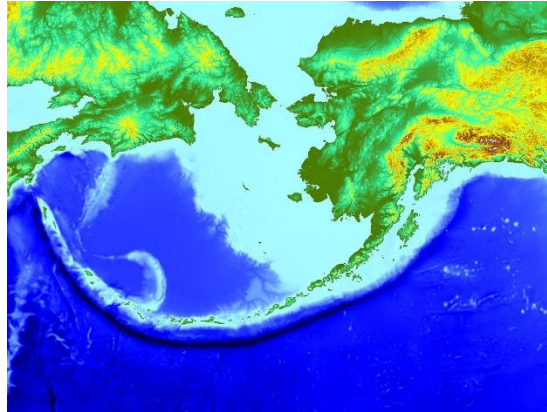
Topic: *Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc*

Q1) What are subduction zone volcanoes? Why their study is important? Examine. (150 Words)

[The Wire](#)

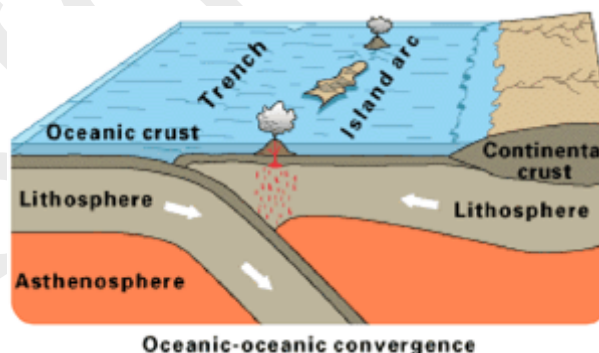
Subduction zone volcanoes :-

- Most observed volcanic activity takes place along the Pacific Ring of Fire, a region around the Pacific Ocean where several tectonic plates meet, causing earthquakes and a chain of what geologists call subduction zone volcanoes.
- Subduction zone volcanism occurs where two plates are converging on one another. One plate containing oceanic lithosphere descends beneath the adjacent plate, thus consuming the oceanic lithosphere into the earth's mantle. This on-going process is called
- As the descending plate bends downward at the surface, it creates a large linear depression called an **oceanic trench**.
- Example, forming the northern rim of the *Ring of Fire*, is the *Aleutian trench*.

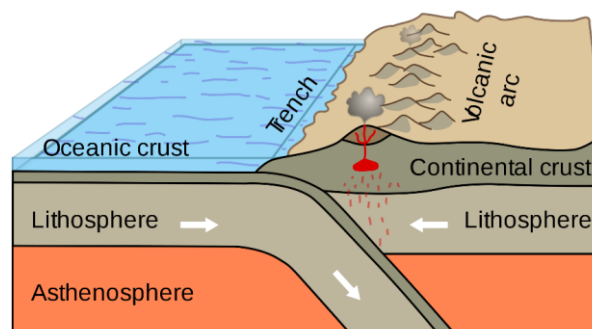


- The Pacific plate descends into the mantle at the site of the Aleutian trench. Subduction zone volcanism here has generated the Aleutian island chain of active volcanoes.
- As the subducting slab descends to greater and greater depths, it progressively encounters greater temperatures and greater pressures which cause the slab to release water into the mantle wedge overlying the descending plate.
- Magma rises upward to produce a linear belt of volcanoes parallel to the oceanic trench, as exemplified in the above image of the Aleutian Island chain. The chain of volcanoes is called an **island arc**.
- If the oceanic lithosphere subducts beneath an adjacent plate of continental lithosphere, then a similar belt of volcanoes will be generated on continental crust. This belt is then called a **volcanic arc**, examples of which include the Cascade volcanic arc of the U.S. Pacific northwest, and the Andes volcanic arc of South America.

Island arc formed by oceanic-oceanic subduction



Volcanic arc formed by oceanic-continental subduction



- The volcanoes produced by subduction zone volcanism are typically stratovolcanoes.

Why is their study important :-

- It is the frequent, small to moderate-sized eruptions that pose a constant volcanic threat. Around the globe today, about 800m people live within 100km and 29m within 10km of active volcanoes.
- Other threats include potentially deadly landslides, falling rocky ash, and inundation by toxic gases that can be triggered by volcanic eruptions.
- Beyond human safety, there are huge economic concerns.
- Monitoring of these volcanoes is extremely important to the aviation industry.
- Volcanoes continue to play an important role by adding to the Earth's water supply and forming new islands.
- Volcanic eruptions may slow climate change by releasing aerosols that help block sunlight into the Earth's stratosphere, according to a Nature Geoscience study mentioned in Time magazine.
- Subduction zone volcanoes
 - are generally violent volcanoes as overriding of plates creates blockage for molten lava (unlike the volcanoes that are created during plate divergence) and this blockage precisely decides the intensity of eruption.
 - Due to plate overriding the magma is expected to travel larger distance within the earth's crust. Hence, during the process it becomes highly viscous.
- Geologists conjure that the violent volcanic activities in the Ring of fire area is because the region is very close to numerous tectonic plates that are frequently subjected to subduction.

Topic: Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India)

Q1) What is the intensity and level of domestic tourism in rural and urban India? What are the key reasons for households' domestic tourism trips? What can we understand from domestic tourism patterns in India? Examine. (250 Words)

EPW

Intensity and level of domestic tourism:-

- Domestic tourism is one of the **major engines of economic growth and development for many regions and states of India.**
- It contributes to **income generation** and is the source of **large-scale employment** in both formal and informal activities
- There is an **increase in the incidence of tourism** among both rural and urban households.
- The share of holiday and leisure activity and social trips has slightly increased .
- The share of health trips and religious and pilgrimage trips has gone down compared to earlier
- Muslim households in urban areas have a lower level of domestic tourism.
- In **rural areas**, the incidence of tourism is higher among households with major source of income from non-agricultural activities, whereas lowest among casual labour and other households.
- In **urban areas**, household with self-employment and other activities have significantly higher incidence of tourism than wage/salary and casual labour households.
- Households with members **employed in high skilled occupation** have higher incidence of domestic trips being made than households with low-skilled workers.
- The main destination for these trips was **same district or other districts of same state.**
- Outside the state visit only accounted for 9% of trips.
- A statewise distribution reveals Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka account for half of such trips. Given that these are populous states, it is not surprising that they account for a large share of health-related trips.
- North-eastern states account for only 2.5% of all overnight trips as well as health-related trips.

Key reasons for domestic tourism:-

- The purpose of the trip can be holidaying, leisure and recreation, health and medical, shopping or business, social, pilgrimage and religious activities, education and training, and others .

Analysis of domestic tourism patterns:-

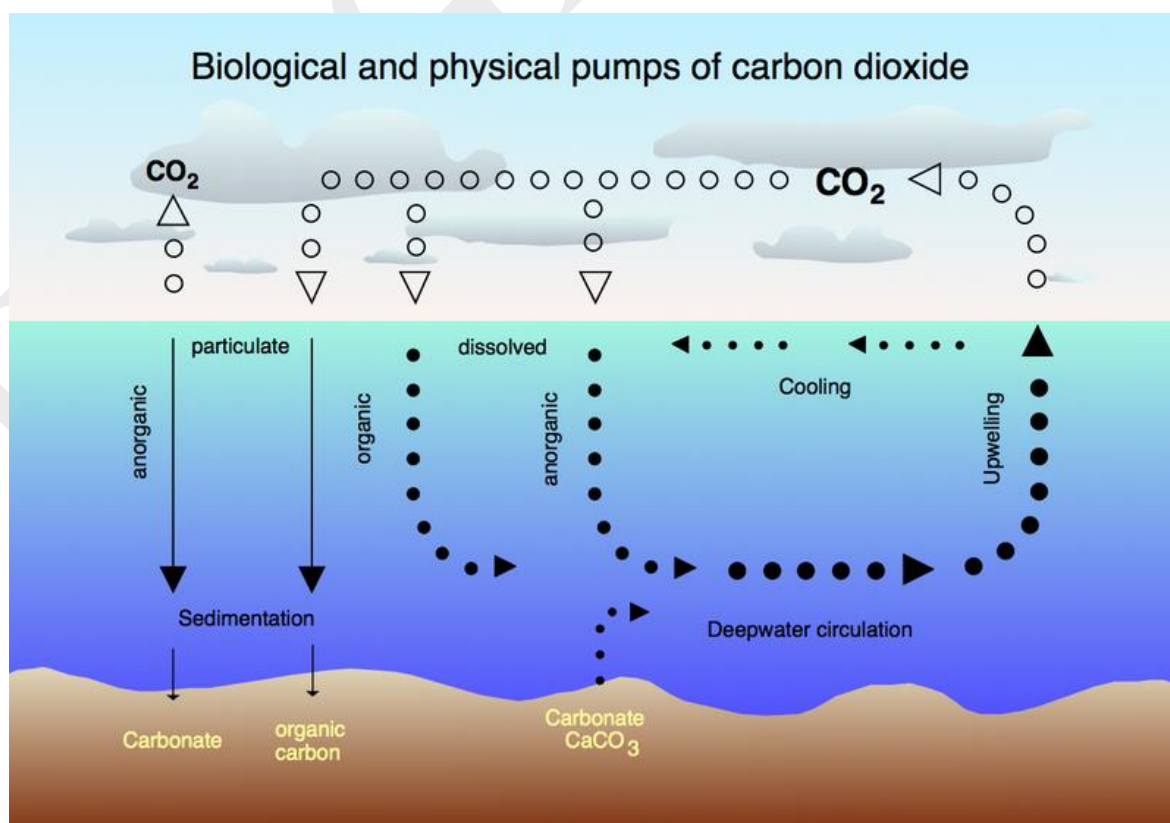
- The average Indian household took four trips overnight trips a year, higher in rural than in urban areas
- There is not much of a pattern to inter-state differences.
- Summer is the holiday peak for rural India, but for urban India, there's one peak in August, and then a few similar highs in May, September and October, possibly reflecting regional festivals.
- Holidays also tend to be slightly longer over summer and September/ October in urban India while they vary little in duration in rural India.
- From the frequency and average expenditure point of view, health- and medical-related trips dominate the mobility of households, followed by holiday- and recreation-related trips.
- While **health-related trips raise concern about health delivery in India** and its impact on households out of pocket expenditure as well as regional disparities in health service availability
- **Holiday trips highlight the positive impact tourism** can have on regional economies in terms of employment and livelihood opportunities.
- Another **key difference between health and holiday trips** is that major part of expenditure in health trips is directed towards medical and medicine bills whereas holiday trips contribute to local economy through expenditure on food, transport and shopping activities.
- Further, one-third of holiday trips are interstate trips **providing a larger spatial spillover effect.**
- Indians are social creatures, who travel largely to see family and friends.
- Package tours are a relative rarity in India.
- Not just do few travel out of the country, very few even leave their state.
- The bus is the most popular mode of travel for Indian tourists.
- When Indians holiday they rarely take a hotel and rather stay with a friend or relative.

Topic: Changes in critical geographical features (including waterbodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes.

Q1) What causes acidification of oceans and freshwater bodies? What are the consequences of the same? Examine. (250 Words)

[Down to Earth](#)

Ocean acidification:-



- **Ocean acidification** refers to a reduction in the pH of the ocean **over an extended period of time, caused primarily by uptake of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere.**

Reasons for ocean acidification are:-

- **High concentration of carbon dioxide :-**
 - The ocean absorbs about 30 percent of the CO₂ that is released in the atmosphere, and as levels of atmospheric CO₂ increase, so do the levels in the ocean.
- **Improper land management**
 - Agriculture may also contribute to the problem of ocean acidity. It may happen especially when the methods that are employed by the farmers are not suitable
- **The industrial revolution**
- **Burning of fossil fuels**
- **Cement manufacturing**
- **Chemical reactions causing high concentration of hydrogen ions**
- **Decrease in carbonate ions**
- **Loss of biodiversity**
- **Production alterations of biogas**
- **Lack of environmentally friendly laws and regulations**

Consequences of ocean acidification:-

- **Food shortage**
 - Ocean acidification contributes to the problem of food shortage in many ways. When fish die, humans who depend on them for food and livelihood are hit by the socio-economic problems.
 - Acidic waters will have more devastating effect on the **agricultural production**. Acidic water results in the increase in the **soil acidity**.
- **Food web interference**
 - Ocean acidification leads to the death and disappearance of some plants and animals in the sea. When some organisms become extinct, their dependents are also threatened because they have nothing to feed on.
 - Certain fish's ability to detect predators is decreased in more acidic waters. When these organisms are at risk, the entire food web may also be at risk.
- **Impact on human health**
 - When the ocean water acidity gets higher, the consumers or the users of such water are living in perilous situation. Diseases such as cancers can easily be transmitted to humans when they consume fish intoxicated with higher sulfur concentrations.
- **Impact on the reefs**
 - The problem with acidification is that marine organisms possessing shells (corals, crustaceans, mollusks, etc) need the carbonate ions to make calcium carbonate shells and skeletons. Thus, the more dissolved carbon dioxide in the ocean, **the less free carbonate ions accessible for forming calcium carbonate shells/skeletons**
- **Economical concerns:**
 - Ocean acidification is affecting the entire world's oceans, including coastal estuaries and waterways. Many economies are dependent on fish and shellfish and people worldwide rely on food from the ocean as their primary source of protein.
 - Tourism will decline when coastal communities are tainted and species relative to the oceans will become extinct.

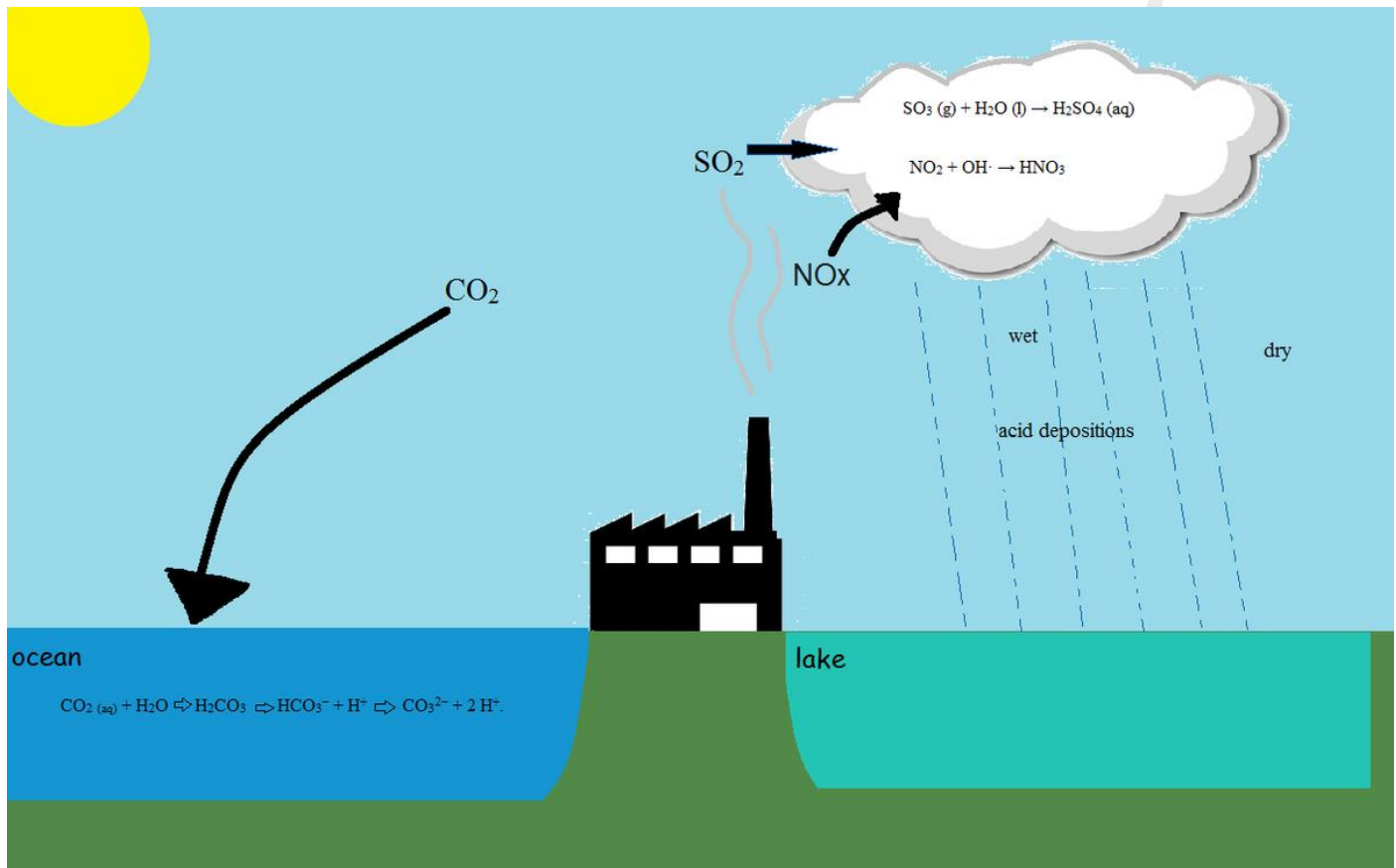
Acidification of freshwater bodies:-

- Freshwater ecosystems are becoming more acidic as atmospheric CO₂ levels rose.
- In fact, acidity in freshwater bodies had increased too and the pH by 0.3 units in the 35 years. This rate is about 10 times faster than oceans in which pH has fallen by just about 0.1 units in the last 100 years

Causes of freshwater bodies acidification are:-

- **Acid rain.**
- **Buffer solution:-**
 - The soil usually has substances that ensure that the pH is neutral and that the acid will be removed: The Buffer solution.

- If the buffer solution is finished then the soil will become acid. This may cause toxic chemicals or nitrate to be released.
- The rain will cause the nitrate or the toxic chemicals to rinse out the surface water or ground water, causing them to contaminate water.
- **Land-use changes:**
 - **Livestock introduction into the catchment.**
 - **Use of nitrogen fertiliser.**
 - **Increased efficiency of drainage.**
 - **Dry deposition of air pollutants.**
 - **Wet deposition of sulphuric and nitric acids.**
- It will be a combination of the above factors that will lead to freshwater acidification.



Consequences of Freshwater bodies acidification:-

- **Significant implications for several other standing freshwater bodies, especially around cities and urban spaces** where local levels of CO_2 and other water-soluble pollutants are very high.
- **Increasing CO_2 levels hampered the ability of individuals in the water bodies to produce the protective features like Daphnia** in freshwater bodies.
- Fish and other aquatic animals will die in water with low pH.
- Acidified water cannot be used for drinking.
- Acidic water is damaging health and could possibly cause kidney

Measures needed are:-

- Some countries try **de-acidification of the lakes by adding a suspension of calcium carbonate**. It is also possible to stop the environmental acidification by reducing the use of SO_2 (Sulfur dioxide), NO_x and NH_3 (Ammonia).
 - Lowering the use of these substances is done by using low-Sulphur fuel, or flue gas desulphurization.
- **Ratification of legislations that can ensure that the waste handling, among other pollution-risk activities are controlled.** Such regulations would spread to the fisheries department to ensure that safety is maintained in food consumption.
- **Civil Education**
 - Governments and international organizations can come up with some platforms where they educate or sensitize the common citizens on the risks posed by the climate change and ocean acidification. Such

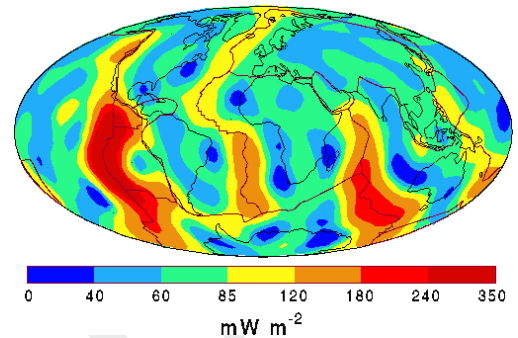
initiatives can instill some self-triggered discipline that acts as guidance for the quest to environmental conservation.

Q2) What is geothermal heat flux (GHF)? How does it affect earth's surface? (150 Words)

[Down to Earth](#)

Background :-

- The GHF is the amount of heat moving steadily outward from the interior of the Earth through a unit area in unit time. The geothermal gradient varies with location.
- It is primarily caused by molten matter in core of Earth and radioactive decay in Earth.



Effects :-

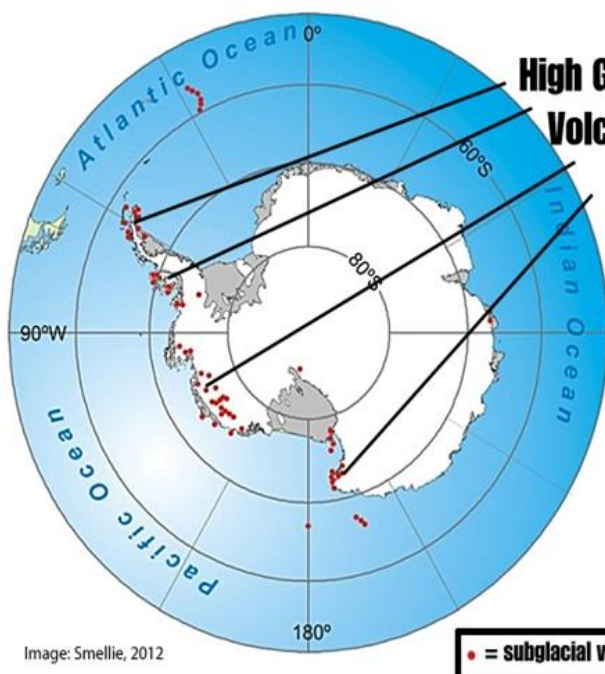


Image: Smellie, 2012

• = subglacial volcanoes

Antarctic temperature trends

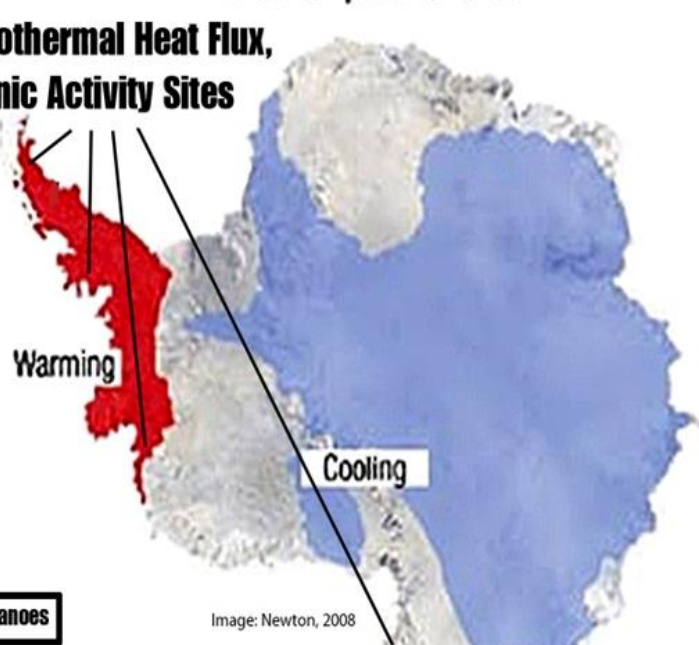


Image: Newton, 2008

- Geothermal heat flux is a critical thermal boundary condition that **influences the melting, flow, and mass balance of ice sheets.**
- High heat flow below the West Antarctic ice sheet may also **help explain the presence of lakes beneath it and why parts of the ice sheet flow rapidly as ice streams.**
- **Warm geothermal conditions may help to make sub glacial habitats more supportive of microbial life, and could also drive fluid flow that delivers heat, carbon, and nutrients to these communities.**
- Warming of oceans and water bodies can take place leading to **death of many aquatic fora.**
- There has been a notable increase in the loss of the Greenland ice sheet (GIS) due to its seaward slide. **A new research holds higher-than-expected geothermal heat flux (GHF) from the Earth's interior responsible for the sliding of glaciers towards the sea and hence, acceleration of the surface melting.**
- Creates lubrication and accelerates glacial descent leading to sea level rise which might lead to **coastal areas inundation.**
- **It makes water bodies as Geysers and hot springs** which can be invested on for their tourist potential.
- It may have **potential to be used for power generation** as well.
- Now the **underwater organisms can get food and minerals.**