



## EVALUATION INDICATORS

1. Contextual Competence
2. Content Competence
3. Language Competence
4. Introduction Competence
5. Structure - Presentation Competence
6. Conclusion Competence

Overall Macro Comments / feedback / suggestions on Answer Booklet:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

All the Best

## Data as a Public Good in India

It is said that, time is  
 reminiscent of the past and that, greatest  
 lessons can be learnt from history. The  
 21<sup>st</sup> Century is no exception. Industrial  
 Revolution of 1750s was considered to be  
 greatest achievement of mankind after ~~after~~  
 discovery of wheel & fire. None could have  
 thought of a greater achievement by any  
 stretch of imagination. However, time is  
 known to make exceptions and the place  
 enjoyed once by machines has been taken  
 by Data. The Industrial Revolution 4.0  
 is centred on this Data. Another parallel  
 that can be drawn is of the Coronavirus  
 with the Spanish Flu in the aftermath  
 of World War II. Back then the world  
 was very large, unlike today where  
 information virtually travels faster than the

Speed of light. At that time, the vaccine took around 20 years to arrive with all supporting evidences and clinical data.

On the contrary, it took less than 20 months for the vaccine of coronavirus to prove its efficacy and save countless lives. This was possible because of public health data available with governments and pharmaceutical companies. Thus, importance of Data cannot be overemphasised.

Data involves two components, one that allows the people to connect with each other, communicate and interact with each other is commonly known as the Internet data. ~~However~~ Another component is the user generated data i.e. the information people unconsciously generate and reveal about themselves. It includes details regarding their age, gender, preferences, education, health, choices etc. Both these components enable better political awareness,

Social interaction, effective policymaking and curated products for the people. This is only true so long as data does not become a monopoly of a few rather than being a public good. In the former case it can have catastrophic effects, benefitting a handful while depriving millions and in the latter case, it is a common road to prosperity based on equity.

It was once remarked by Justice James Madison that, "people who seek to be their own governors need to be armed with weapon of information". The role played by data in providing this information to the people on their fingertips is priceless.

In the earlier days when an event in the remote corner of the world could barely make it to local news, the world has evolved into a time when asphyxiation

of George Floyd by a cop became a reason for global outrage. Similarly when a teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg alarmed the people about a global catastrophe, it woke up the people from slumber and made the deaf hear that environment could no longer be ignored.

At a time when whole world was in lockdown due to coronavirus and meeting with people could prove fatal, internet came to the rescue and connected people world wide. Everything ranging from international summits, business meetings, disaster response to education turned into online mode. Internet ensured that wheels of life do not come to a standstill.

Data has also revolutionised the economic systems which were earlier limited to a brick & mortar model. People today have the luxury to buy goods online and avail services on-the-go without having the need to step out of their houses. It has enabled

that  
financial inclusion like never before. The  
milestone of \$ 100 Billion online payments  
(Digital Payments Index (RBI)) could be made  
possible because of data. The reduction of  
Information Asymmetry has enabled the governments  
to draw up better policies that directly benefit  
the people without any middleman. The  
Direct Benefit Transfers under PM-KISAN,  
faster credit through Kisan Credit Card  
and numerous services under Digital India  
Mission are merely a few examples.

Societies have changed at an  
unprecedented pace and data is the biggest  
Catalyst in the process. Flow of data has  
led to widespread interaction, spread of  
ideas and has brought down walls of  
separation. It is unleashed a wave of  
Cultural interaction and growth which  
symbolises a Salad bowl that India is.  
This change can be best summarised in words  
of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam as, 'When there

is righteousness in heart there is harmony  
in home, when there is harmony in home,  
there is order in the society and when  
there is order in the society there is peace  
in the nation.

Individuals have benefitted from data  
at an unprecedented scale. It has enabled  
them to acquire skills and put them to use  
from their livingroom. It has also exposed the  
people to modern ideas and thought processes  
which has led to reduction in prejudices  
about others and develop a cosmopolitan  
value system. This leads to the betterment  
of not just an individual but also those  
around him/her, the spillover effects are  
innumerable.

As John Lennon describes the  
world as it should be in his acclaimed dattic  
'Imagine' i.e. a world free from vices,  
violence and vicissitudes, the data has  
the power to put the world towards that  
path. However like the oil was running  
the world in 20th century, Data is the

new oil of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Though India has world's most cost effective tariff regimes as per International Telecommunication Union, it is still out of the reach of far too many. As per World Bank, around 22% of Indians still survive on per capita income of less than \$ 3.5 per day, it ~~becomes~~ becomes virtually impossible for the people to afford data. The recent outrage among the people on 10% tariff hike by all major telecom companies in India indicates tens of thousands price sensitivity of people towards data.

Despite the fact that there were great leaps towards digitization in India for the past decade and the efforts exacerbated during COVID, there are numerous incidental costs that are associated with it. Internet is yet to reach all Gram Panchayats of the country where, as Gandhi Ji described, the "true India", lies. Also gadgets required to benefit from the data are unaffordable for many people.

Private sector is hailed for its quality, time bound and efficient delivery of goods and services to the people. It has further improved ever since the corporates became aware about the user ~~gen~~ preferences and choices through user generated data. However, in order to eliminate competition and in an effort to create an oligopoly if not monopoly, they have begun to monopolise data. The anti-trust lawsuits on Google and Facebook (Meta) in USA and Europe and Australia speak volumes of ill-effects that private sector can have on consumers, small business owners and nation at large.

Data is an essential part of an individual's life. It is hard to imagine a life without it. In the process a user generates immense amount of data including personal data which is shared and stored on the web. In the absence of Data Protection framework and Data localisation norms, this puts millions of users at risk of data theft, cyber bullying, cyber crime etc. The

extent of menace can be gauged from the fact that Cyber crimes increased 64% during COVID-19 when the whole world was online. (NCRB Report).

For effective utilization of data and the benefits it provides, awareness about the ecosystem and the services it offers is essential. The ease of doing things on the web may induce complacency among the people leading to unwanted situations. The Chinese loan Apps scam that surfaced in 2020 which led to numerous suicides is the case in point. It was out of desperation that people fell prey to such scams.

The regulation of content over the internet and data itself is another challenging task that involves conflict between national security and rights of the people. India finds a distinct place on top in terms of number and losses due to internet shutdowns.

A report titled 'Global Cost of Internet Shutdowns' by organisation Top10 VPN estimates that India lost \$ 2.8 Billion out of \$ 4 Billion lost globally due to internet shutdown. This calls for revisiting the rules governing internet shutdowns as it is essential for exercising fundamental rights by the people.

There was a time when the needs of a human being were summed up into three words 'Food, clothes and shelter'. There has been a considerable enhancement in these basic needs and 'Data' is the latest addition to this basket. ~~of~~ Data can no longer be called a luxury, rather it has become a basic need through which government does governance, people avail education, health and economic facilities and society interacts. Acknowledging the limited resources at the disposal of the state, there has to be a concerted and collaborative effort between the stakeholders to make Data a public good in India.

The Government can partner with international companies like SpaceX which has an ambition to provide global broadband connectivity using Satellites. The government can tap into Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) corpus for this programme. This will provide universal connectivity without the need for laying physical infrastructure saving land acquisition costs and hassles for Right of Way.

The BharatNet programme aimed at connecting all Gram Sabhas with 10 Mbps broadband, scalable to 50 Mbps, must be implemented at a faster pace. This will ensure that internet reaches every village thereby benefiting in terms of better governance, development, monitoring, market access, telemedicine and education etc.

Efforts should be made to make public places such as railway stations, bus stations, ports etc to have a universal broadband connection. This can be done by

Mandating the Telecom Companies to spend their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund for the same. This will address the accessibility issues with respect to wireless connectivity.

Incentives can be provided to people applying for Prime Minister's - Wifi - Access Network (PM-WANI) scheme. This will enable internet penetration along with job creation for the people. The incentives can be further scaled up for setting up hotspots in rural areas.

Awareness regarding internet and various other services such as financial services, banking, government services etc must be provided to students in schools. This will enhance financial and digital literacy among young generation and also help in reducing cyber frauds. Further there would be spillover effects among parents and family members.

Telecom Sector must be distressed in order to ensure enough number of

Sizable players for a healthy competition. The recent Telecom Reforms (2021) are a welcome start. Further efforts should be made to streamline spectrum costs on global lines and the government must not view the sector as a cash-cow. The loss making PSUs in telecom sector i.e. the BSNL and MTNL must be turned-around or privatised to improve services, reduce burden on exchequer and instead use saved costs towards expansion of internet services. This will also boost competition.

The Parliament should also enact robust Data Protection Framework to protect privacy of an individual which has been declared as a fundamental right. The law should match the global standards similar to those prevalent in Europe's GDPR Regulations. This will prevent exploitation of user's data for profiteering. The Personal Data Protection Bill as recommended by Justice B. N. Sri Krishna Committee must be enacted without any further delay.

The National Cyber Security Policy 2013 aims at having 5 lakh Cyber Security experts in the country to protect against cyber attacks and cyber crimes. The NASSCOM Report estimates that the country is still short of 3.5 lakh persons. This vulnerability should be minimised at least footing. It is imperative to do so keeping in mind the rising cyber crimes and cyber attacks from China on Mumbai's power grid last year.

Ensuring universality of data is not merely a desire but the need of the hour. The recent times have brought to fore the significant place that data occupies in our daily lives. Having been caught off-guard by the pandemic has exposed the digital divide in the society. Being complacent any further would be criminally unjustified and <sup>can</sup> push back the progress made by the country on various fronts. It becomes imperative for India to consider

data as a public good, accessible to all  
and not luxury of a few.

“From the turmoil of Gulf shock,  
Came a monopolistic block,  
Starving the world for its oxygen,  
Justifying profits as if a comprehensible reason,  
Efforts are on to redo the oil prophecy,  
By making ~~interest~~ data as the next eBay,  
Some wish to cage the wings of the internet  
age,  
All for profits, with their lustful gaze,  
Snatching away from the poor, the last bite  
of his food,  
Is there a doubt, data is a public good?”

An Army of Principles can Penetrate  
where an army of soldiers cannot

Emergence of Nation States after the French Revolution (18<sup>th</sup> century) inspired the Armies to go on a conquest for colonies, all in the name of making their nation great. Imperialism and War was justified as a right of the Superior. However, the same revolution and its ideals inspired the colonies to fight for their freedom. The League of Nations (1919) which was a Cotric of Allied Powers was transformed into a more universal and representative United Nations (1945). India also attained independence based on ideas of Sovereignty of the people and their right of Self-Determination. However this transformation took numerous sacrifices and considerable

time, from demand for 'Dominion Status' in 1851 to 'Poona Subraj' in 1929. This idea inspired millions who rallied behind an unarmed 'Fakir' against the might of the British Empire of 'Gentlemen'. Such is the power of principles which have the capacity to move mountains and melt glaciers.

Ever since the humans have begun recording history, there have been numerous instances where principles and ideals have prevailed even in most perilous circumstances. The mythologies of Mahabharata, Ramayana and Thiruvalluvar are filled with such instances. One can recall such instances even in remote past in almost every domain. However there are still numerous principles which are in their nascent stage and many whose redemption is long overdue. The contemporary times require the army of youngsters to act as a catalyst for the principles to penetrate this Berlin Wall of ignorance and

indifference.

Indian Independence is not just a story of a nation attaining independence. It is fraught with socio-political and cultural changes which are no less than a revolution. The emancipation of women by abolition of Sati, widow remarriage, prohibition on child marriage etc is a testament to principles of equality and justice taking roots during the movement. Similarly, the constitutional rights to Depressed Classes in form of reservation, prohibition of discrimination and untouchability embody the long drawn struggle of justice by Dr. Ambedkar based on principle of caste less and egalitarian society.

Despite an army of opponents both within and outside the Parliament, against the immediate scientific modernisation of the country, the commitment of Prime Minister Nehru to develop the Scientific Temper among Indian people led to leaps and bounds with the establishment of ISRO & BARC. The results

can be witnessed today when India has sent Mission to Mars with a distinction of doing so successfully in first attempt. Further Nuclear Power has become an integral part of decarbonising Energy Sector with an aim to have Nine-Nuclear Power Plants by 2024.

The Socialistic influence of Soviet success in its initial years led to a centralising tendency in decision making in India. The drawbacks were apparent in the failure of community Development Programme (1952). But it took four decades, five committees and two unsuccessful attempts to finally establish local self governments in India in 1993. This was possible because of the guiding principle left by mahatma Gandhi under Article 40 of the constitution i.e. organisation of local self government.

Another significant <sup>political</sup> development during this period was Thirty-Three Percent Reservation to women in local bodies and proportional representation to schedule tribes

and schedule castes who were hitherto absent from the political spectrum in the country. This was done in the backdrop of long drawn struggle for social justice and empowerment. Moreover, equity was ensured by implementation of Mandal Commission Report which gave 52% OBCs 27% assured representation in jobs and education. The historical injustices were being rectified.

Departure from 'Socialistic pattern of society' was another milestone in economic history of the country. The acceptance of Market Economy in 1991 in the form of Liberalisation - Privatisation and Globalisation was tacit acknowledgement of benefits of capitalism. There had been numerous efforts by both, people in India and outside world, to nudge India to open its economy to competition to ensure efficiency, ~~and~~ growth and development. However it did so only when faced with situation of pledging gold in exchange for forex. Despite protests from industry and politicians the idea was accepted because its time had come.

With Democracy taking roots in the country came awareness among the people about their rights and entitlements, also about the corresponding duties of the Decision makers. The demand for transparency in Government and Governance was legitimised and solidified by the decision of Supreme Court in PJCL v. Union of India. It granted Right to Information as a fundamental right under article 19 of the Constitution. Despite the inherent secrecy and confidentiality in functionaries of government it was only a matter of time for the weapon of RTI was given to every citizen against every public authority. Thus, transparency and accountability became the principles of public life and good governance.

Though significant progress has been made in inculcating modern, progressive and equitable principles. The nation with the young population of more than 60 crores has been criminally complacent in ignoring and neglecting certain cogent and essential

aspects which are long overdue. In order to become a 'virtuous society' that Mahatma Gandhi had envisioned and to legitimately claim the rightful spot at global power tables, there is a need to address some pressing concerns of contemporary times.

Despite being 5th largest economy globally and shiploads of forex sufficient for more than 16 months of imports, India finds itself among the most hungry countries in the world. The Global Hunger Index (2019) ranked India 94th in terms of Hunger and Nutrition with situation worsening in times of COVID. India has been running world's largest free food grain programme under PM - Grain Kalyan Anna Yojana for 67% of the population. Despite of these efforts, the ranking and evidences are a cause of great concern.

Kautilya has remarked in Arthashastra that, "one can never tell the amount of water drunk by a fish swimming in the ocean". The situation today outweighs the 'fish' and its place has been taken by

'Whales' indulging in Big ticket Corruption.  
The Corruption Perception Index (2019) ranks  
India at 26<sup>th</sup> out of 150 aid countries. It  
speaks volumes of the menace despite  
having some of the most stringent Anti-  
graft laws in place. The Prevention of Corruption  
Act, 1988 includes within its ambit even the  
Directors of a Private Bank because, though it is  
not a 'State' or 'Public Authority' but because  
it performs a 'public duty' of banking. Further,  
Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 presumes  
guilt of the person accused of money laundering  
even though he might have been an accessory  
merely by accident or unknowingly. Thus merely  
principles of law are not enough to address  
this social menace.

Similar is the situation with  
respect to Social Status of lower castes.  
Though Constitution has prohibited untouchability  
in all forms, it continues to persist in the  
society. The presence of Manual Scavengers  
still speaks volumes about the work

and caste linkages. The enactment of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 was aimed at creating a deterrent effect among the perpetrators of caste based violence and discriminators. However, even after three decades caste based crimes are on the rise. The NCRB (2019) Report shows increase of 7.5% in crimes against vulnerable sections. This phenomena has to be addressed from a social ~~issue~~ perspective rather than a law and order problem.

Women have shown remarkable progress in all fields. Newspapers are full of eulogiums about Sruati Mohan who landed NASA's persaurance award on Mars or Malti Kulka, an AASHA worker from Odisha who finds her name in Forbes Most Influential Women. However, there are also instances of Indira Nooyi who has faced patriarchy at home from her own mother. The Dual Burden on women is one of the greatest reason for low female labour force participation. This is at the time when NFHS-5 (2019) Reports

that there are more women than men in India. The safety at workplaces continues to be a concern, partially because of lack of awareness regarding protection laws such as Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013 but mainly due to inaction on the part of employers and law enforcement agencies being complacent about this aspect. It is not the laws but principles which will make people realise that societies cannot move forward without the wellbeing of half of its members.

The economic progress of the country is an achievement for which the whole nation can pat its back. The V-shaped recovery from COVID-19 is a remarkable feat. However when it comes to the concentration of its wealth, the picture is not so vibrant. The OXFAM Report highlights that top 1% of Indians hold more than 50% of the nation's wealth. An average Indian still lives hand-to-mouth. The COVID induced lockdown presented a giant dichotomy where the bourses were

booming with sharpest recovery, better than any other stock market in the world but actual situation on the ground was not so a cause of joy. Though we adopted the capitalist tilt in our economic policy but inequality was not the principle we accepted ~~but~~ by us, still it is today an infamous characteristic of our lives.

India boasts of world's largest and most diverse democracy today. But on a closer look it can be seen that 17th Lok Sabha has 447 of members facing serious criminal charges (Association for Democratic Reforms). Further local governments were organised as a tool of Direct Democracy. However, they have not performed as expected. The representation of women has been a political hot potato in the recent past, but there has been no cogent step towards it. Transparency in functioning and funding of political parties has been an agenda since time immemorial, but it has never seen the light of

the day.

This year was an exceptional one for the developments and achievements in the field of Science, Technology and Entrepreneurship. India witnessed 37 unicorns in the initial 9 months and the number is expected to rise even further. Also CEOs of top American tech companies like Google and Twitter are persons of Indian origin. However, when it comes to domestic focus on Research & Development, only 0.7% of GDP is allocated towards it. Further India has one of the lowest proportions of Doctors, Scientists and Researchers per million population. The development of Scientific temper is still a long road.

Future belongs to the nation with Bread, Brain and Bandwidth. India has the capability to become a global powerhouse in terms of supplying goods to rest of the world and servicing their needs. The time has come for the nation to embark upon the path based on right principles and ideas,

breaking the army of shackles curbing its progress.

For a nation to progress it is necessary that its population is well fed and nurtured. It is imperative that an integrated effort is made to improve the nutritional levels in children through a combination of efforts under ICDS and POSHAN Abhiyan. Also the government should diversify the food basket under NFSA, 2013. This will ensure that there is no deficiency of micronutrients and will also aid in agriculture's diversification.

Health & Well-being is another focus area where efforts are required particularly at primary level. There is a need to increase Doctor-to-Population ratio which is ~~at~~ below national average for all states except Kerala. Also a shift is required from curative to Preventive Healthcare by incorporating healthy lifestyle practices such as Yoga, ensuring hygiene through Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

and clean drinking water under Jal Jeevan Mission.

It is time that state acknowledges the basic rights of citizens to civic amenities such as electricity, housing and clean environment. Climate can no longer be neglected and it is imperative that Sustainable Development is brought to the mainstream practice of development.

In order to inculcate right set of values, Primary Socialisation is utmost important. The curriculum should be modified to create right set of values in addition to academics. The practical and realism incorporated under New Education Policy (NEP) is a good start.

Gender Sensitisation requires both preventive and punitive aspects to make world more safe for women. Education about various physiological aspects of women and not considering it a Taboo will go a long way in addressing prejudices and

Stereotypes. Further there is a need to improve policing and judicial infrastructure, training and workforce to reduce delay in administration of justice.

The changes in political system are long overdue. The Political Parties should be brought under RTI to ensure transparency in funding. Further criminalisation of politics should be checked by barring politicians charged with any offence from contesting elections for rest of his/her life. Reservation for women should be brought in to make the legislature more representative.

As remarked by Nelson Mandela,  
"It is not the kings and generals that make history, but the masses of the people".  
It is important that people are guided by right principles and maintain their steadfast commitment to them, no matter the adversity, as it is rightly said, "an army of principles can penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot."