

UPPCS MAINS TEST - 10 (SOLUTION)

Section-A

Q 1. Role of literature in Nation Building

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world

- Percy Bysshe Shelley

By calling poets “unacknowledged legislators,” Shelley does not mean that writers make laws in a formal sense. Instead, he suggests that poets and literary figures shape the ideas, values, emotions, and moral outlook of people long before these ideas are translated into laws, institutions, or political movements, which are necessary for the nation building. Across civilizations, literature has preserved cultural heritage, inspired social reform, awakened national consciousness, and provided moral and intellectual direction to societies.

Literature as a Preserver of Collective Identity

One of the foremost contributions of literature to nation building lies in preserving and transmitting cultural identity. Epics, folklore, poetry, and classical texts serve as repositories of a nation’s collective memory. In India, works such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata have shaped ethical values, social norms, and philosophical outlooks across centuries. These texts transcend regional and linguistic boundaries, fostering a shared cultural ethos in a diverse society.

Globally, literary traditions have played similar roles. Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey helped define Greek identity, while Dante’s Divine Comedy contributed to the consolidation of the Italian language and cultural unity. By sustaining a sense of continuity between past and present, literature strengthens the cultural foundations upon which nations are built.

Literature and National Consciousness

Literature has often acted as a catalyst for awakening national consciousness, particularly during periods of colonialism and oppression. In India, the nationalist movement was deeply influenced by literary figures such as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, whose song “Vande Mataram” became a symbol of resistance and patriotic fervour. Rabindranath Tagore’s poetry and essays offered a humanistic vision of nationalism rooted in freedom, dignity, and universalism. Hind Swaraj, a critique of modern Western civilization and a foundational text on Indian self-rule (Swaraj) by Mahatma Gandhi.

Similarly, in other parts of the world, literature inspired struggles for independence and unity. The writings of Leo Tolstoy influenced Russian social thought, while African writers like Chinua Achebe used literature to reclaim indigenous identity distorted by colonial narratives.

Literature thus becomes a medium through which people imagine themselves as part of a collective national destiny.

Literature as an Instrument of Social Reform

Nation building requires not only unity but also introspection and reform. Literature plays a critical role in questioning social evils and advocating progressive change. In India, reformist writers like Premchand highlighted issues such as caste oppression, poverty, and gender inequality in novels like Godaan and Ghaban. Poetry and plays became vehicles to critique orthodoxy and promote social justice. **Dalit Literature**, works by authors like Omprakash Valmiki (Joothan) continue to redefine the Indian nation by demanding that the “building” include those previously relegated to the margins.

Globally, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin exposed the moral horrors of slavery in the United States and contributed to abolitionist sentiment. Henrik Ibsen’s play A Doll’s House challenged patriarchal norms and sparked debates on women’s rights. Such works demonstrate how literature contributes to nation building by pushing societies toward ethical and inclusive progress.

Literature as the Moral Conscience of the Modern Nation

In the contemporary world, literature continues to shape nation building by engaging with new challenges such as globalization, migration, identity crises, and technological change. Modern literary works encourage critical thinking and self-reflection, essential qualities for active citizenship in a democracy. By preserving historical memory, literature also guards against collective amnesia. Milan Kundera’s remark that “the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting” reinforces the idea that a nation’s moral strength depends on its ability to remember and learn.

As George Orwell observed, “In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act,” highlighting the transformative power of honest literary expression.

Literature is not merely an artistic endeavor but a foundational pillar of nation building. While constitutions and institutions provide the structural framework of a nation, literature nurtures its soul. It shapes identity, inspires unity, promotes social justice, and sustains cultural continuity. In an era of rapid change and fragmentation, the role of literature remains indispensable in guiding nations toward cohesion, empathy, and enlightened progress.

Q 2. Women Empowerment: The Foundation of Developed India

“To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves.”

- **India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru**

The above lines of our first prime minister exemplify by women scientists in traditional saris celebrating the success of the **Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM)** in 2014 shattered global stereotypes. Women like **Ritu Karidhal Srivastava** (known as the “Rocket Woman of India”) and **Nandini Harinath** were not just team members; they were the Deputy Operations Directors who ensured India became the first nation to reach Mars on its maiden attempt.

More recently, the success of **Chandrayaan-3** saw over **100 women scientists** playing a pivotal role. The mission was led by Associate Project Director **Kalpana Kalahasti**, whose expertise in lander systems ensured the historic soft landing on the Lunar South Pole.

These missions demonstrate that when women are provided equal access to education, institutions, and decision-making spaces, they emerge not merely as participants but as architects of national success.

Historical Context: From Suppression to Sovereignty

India's journey regarding women's rights is a saga of resilience. In the Vedic era, women held positions of intellectual and spiritual leadership—exemplified by figures like **Gargi** and **Maitreyi**. However, subsequent centuries saw the encroachment of regressive practices like Sati, child marriage, and the Purdah system.

The 19th-century social reform movement, led by **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** and **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar**, laid the groundwork for modern empowerment. Literature of that era, such as **Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's** *Sultana's Dream* (1905), dared to imagine a “Ladyland” where women led with science and peace. The Indian freedom struggle further politicized women, as leaders like **Sarojini Naidu** and **Aruna Asaf Ali** proved that the path to national sovereignty was paved with gender equality.

The Multi-Dimensional Impact of Empowerment

Economic Front: The Multiplier Effect

Empowering women is not just a moral imperative but a fiscal necessity. According to the Economic Survey 2025-26, India's Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) has seen a steady rise from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24. This shift is driven significantly by rural women and the PM Mudra Yojana, where nearly 68% of the loans have been sanctioned to women entrepreneurs.

The IMF estimates that equal participation of women in the workforce could boost India's GDP by a staggering **27%**. When a woman earns, she typically reinvests **90% of her income** back into her family's health and education, creating a virtuous cycle of human capital development.

Politically, the passing of the **Nari Shakti Vandan**

Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act) in 2023 is a watershed moment, promising **33% reservation** in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. This ensures that women are no longer just voters, but lawmakers who can address issues like workplace safety and maternal health with firsthand perspective.

Breaking the “Brass Ceiling”

In 2020, the Supreme Court of India delivered a watershed judgment in the case of Secretary, Ministry of Defence v. Babita Puniya. The Court struck down the government's arguments that cited “physiological limitations” and “domestic obligations” as reasons to deny women permanent roles. By granting women the right to Permanent Commissions and command posts across all ten non-combat streams, the judgment ensured that “Nari Shakti” is not just a slogan for Republic Day parades but a lived reality in the barracks.

Despite progress, significant challenges remain. Gender-based violence, wage disparity, low labor force participation, and unequal access to education and healthcare continue to hinder empowerment. Social attitudes rooted in patriarchy often limit women's choices and opportunities. Technological change and globalization, while offering new avenues, can also widen inequalities if women lack access to digital skills and resources.

The transformation of India into a developed nation by 2047 hinges on whether we can move from “women's development” to “**women-led development.**” It requires a systemic change where gender sensitisation starts at the primary school level and where the “care economy” is professionalized and recognized.

The essence of this mission was beautifully captured by **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**, who stated:

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved.”

Q 3. Atmanirbhar Bharat: Challenges and Achievements on the Path to Self-Reliance

In the 1960s, India faced severe food shortages. Consecutive droughts, low agricultural productivity, and a rapidly growing population meant the country struggled to feed itself. Ships carrying wheat under the US aid programme PL-480 Food for Peace docked at Indian ports. There's a famous line attributed to policymakers of that era: India was living “ship to mouth.” Grain arrived just in time to prevent famine.

During periods of **war and geopolitical tension**, this dependence weakened India's autonomy. The pace, quantity, and timing of grain shipments could be influenced by foreign political considerations, limiting India's freedom of action. Food security was no longer just an economic issue it had become a **national security concern**.

Recognising this vulnerability, Indian policymakers took a decisive turn inward. The launch of the **Green**

Revolution—driven by scientific innovation, state support, and farmer participation transformed agriculture. This was the first stride of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Historical Context: The Evolution of Self-Reliance

The concept of self-reliance, or Atmanirbharta, is not a modern political invention but the very pulse of India's civilizational identity. From the ancient wisdom of **Chanakya**, who emphasized economic sovereignty as the bedrock of a state. **The Swadeshi Era:** Mahatma Gandhi saw Charkha (the spinning wheel) not just as a tool for cloth, but as a symbol of defiance against colonial economic drainage.

Achievements and Milestones under Atmanirbhar Bharat

Unlike the inward-looking policies of the past, the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** is based on Five Pillars: Economy (Quantum Jumps), Infrastructure (Modern Identity), System (Technology-driven), Vibrant Demography, and Demand.

Policy Initiatives and Structural Reforms

The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes across sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and renewable energy have incentivized domestic manufacturing and attracted investment. Reforms in labor laws, corporate taxation, Good and Services taxes and ease of doing business have aimed to create a conducive ecosystem for self-reliant growth. India has emerged as the **third-largest startup ecosystem** in the world, trailing only the US and China. This isn't just about "Unicorns" (startups valued at over \$1 billion); it's about a fundamental shift in the Indian psyche.

Defence and Strategic Autonomy

India, once the world's largest arms importer, is now emerging as a global exporter. Domestic defense production reached a record **₹1.27 lakh crore** in 2023-24. The commissioning of the indigenously-built aircraft carrier **INS Vikrant** and the test-firing of the **Agni-V** missile with MIRV technology are testaments to our growing strategic autonomy.

Space Sovereignty

The "Cost-Effective" Paradigm, India has mastered the art of "frugal innovation." The Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan). By successfully landing on the South Pole of the Moon, India demonstrated that its indigenous technology—from navigation sensors to landing software—is world-class. To reduce dependency on the American GPS (especially after being denied access during the Kargil War), India developed its own regional satellite navigation system.

This is a crucial step for national security and sovereign data control

Digital Public Infrastructure

The "India Stack" (Aadhaar, UPI, ONDC) has acted as a public good, allowing startups to scale at a fraction of the cost compared to global peers. This infrastructure has lowered transaction costs, improved governance, and enabled entrepreneurship, reinforcing self-reliance in the digital age.

Pharmacy of the World 2.0

Moving beyond being just a manufacturer of generics, the **PLI (Production Linked Incentive) Scheme** has incentivized the domestic production of APIs and medical devices, The COVID-19 pandemic became a real-time stress test for **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**, especially in the strategically critical sector of vaccine manufacturing. India's response showcased both the challenges of dependence and the power of indigenous capability-building. Bharat Biotech developed Covaxin, a fully indigenous COVID-19 vaccine. Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine producer, manufactured Covishield at scale. Under the **Vaccine Maitri** initiative, India supplied vaccines to over **90 countries**.

Challenges on the Path to Self-Reliance

Economic and Industrial Constraints, India's manufacturing sector has historically lagged behind services in terms of productivity and global competitiveness. Dependence on imports for critical inputs—such as semiconductors, electronics, and advanced machinery.

Infrastructural and Technological Gaps, Inadequate logistics, high transaction costs, and uneven digital infrastructure constrain industrial growth. Advanced R&D ecosystems and high-end technological capabilities still require sustained investment.

Social and Skill-Related Barriers, Self-reliance depends not only on capital and policy but also on human capability. Skill mismatches, informality in labor markets, and unequal access to education limit productivity gains. As Amartya Sen argued, development must expand human capabilities, without which economic self-sufficiency remains fragile.

Atmanirbhar Bharat is more than a policy; it is a mindset of resilience. It is the bridge that will take India from a developing nation to a **Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047**. As Rabindranath Tagore envisioned a nation where the "mind is without fear," self-reliance must ultimately foster confidence-economic, technological, and moral. The future of Atmanirbhar Bharat lies in deepening reforms, investing in human capital, and sustaining innovation, while remaining integrated with global value chains.

Q 1. Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges for India

“AI won’t replace humans. But humans who use AI will replace those who don’t.”

- Sam Altman

The above lines of Sam Altman also true with the context of Nations as well, The Nations who uses AI will move ahead of those who don’t. India’s journey with Artificial Intelligence is defined by the mantra “**AI for All**,” a vision that seeks to move beyond technological prestige and prioritize social inclusion and grassroots impact.

To define, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of machines to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. It enables systems to learn from experience, adapt to new situations, and solve complex problems independently. AI uses datasets, algorithms, and large language models to analyse information, recognise patterns, and generate responses. Over time, these systems improve their performance, allowing them to reason, make decisions, and communicate in ways similar to humans.

The Indian Opportunity: A Catalyst for Inclusive Growth

India’s primary advantage in the AI era is its unique combination of **massive datasets** and **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**. By layering AI over foundational tools like Aadhaar and UPI, India is creating a “Smarter Bharat.”

Economic growth, productivity and new industries

AI can be a major productivity multiplier across manufacturing, services, and agriculture. Automated decision-support, predictive maintenance, and process optimization raise output per worker; AI-driven platforms enable new business models and generate high-value jobs in data science, engineering and AI productization. The IndiaAI/MeitY/NITI institutional push to build computing infrastructure and support startups aims to convert this potential into an on-ground ecosystem. Evidence of national-level commitment can be seen in coordinated initiatives like the IndiaAI mission and MeitY’s AI programmes that focus on compute, data and skilling. Example Accenture, in its recent AI research reports⁵, provides a framework for evaluating the economic impact of AI for select G20 countries and estimates AI to boost India’s annual growth rate by 1.3 percentage points by 2035.

Agriculture: The Precision Revolution

While India has come a long way from being categorised as purely an agrarian economy, agriculture and allied sector still accounts for 49% of India’s workforce, 16% of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP).

AI-powered monsoon prediction models now deliver

hyper-local warnings to nearly **38 million farmers**, helping them mitigate climate risks. AI will have significant global impact on agricultural productivity at all levels of the value chain. AI can be used to predict advisories for sowing, pest control, input control can help in ensuring increased income and providing stability for the agricultural community. For example, many agronomic factors (such as vegetation health and soil moisture) can be monitored up to the farm level through remote sensing.

Healthcare: Bridging the “Last Mile”

AI is democratizing quality healthcare in rural regions where doctors are few. AI-powered image analysis systems can scan X-rays, CT scans, and retinal images faster and often with accuracy comparable to specialists. AI-driven radiology tools assist doctors by highlighting abnormalities in scans, reducing diagnostic errors and workload.

AI enables personalized medicine by analyzing patient history, genetics, and lifestyle data to recommend tailored treatments. Cancer screening and treatment is an area where AI provides tremendous scope for targeted large scale interventions. India sees an incidence of more than 1 million new cases of cancer every year, a number that is likely to increase given the increasing age of Indian population and lifestyle changes.

Education

In India, the importance of a developed education sector is amplified by a large youth population. AI has the potential to bring about changes in the sector by supplementing pedagogy and establishing systems to inform and support decision making across stakeholders and administrative levels.

Adaptive learning tools for customised learning, While AI may not completely replace a teacher, it has the potential to greatly assist teachers in efficiently and effectively managing multi-level / multigrade classrooms, by judging learning levels of individual students.

Intelligent and interactive tutoring systems, Intelligent Tutoring Systems can provide great benefit to students through delivery of learning materials adapted to the child’s proficiency level, learning style, and pace of learning. Example A recent hackathon conducted by NITI Aayog also featured ‘ReadEx’, an android application that does real-time question generation using NLP, content recommendations, and flashcard creation.

Smart Cities and Infrastructure

India is currently in the midst of a surge of urbanisation. While the percentage of the population living in urban areas was estimated to be 31% in 2011. Smart Parks and public facilities, Use of AI to monitor patronage and accordingly control associated systems such as pavement lighting, park maintenance.

Use of AI in providing effective solutions in crowd management in recent times have been in vogue and given fruitful results in averting city-scale challenges such as managing mega football events, emergency and disasters.

Challenges

Despite the optimism, the path is fraught with significant hurdles that require a nuanced, “India-specific” approach. Infrastructure constraints and resource, needs Large-scale AI requires compute (GPUs, data centers), quality labelled data, and stable power/internet infrastructure. Bridging infrastructure gaps, especially in tier-2/3 cities and rural areas is essential to decentralize AI benefits and reduce regional disparities.

Data Sovereignty and Privacy, As AI models ingest vast amounts of Indian data, ensuring that this data is not misused by “Big Tech” while maintaining the privacy of individuals is a non-negotiable challenge.

Employment disruption and skill mismatches, While AI can create jobs, it also automates routine tasks and can displace workers, particularly in call-centres, clerical roles, or low-skill manufacturing.

The “Social Sycophancy” and Bias: A recent concern highlighted in the **Economic Survey 2025-26** is the risk of AI models “over-agreeing” with users to be likable, which can reduce critical thinking and amplify existing social biases related to caste and gender.

Artificial Intelligence is not a magic wand, but a powerful mirror that reflects and amplifies human intent. For India, the goal is not to win a global “AI arms race” but to harness the technology to solve uniquely Indian problems—from malnutrition to judicial backlogs.

As experts at Davos 2026 noted, India is emerging as a global hub where AI delivers “measurable, life-changing impact on the ground.” By balancing innovation with a “human-centric” regulatory framework, India can ensure that AI serves as a tool for empowerment rather than a source of inequality.

Q 2. Unemployment and Youth: How to Harness India’s Demographic Dividend

The demographic dividend is a double-edged sword — if productively employed, youth can drive growth; if neglected, it can become a demographic disaster.”

- **Narendra Modi (PM of India)**

In the corridors of global economics, India is often described as a “bright spot,” a nation buoyed by a unique phenomenon known as the **demographic dividend**. With over 65% of its population in the working-age group and a median age of roughly 28.4 years, India possesses a youthful energy that most aging developed nations envy.

However, this potential advantage is shadowed by the persistent challenge of youth unemployment and underemployment. The paradox of a young population alongside job scarcity raises an urgent question for

policymakers: how can India convert its demographic promise into a productive economic asset rather than a social liability?

The Current State of Youth Unemployment in India

According to the latest **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2025**, while the overall unemployment rate has stabilized around **4.7% to 4.8%**, youth unemployment (ages 15–29) remains stubbornly high at approximately **14% to 15%**. A troubling trend in the 2026 labor market is that unemployment actually increases with educational attainment. Graduates and postgraduates face higher rates of joblessness than those with only primary education.

Indian newspapers have repeatedly reported instances where **PhD holders and post-graduates applied for Group-D/Class-IV government posts**—such as peons, helpers, or sanitation workers—during large recruitment drives conducted by state governments. In some cases, the applicant pool for these low-skilled posts ran into lakhs, with thousands of highly educated candidates competing for a handful of vacancies. This stark mismatch between educational attainment and employment opportunities highlights the challenge of converting India’s demographic dividend into productive economic growth.

India’s Demographic Dividend: Potential and Peril

The concept of demographic dividend rests on the idea that a growing working-age population can boost economic growth if productively employed. Countries such as South Korea and China successfully leveraged this phase through investments in education, manufacturing, and exports. For India, the window of opportunity is time-bound; by the mid-2030s, the demographic advantage is expected to plateau.

India’s dividend lies not only in numbers but in diversity—rural youth, women, and first-generation learners represent untapped reservoirs of growth. However, without adequate skilling, health, and employment opportunities, this dividend risks turning into demographic distress, marked by frustration, social unrest, and wasted human capital.

Transforming Potential into Assets: Key Strategies

Bridging the Skill Gap by linkage between industry and academia is a critical pillar for addressing India’s youth unemployment and for effectively harnessing its demographic dividend. A persistent gap exists between what students learn in classrooms and the skills demanded by employers.

Skilling is still treated as an extracurricular activity in India and yet to be treated as part of mainstream education, said B.V.R Subrahmanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog. Programmes such as **Skill India** and **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana** seek to bridge the skill gap by aligning training with industry requirements.

Policies should foster an enabling environment for job creation and entrepreneurship, promoting private sector

growth, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and encouraging innovation and investment. Special attention should be given to sectors with high employment potential, such as manufacturing and services. Similarly, **Startup India** has encouraged youth to become job creators rather than job seekers, fostering innovation and self-employment.

Formalizing the Gig and Green Economy, The **Union Budget 2026** has prioritized seven key sectors, including **Semiconductors** and **Renewable Energy**. With the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, the government is betting on high-tech manufacturing to absorb engineering graduates. Simultaneously, the rise of the “Green Economy” is expected to create millions of “Solar-preneurs” in rural India, helping to reverse the trend of distress migration to overcrowded cities.

Structural Reforms and the Role of Education, Education must shift from rote learning to skill-based and experiential models. Greater emphasis on vocational training, apprenticeships, and industry-academia collaboration can improve employability. Manufacturing-led growth, particularly through labour-intensive sectors, remains crucial for absorbing large numbers of young workers.

India’s **Orange Economy**—covering creative industries such as design, animation, gaming, digital content, crafts, media, and cultural tourism—remains under-leveraged despite its high employment elasticity.

Addressing India’s regional disparity with migration dynamics is more than a mere demographic endeavour; it is a pressing socio-economic imperative. The way forward demands a dual approach from policymakers. There is a need to invest in and uplift regions witnessing high outmigration, ensuring holistic development, job creation, and access to quality education and healthcare.

As famously said by Frederick Douglass that, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.” As India stands at this demographic crossroads, the success of its youth will determine whether the 21st century truly belongs to India. By investing in “human capital” with the same fervour used for “physical infrastructure,” India can ensure that its young population is not just a statistic of concern, but the engine of a global economic renaissance.

Q 3. National Education Policy 2020: Transforming India’s Education System

Education,
Wants us to be attention,
In older to build the nation.
Education,
It shows direction,
In older to do correction.
Education,
Needs people more than ten,
In older all to learn.
Education,
It is your way,

Which you can stay.
Education,
Nothing will remain,
It will remove your pain.
Education,
It has alot of section,
Which I can’t mention.

- Husna Chikwela

Above poem of Husna Chikwela signifies that Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development. The landscape of Indian education is undergoing a seismic shift, moving away from a legacy of colonial rote learning toward a future defined by curiosity and capability. At the heart of this metamorphosis is the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, the first education policy of the 21st century in India. It replaces the thirty-four-year-old policy of 1986 and serves as a visionary blueprint to transform India into a “global knowledge superpower.” Built on the five foundational pillars of **Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability**, the NEP 2020 is not merely an administrative reform; it is a civilizational statement that seeks to reclaim the Indian ethos while embracing global standards.

A Paradigm Shift in Pedagogy

One of the most striking features of the NEP 2020 is the structural overhaul of school education. The traditional **10+2 system** has been replaced by a more developmentally appropriate **5+3+3+4 structure**. Students are encouraged to explore arts, sciences, and sports together, dissolving the long-standing silos between “academic” and “co-curricular” pursuits.

This new model recognizes that 85% of a child’s brain development occurs before the age of six, bringing early childhood care and education (ECCE) into the formal schooling ambit for the first time. The transition from high-stakes board exams to a **formative assessment model** aims to reduce the “coaching culture” that has long plagued Indian households. By allowing board exams twice a year and focusing on core competencies, the policy prioritizes “how to think” over “what to think.”

There is an urgent need for additional special educators for certain areas of school education. Some examples of such specialist requirements include subject teaching for children with disabilities/Divyang children at the Middle and Secondary school level, including teaching for specific learning disabilities. Remember the story of Ishaan Awasthi in Taare Zameen Par powerfully reflects the vision of NEP 2020. Struggling with undiagnosed dyslexia, Ishaan is punished by a rigid, exam-centric system that overlooks his creativity and curiosity. When a sensitive teacher recognizes his strengths, he begins to thrive—not by conforming, but by being understood. The narrative captures the core promise of NEP 2020: an education system that values the learner beyond grades and nurtures individual potential.

Breaking Silos: Holistic and Multidisciplinary Learning

For decades, Indian students were forced to choose between the rigid silos of Science, Commerce, and Arts by the age of 16. The NEP 2020 dismantles these walls. A student can now study Physics alongside Music or Chemistry with History. This **multidisciplinary approach** fosters a well-rounded personality, mirroring the ancient Indian tradition of Lalit Kala (liberal arts), where knowledge was viewed as an integrated whole. As Rabindranath Tagore once wrote, “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”

This sentiment is echoed in the policy’s heavy emphasis on **Vocational Training**. Starting from Grade 6, students are exposed to practical skills like coding, carpentry, and pottery, including a “10-bagless days” period to intern with local experts.

Technology: The Great Equalizer

In a country as diverse as India, technology is the bridge across the digital divide. The NEP 2020 integrates technology at every level through initiatives like the **National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)** and platforms like **DIKSHA**, which provide high-quality e-content in multiple regional languages. For instance, the story of Indian village teacher Ranjitsinh Disale, who transformed the life chances of young girls at the Zilla Parishad Primary School, Paritewadi, Solapur, Maharashtra, India, has been named the winner of the Global Teacher Prize 2020, in collaboration with UNESCO. Ranjitsinh then not only translated the class

textbooks into his pupils’ mother tongue but also embedded them with unique QR codes to give students access to audio poems, video lectures, stories and assignments.

Professional Standards for Teachers

The NEP rejects the idea that learning ends with a degree. It introduces a mandatory requirement for **50 hours of CPD per year** for every teacher and principal. To bring transparency to career growth, the policy mandates the creation of the National Professional Standards for Teachers (**NPST**). These standards define the roles and expectations for teachers at different career stages (e.g., Beginner, Proficient, Expert, and Lead Teacher). Similarly, in Higher Education, the introduction of the **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)** and the **Four-Year Undergraduate Program (FYUP)** has provided students with “multiple entry and exit” options

The rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought has been a guiding light for this Policy. The pursuit of knowledge (Jnan), wisdom (Pragyaa), and truth (Satya) was always considered in Indian thought and philosophy as the highest human goal. The aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world. The National Education Policy 2020 is a bold leap toward a “Viksit Bharat” (Developed India) by 2047. It envisions an education system that is “rooted in Indian ethos but global in its outlook.” While challenges in implementation—such as infrastructure gaps and the need for consistent funding—remain, the trajectory is undeniably positive.

Section-C

Q 1. Minilateralism as a New Tool of Global Governance: Implications for India

“India’s strategic autonomy is strengthened, not diluted, through selective cooperation.”

– S. Jaishankar

The architecture of global governance is undergoing a quiet but decisive transformation. Institutions that once symbolized collective problem-solving—large multilateral forums with universal membership—are increasingly struggling to deliver timely and effective outcomes. In this context, **minilateralism**, defined as cooperation among a small number of like-minded or strategically aligned states to address specific global or regional challenges, has emerged as a pragmatic alternative. Coined by political scientist Miles Kahler, the concept rests on the belief that “the smallest number of countries necessary to have the largest possible impact” may be better suited to contemporary geopolitics.

Understanding Minilateralism in Global Governance

Minilateralism occupies a middle ground between **unilateralism**, where states act alone to pursue national

interests, and **multilateralism**, which involves broad-based institutions with universal or near-universal membership. Unlike multilateral bodies such as the United Nations, which often suffer from consensus paralysis, minilateral platforms are purpose-driven, flexible, and outcome-oriented.

For developing countries, their numbers are their greatest bargaining power; developed countries—less in number—view this as “tyranny of the majority” which has obstructed consensus in large multilateral organisations. The prevailing North-South dichotomy, where developing countries are keen on retaining special and differential treatment, while developed countries want to shift to discussing new issues outside the Doha development agenda, has become an inflection point for trade negotiations. Examples include the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and the more recent RCEP, signed in November 2020.

However, minilateralism also presents dangers of forum-shopping, undermining critical international organisations, and reducing accountability in global governance. For instance, the G20’s Mutual Assessment Process

(MAP)—where members share national economic plans and disclose their potential negative impacts—has been criticised for being ‘toothless’. It is not immediately clear if the existence of the G20 Framework or the mutual assessment peer review process has actually influenced the policy choices of countries. In this context, it is difficult to measure the actual qualitative and quantitative outcomes of minilateralism.

Implications for India: Opportunities and Strategic Autonomy

For India, minilateralism is the perfect vehicle for its policy of **Multi-alignment**. It allows New Delhi to sit at different tables simultaneously without the baggage of formal military alliances. **Agility and Issue-Specific Focus**, Small groups lack bulky bureaucracies. Decisions are made at “the speed of business” rather than “the speed of diplomacy.” For example, the **Quad** (India, US, Japan, Australia) allows India to lead on maritime security and illegal fishing in the Indo-Pacific without the need for a formal treaty.

Bypassing Veto Paralysis, At “Large Tables” like the UNSC, progress is often blocked by the vetoes of permanent members. In minilateral groups, India can set the agenda among peers. The **I2U2** (India, Israel, UAE, USA) is a prime example, focusing on tangible investments in water, energy, and food security.

Strategic “Friend-Shoring”, Initiatives like the **iCET** (India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology) provide India access to high-end tech, such as semiconductors and jet engines, that large multilateral bodies cannot facilitate. Parallely, its presence in **BRICS** to represent the Global South, preventing its foreign policy from becoming a zero-sum game. For Instance, while defending India buying Russian oil S. Jaishankar, said “Europe has to grow out of the mindset that its problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems are not Europe’s problems.”

Challenges and Risks for India

One concern is **strategic overextension**. Active participation in multiple minilateral forums demands diplomatic bandwidth, military readiness, and policy coherence—resources that are not infinite. There is also the risk of **perception management**, particularly vis-à-vis China and Russia, who may view some minilateral engagements as containment strategies.

Another challenge lies in **normative fragmentation**. As minilateral groups set standards on technology, trade, or security, competing norms may emerge, complicating India’s commitment to inclusive global governance. Moreover, excessive reliance on minilateralism may weaken multilateral institutions that India has traditionally championed as platforms for the Global South.

Finally, minilateralism’s selective nature raises ethical and political questions. As Amartya Sen cautioned, governance structures must not sacrifice inclusiveness at the altar of efficiency. India, given its civilizational ethos and leadership

aspirations, must ensure that minilateralism does not become a tool of exclusion.

As the poet T.S. Eliot wrote, “Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.” India’s engagement with minilateralism is such a calculated risk—one that, if guided by strategic clarity, ethical responsibility, and inclusive vision, can enhance India’s role as a leading power in an increasingly complex global order. In navigating this new tool of global governance, India’s challenge will be to combine realism with responsibility, and efficiency with equity.

Q 2. India’s Commitments and Actions Against Climate Change

“Today the entire world acknowledges that India is the only big economy in the world that has delivered both ‘in letter and spirit’ on its Paris commitments. We are making all possible efforts in a resolute manner; we are working hard and showing results.”

- PM Narendra Modi in COP26

India’s civilizational history has long emphasized harmony between humans and nature. Ancient texts speak of the phrase “Prakriti Rakshati Rakshitah” is a widely cited, eco-conscious maxim that translates to: “Nature protects those who protect her.” Yet, modern industrialization and urbanization have strained this balance. Today, India ranks among the countries most affected by climate-related disasters, even though its historical contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions remains relatively low. This asymmetry lies at the heart of India’s climate diplomacy and domestic policy—demanding climate justice while committing to sustainable pathways.

The Global Stage: From Paris to Panchamrit

India’s international climate journey is marked by a shift toward bold, quantifiable targets. Under the **Paris Agreement**, India initially committed to three Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). However, at **COP26 in Glasgow**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the **“Panchamrit”** (Five Nectars) strategy, raising the stakes significantly.

- (i). Reach 500GW Non-fossil energy capacity by 2030.
- (ii). 50 per cent of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030.
- (iii). Reduction of total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now to 2030.
- (iv). Reduction of the carbon intensity of the economy by 45 per cent by 2030, over 2005 levels.
- (v). Achieving the target of net zero emissions by 2070.

India has also spearheaded innovative multilateral initiatives such as the **International Solar Alliance**, aimed at promoting solar energy deployment in tropical countries. **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**, Recognizing that mitigation (cutting emissions) is only half the battle, India launched CDRI in 2019 to focus on

Adaptation. Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA) Launched during India's G20 Presidency in 2023, the GBA seeks to do for biofuels what the ISA did for solar.

National Actions: Policy in Motion

India's global promises are supported by a robust domestic architecture. The **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** serves as the umbrella for several missions that have seen aggressive scaling in recent years. **The Solar and Wind Revolution**, India currently ranks **4th globally** in total installed renewable energy capacity. As of **January 2026**, solar energy dominates the mix with over **135 GW**, driven by the **National Solar Mission** and the innovative **PM-Surya Ghar Yojana**, which has pushed rooftop solar into millions of households.

Green Hydrogen and Nuclear Ambition, to address "hard-to-abate" sectors like steel and cement, the National Green Hydrogen Mission is creating production hubs at major ports. Simultaneously, the National Nuclear Mission has set a long-term target of 100 GW by 2047, treating nuclear energy as a critical "baseload" partner to variable solar and wind power.

Mobility and Lifestyle (Mission LiFE), The FAME-II scheme has accelerated the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs), while **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** seeks to turn climate action into a mass movement. By encouraging circular economy practices—such as the **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** for plastics and e-waste—India is attempting to shift societal mindsets from "consumption" to "conservation."

Challenges: The Rough Road to Net Zero

Despite these successes, India faces a "Trilemma": balancing **Energy Security, Energy Equity, and Environmental Sustainability**. **The Coal Conundrum**, Coal still accounts for nearly **75% of actual electricity generation**. While its share in installed capacity has dropped below 50%, the lack of affordable battery storage means coal remains the backbone of the grid.

Climate Finance, The **Economic Survey 2025-26** highlights a massive financing gap. India requires an estimated **\$2.5 trillion by 2030** for effective mitigation and adaptation, yet international climate finance remains elusive and skewed toward mature markets.

Vulnerability, In 2025 alone, catastrophic floods and cyclones caused over **\$12 billion in damages**, illustrating that for India, **Adaptation** is as urgent as **Mitigation**.

As Mahatma Gandhi presciently warned, "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed." This moral framing continues to inform India's stance on climate change. India's climate journey embodies this interconnectedness—between local action and global outcomes, between present needs and future generations. The road ahead will be challenging, but with sustained political will, technological innovation, and global cooperation, India can chart a climate pathway that is both

responsible and resilient, contributing meaningfully to the global fight against climate change while securing its own developmental future.

Q 3. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and the Right to a Dignified Life in India

Human impact of the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana** came during **Narendra Modi's visit to Varanasi (Banaras)**, where he interacted with **Meera**, a beneficiary of the scheme. Meera, who had spent years living in a fragile kutchha dwelling, spoke of how owning a pucca house transformed not only her living conditions but also her sense of self-worth. With visible emotion, she described how a secure home meant safety for her children, dignity in social interactions, and relief from the constant anxiety of displacement. The Prime Minister's interaction with Meera went beyond symbolism—it underscored how housing acts as a catalyst for empowerment, particularly for women from economically weaker sections.

Defining Dignity: Beyond the Four Walls

The **Right to a Dignified Life**, Under Article 21 interpreted by the Supreme Court of India in the landmark **Francis Coralie Mullin** case, goes beyond mere animal existence. It encompasses the right to food, clothing, and—crucially—shelter. The **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)**, launched in 2015 with the vision of "Housing for All", represents not merely a welfare programme but a rights-oriented intervention aimed at social transformation. PMAY is split into two specialized wings: **PMAY-Gramin (Rural)** and **PMAY-Urban**. As we move through **2026**, the scheme has entered its second phase (**PMAY 2.0**), focusing on sustainability and inclusivity.

PMAY prioritises **economically weaker sections (EWS), low-income groups (LIG), and middle-income groups (MIG)**, with special emphasis on women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens. One of its most significant features is the **mandatory inclusion of women as owners or co-owners of houses**, a step that subtly but powerfully reconfigures gender relations and economic security within households. Additionally, the Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) lowers the financial barrier to home ownership by making housing loans more affordable.

The core objectives of PMAY-G

Financial assistance, the government provides a substantial financial grant of US\$ 1,429 (Rs. 1.20 lakh) in plains and US\$ 1,548 (Rs. 1.30 lakh) in hilly and difficult terrains to beneficiaries for constructing homes. This grant ensures that even the poorest rural families can afford to build a durable house.

Convergence with other schemes, PMAY-G is implemented in convergence with other government schemes like the Swachh Bharat Mission (for sanitation), the Pradhan

Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (for LPG connections), and schemes for electricity and drinking water. This convergence ensures that beneficiaries receive a house and a full package of essential services.

Quality and transparency, A significant aspect of PMAY-G is the emphasis on quality and transparency in the construction of houses. Beneficiaries are encouraged to participate in the construction process, and the use of technology ensures real-time monitoring of the progress. Houses are geo-tagged and tracked using technology to prevent misuse of funds.

The Impact: Case Studies in Transformation

As rightly said, “A house is made of bricks and beams. A home is made of hopes and dreams.”

The Empowerment of Women: In the rural heartlands of Uttar Pradesh, thousands of women have become first-time property owners. Research suggests that when a house is in a woman’s name, domestic violence rates decrease, and the household’s investment in children’s education increases.

The Urban Resettlement: In cities like Surat, the **In-Situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR)** model has allowed slum dwellers to move into vertical pucca apartments on the same land they occupied for decades. This prevents the “dislocation of livelihood”—a common failure of older housing schemes where the poor were pushed to city peripheries.

Despite its achievements, PMAY faces challenges. Urban land scarcity, rising construction costs, and delays in project execution affect outcomes in metropolitan regions. In some cases, the quality of construction and access to livelihood opportunities near housing sites remain concerns. These challenges underline the need for better urban planning, convergence with employment schemes, and sustained community participation. Also, **Basic Amenity Gap,** Standing Committee report recently noted that nearly 5.6 lakh urban houses remained unoccupied due to a lack of immediate water or electricity connections.

In essence, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana represents a shift from welfare to **welfare with dignity.** By recognising housing as integral to the right to life, the scheme aligns public policy with constitutional morality. **As Mahatma Gandhi observed,** “The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.” PMAY, at its best, embodies this ethos by placing the poorest Indian at the centre of development planning.

As we look toward the future of an urbanizing India, the transition from “shelter” to “dignified living” will remain the litmus test of our development. When a citizen steps into their PMAY home, they do not just move into a new address; they move into a more secure, recognized, and dignified version of themselves.