

LUKMAAN IAS

Lead with Edge

UPSC MAINS CORE GROUP 2026



DAF DECODED • HOBBY QUESTION BANK

Hobbies

20 popular hobbies: content, real questions and model answers

292

hobby questions found

40

model answers

20

hobbies covered

CSE 2019–2025 • Systematic Content • Asked + Expected Questions • Model Answers

“Your hobby is the one subject where the board expects you to be the expert.”

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Hobbies are the one part of the DAF that you chose freely, so the board treats them as your **zone of expertise**. This book covers the 20 hobbies that candidates list most often. For each hobby it gives **systematic content** (basics, India story, institutions and policy, 2025–26 developments, science and social angles, administrative linkages), the **questions boards actually asked** in CSE 2019–2025 interviews, **expected questions**, **two model answers**, common **traps** and a **preparation checklist**.

How the questions were collected

292 real hobby questions from candidate-shared Personality Test transcripts (ForumIAS, Insights IAS, PW OnlyIAS, Reddit and toppers' blogs), CSE 2019–2025. Each carries the CSE year in square brackets.

Transcripts are recollections, so wording is approximate. Expected questions and model answers are Lukmaan IAS additions.

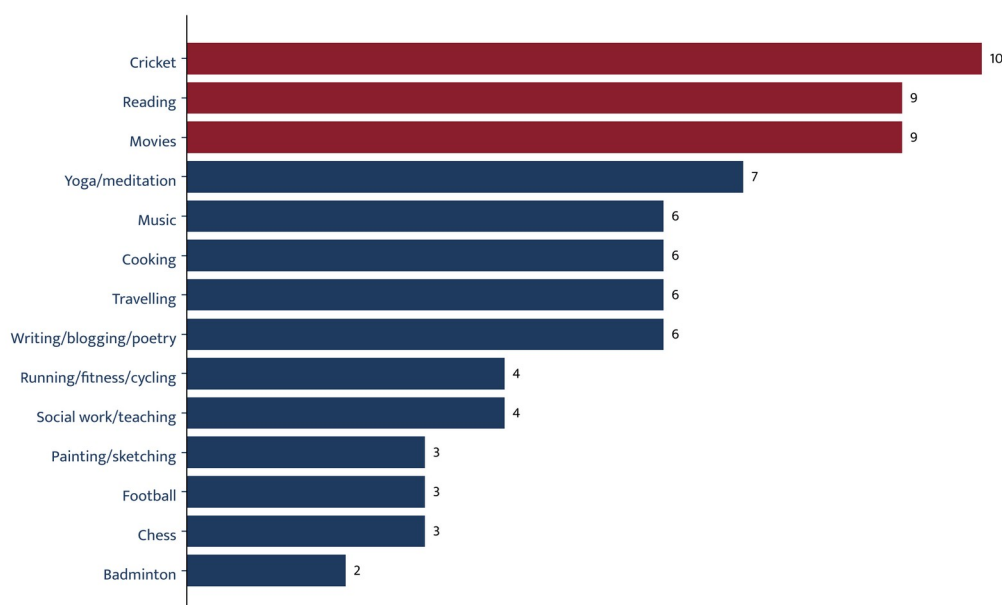


Figure 1. Hobbies in 68 transcripts studied (number of candidates)

How boards question hobbies

- **Many listed hobbies are never touched.** In about a quarter of the transcripts opened, the board skipped the hobby entirely; a 2025 Raj Shukla board candidate wrote 'Nothing asked from Hobbies', and a 2022 RN Choubey candidate's football, tennis and movies drew 'No questions asked'.
- **Proof-of-practice questions.** Boards check whether the hobby is actually practised: 'What level of cricket have you played?' (2022), 'Position I played' in football (2022), 'How much time do you take to solve sudoku? What about hard level?' (2023), 'Chess.. your rating?' (2024).
- **Technical depth tests.** Members drill into the craft's specifics: 'Which camera and lens do you have? Which lens is preferred for bird photography?' (2021), 'what is the actual physiological function... while doing pranayaam?' (2021), 'Why are badminton courts wooden, not cemented?' (2024).

- **Definitions and fine distinctions.** A favourite move is to ask the candidate to separate near-synonyms: 'Journal vs diary writing' (2021), 'difference between bibliophile, bookworm and wordsmith' (2024), budget traveller vs backpacker (2022), 'How is mindfulness different from other forms of meditation?' (2025).
- **Recency checks.** Boards ask what you did with the hobby lately: 'What did you write about recently?' (2021), 'Recent movie watched?' (2021), 'which books did u read recently. Why?' (2021), 'What was the last sketch you made... why choose [a lion]?' (2025).
- **Hobby turned into a policy question.** A sport or pastime becomes a governance question about the sector: 'Why are we lagging so behind in swimming?' (2020), 'India not favourable to cycling, why? What needs to be done?' (2021), 'What will you do to attract children to play badminton?' (2024), 'Why did the Formula 1 race stop in India?' (2024).
- **Link to administration and life lessons.** Candidates are asked what the hobby taught them or how it transfers to the job: doodling 'how can this be used in administration?' (2022), 'What do you learn from chess in life?' (2024), 'How kabaddi contributes to character development' (2024), 'Football tactic that can be used by lawyers in arguing a case' (2022).
- **Favourites with justification.** A favourite is asked and then the reason is probed: 'Which cricketer inspires you the most... calm and that too Virat Kohli?' (2025), 'Favourite Agatha Christie detective... what do you like about his character?' (2024), 'Favourite book and why?' (2023).
- **Regional and cultural anchoring.** Hobbies are tied to the home state or to Indian culture: Malwa cuisine and daal bafra for a cooking candidate from MP (2024), Pichwai vs Tanjore painting and Sanganeri vs Bagru print (2023), features of Bundelkhandi music (2020), famous Indian flautists (2025).
- **Hobby as a hook for current affairs or GK.** The hobby only opens a factual question: 'Your hobby is quizzing.. then tell me the name of rail corridors announced in budget?' (2025), 'Why 2nd November 2025 is known as the red day of Indian cricket' (2025), 'U mentioned quizzing... 2 American states which are perfectly rectangular' (2021).
- **Odd combinations questioned.** Unusual or mismatched profiles draw a 'how come' question: 'Its interesting that a student of Physics also likes to sing. Amateur or trained?' (2021), 'You have covered different unrelated fields... cooking, Aircraft, Formula 1. How and why?' (2021), 'unique combination of Pichwai and Tanjore painting, how come?' (2023).
- **Wording and padding get exposed.** Coaching commentary (Onmanorama 'ABC of Civil Service', 2020) gives examples of padded entries being mocked: 'following wildlife' drew 'Whom do you follow; a bear or an elephant?', and 'crooning' or 'cherishing Bharatanatyam' showed the candidate did not know what the words mean. The same column says boards may ask about books, movies or music even when they are not listed.

General hobby questions asked in real boards

1. Where all have you travelled? / Which places have you travelled to? [2020, 2022]
2. Which books did you read recently? Why? [2021]
3. Recent movie watched? What is it about? [2021]
4. What did you write about recently? [2021]
5. How can this [hobby] be used in administration? [2022]
6. What do you learn from [chess] in life? / What have you learnt [from volleyball]? [2019, 2024]
7. What level have you played at? What was your parents' reaction when you started playing? [2022]

8. At what position do you play? [2022, 2024, 2025]
9. Who is your favourite player / who inspires you most, and why? [2022, 2025]
10. How is [cooking] your hobby? [2021]
11. Why do you meditate? What would you tell school children to convince them? [2021]
12. How long have you been doing/watching this? [2021]
13. Favourite book and why? [2023]
14. What was the last [sketch] you made, and why that subject? [2025]
15. Why is India lagging in [your sport], and what can be done? [2020, 2021, 2025]

The four-layer method for any hobby

Step 1. Personal layer. Why you took it up, what you do, how often, your best moment. Be specific: titles, matches, routes, recipes.

Step 2. Knowledge layer. History, rules, techniques, Indian icons, records and the vocabulary an enthusiast would use.

Step 3. Governance layer. Ministries, bodies, schemes, laws, court cases and current controversies linked to the hobby.

Step 4. Officer layer. How the hobby makes you a better administrator, and how you would use it in a district or ministry.

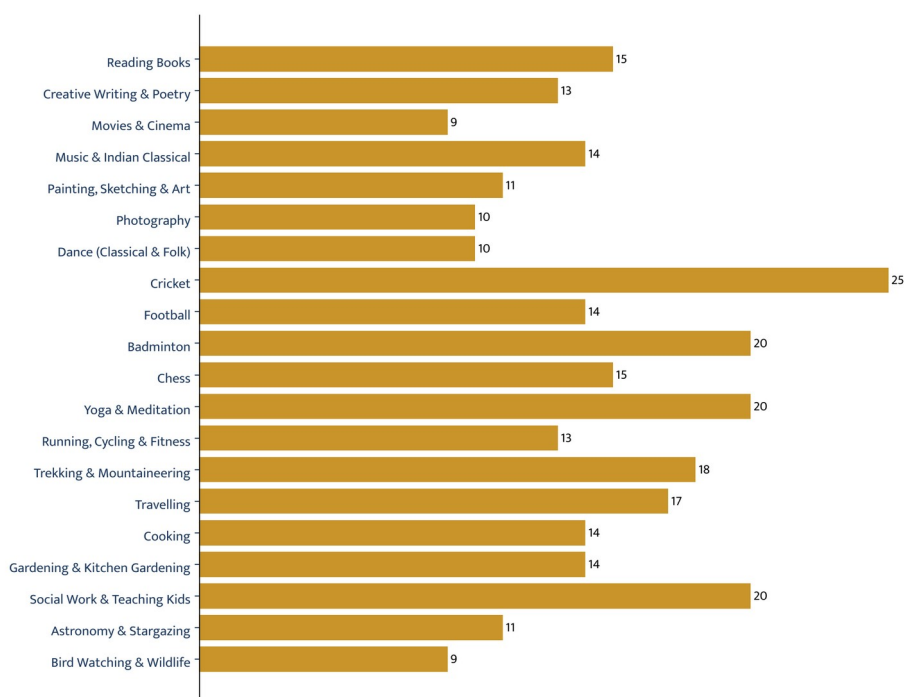


Figure 2. Real board questions found per hobby in this compilation (CSE 2019-2025)

PART I

Mind, Arts and Expression

Reading, writing, cinema, music, art, photography, dance

HOBBY 1

Reading Books

Appears in DAFs as: reading fiction, non-fiction, biographies, novels, spy thrillers, classics, collecting books, book clubs, Kindle reading. Reading is the most common DAF hobby, so boards use it to separate genuine readers, who can discuss authors, ideas and their own takeaways, from candidates who listed it as filler.

What the board is really testing

- Is the hobby real: can you name recent reads, authors and the central argument of each book without hesitation?
- Depth of thought: can you turn a book's idea into a view on governance, ethics or society?
- Breadth and openness: do you read beyond your comfort genre, including Indian-language and contemporary writers?
- Honesty under pressure: do you admit 'I have not read that' instead of bluffing?
- Officer-like use: how reading shapes empathy, judgement and communication in administration

Basics, genres and reading culture

- Know the vocabulary: a **bibliophile** loves and collects books, a bookworm reads compulsively, a wordsmith is skilled at using words; boards have asked this distinction directly.
- Main genres: literary fiction, genre fiction (crime, spy, fantasy, sci-fi), biography/memoir, history, popular science, philosophy, self-help; be ready to defend your genre choice.
- Classic versus contemporary: classics have survived generations (Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Premchand); contemporary means recent living writers; boards ask which you prefer and why.
- Formats: print, e-reader and **audiobooks**; be ready for a print-versus-Kindle question covering retention, cost, eye strain, access and environmental footprint.
- Crime fiction pairs boards like: Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot (psychology, 'little grey cells') versus Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes (forensic observation and deduction).
- Keep a reading log: title, author, year, central thesis, one quote, one disagreement and one administrative lesson for every book listed in your DAF.

India story and literary icons

- Non-fiction staples boards cite: Amartya Sen's *The Argumentative Indian*, Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*, Sanjaya Baru's *The Accidental Prime Minister*, Kalam's *Wings of Fire*.
- Indian-language greats: Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore (Nobel 1913, *Gitanjali*), Girish Karnad (plays *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*), Mahasweta Devi, U.R. Ananthamurthy, Basheer, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay.

- **Jnanpith**: 58th went jointly to Gulzar and Jagadguru Rambhadracharya; 59th to Hindi writer Vinod Kumar Shukla, first from Chhattisgarh, who died in Raipur on 23 December 2025.
- **International Booker 2025**: Banu Mushtaq's Kannada story collection Heart Lamp, translated by Deepa Bhashti, the first Kannada book and first short-story collection to win.
- Booker Prize 2025 went to David Szalay's *Flesh*; International Booker 2026 went to Taiwan Travelogue by Yang Shuang-zi, translated by Lin King.
- Spy-fiction context: Eli Cohen was an Israeli Mossad agent who penetrated Syria's elite in the 1960s and was hanged in Damascus in 1965; Vienna was the Cold War 'spy capital'.

Institutions, policy and law

- **Sahitya Akademi** (1954, Ministry of Culture) gives awards in 24 languages; **National Book Trust** (1957, Ministry of Education) runs the New Delhi World Book Fair and PM-YUVA author mentorship.
- Libraries are a **State List** subject (Entry 12); the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954 mandates copies to national libraries; Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation (1972) supports public libraries.
- **Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya**, run by NBT, is a free national digital library for children and adolescents with thousands of e-books across Indian languages, accessible on phones and tablets.
- **Gyan Bharatam Mission** (Ministry of Culture, 2024–31, Rs 482.85 crore) aims to survey, conserve and digitise India's estimated five million-plus manuscripts.
- Copyright Act, 1957 protects literary works for the author's life plus 60 years; DU photocopy case (2016) treated course-pack copying as fair educational use.
- NEP 2020 and NIPUN Bharat prioritise foundational literacy, reading corners and school libraries; ASER 2024 found 27.1% of Std III children could read a Std II text.

Current developments 2025–26

- New Delhi World Book Fair (10–18 January 2026, Bharat Mandapam) made entry free for the first time, took Indian military history as its theme, and reported over 20% higher footfall.
- Sahitya Akademi's December 2025 award announcement was cancelled on Ministry of Culture instructions; the 2025 awards were finally announced on 16 March 2026, raising **autonomy** debates.
- 2025 Sahitya Akademi winners include Navtej Sarna (English, *Crimson Spring*, on Jallianwala Bagh) and Mamta Kalia (Hindi, *Jeete Jee Allahabad*).
- Tamil Nadu announced its own literary awards in several languages after the Akademi episode, framed as a federalism and cultural-autonomy issue.
- Translation is driving Indian literature abroad: Heart Lamp (2025) followed Geetanjali Shree's *Tomb of Sand* (2022) as Indian-language International Booker winners.

Science, economics and social angle

- Neuroscience: deep reading builds sustained attention and **theory of mind**; Matthew Walker's *Why We Sleep* (asked by a board) links sleep to memory consolidation.
- Screen reading tends toward skimming; studies on the 'screen inferiority effect' suggest lower comprehension of complex text on screens than on paper.
- Publishing economy: India is among the world's largest book markets, with a large Hindi and regional-language segment, plus piracy, high GST on paper and thin distribution as constraints.

- Social role: community libraries in villages, mobile libraries and reading rooms widen access for first-generation learners and competitive-exam aspirants from poor households.
- Censorship and book bans test Article 19: Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (import ban 1988) and periodic state-level bans illustrate the tension with public order.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- A district officer can revive panchayat libraries, use DMF or CSR funds for reading rooms, and link them with Samagra Shiksha school libraries.
- Literature builds **empathy**: Premchand's peasants or Mahasweta Devi's tribals show realities that files reduce to statistics.
- Biographies of administrators and leaders model integrity, crisis decisions and the courage to dissent within rules.
- Reading habits help in drafting clear notes, judgements and public communication, and keep an officer updated in a fast-changing policy environment.
- Ethical caution: do not quote a book you have not read; intellectual honesty is itself an integrity signal to the board.

Asked in real interviews

1. You list reading and collecting books. How many books are in your collection? What is the difference between a bibliophile, a bookworm and a wordsmith? [2024]
2. Which fiction have you read? Favourite Agatha Christie book and detective, Poirot or Miss Marple? What is Poirot's speciality and how does his deduction differ from Sherlock Holmes? [2024]
3. Do you read non-fiction? Which genre and which specific books apart from the Constitution? Do you know any plays by Girish Karnad? [2024]
4. You read spycraft novels: who was Eli Cohen and what happened to him? Why was Vienna the Cold War spy capital? What could make New Delhi the new one? [2024]
5. What is the last book you read and what did you learn from it? What is your favourite book? [2024]
6. What is the last book you have read? [2023]
7. Which book did you read recently and what is it about? Have you read 'Why We Sleep'? [2021]
8. Who wrote *The Clash of Civilizations*, *The Argumentative Indian* and *The Accidental Prime Minister*? [2021]
9. What kind of books do you read? Do you buy them in print or read them on Kindle? [2021]
10. You write and read poems; don't you read any books? Name your favourite authors. [2023]
11. Since you like to sing and read, are you aware of Romanticism? [2021]
12. Why did you read Dostoevsky's work and not that of other writers? [2025]
13. You read fiction: classical or contemporary? Which contemporary writers? [2023]
14. From your reading on Gandhi: is Gandhi and his non-violence relevant today? Gandhi or Kissinger, who is better? [2023]
15. Which book has Abdul Kalam written? In *Wings of Fire*, what is 'wings' and what is 'fire'? [2021]

Expected questions

1. Name three books you read in the last six months and the one idea from each that changed your thinking.

2. Who won the 59th Jnanpith Award and what is distinctive about his writing?
3. Should the Sahitya Akademi be fully autonomous of the Ministry of Culture? What happened with the 2025 awards?
4. As a District Collector, how would you build a reading culture among rural youth?
5. Is reading on screens destroying deep reading? Should schools move to e-books?
6. Which book would you recommend every civil servant read, and why?
7. Your favourite author faces a ban on a book in your district due to protests. What will you do?
8. Translations won the International Booker in 2022 and 2025. What does this say about Indian-language literature?

Model answer: In the age of reels and AI summaries, is book reading becoming irrelevant?

I do not think so, though the format is changing. Short content gives information, but long-form reading builds sustained attention and the ability to hold competing arguments, which an administrator needs. ASER 2024 found only 27.1% of Std III children could read a Std II-level text, so the real challenge is foundational reading, not books versus screens. As an officer, I would combine both: revive panchayat and school libraries, promote the free Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya on phones, and run reading campaigns through anganwadis and SHGs, so that technology becomes a gateway to deeper reading rather than a substitute.

Model answer: A book by a well-known author is facing violent protests in your district and groups demand a ban. As DM, what would you do?

My first duty is to protect both public order and the constitutional right under Article 19(1)(a). Courts have repeatedly held that the state cannot surrender to a heckler's veto; in *S. Rangarajan* the Supreme Court said threats of violence cannot justify suppressing expression. Book bans are a decision for the state government under law, not for a mob or for me. I would provide security to bookshops and the author's events, talk to community leaders, counter rumours on social media, and act firmly against anyone inciting violence. If any passage genuinely attracts a legal offence, I would refer it for a legal opinion rather than act on pressure.

Common traps

- Listing 'reading' but naming only exam books or one bestseller read years ago; boards immediately ask for the last book and its argument.
- Bluffing about books or authors you have not read; follow-ups on plot, characters or thesis expose it within seconds.
- Ignoring Indian and regional-language literature, or not knowing major current literary awards and controversies.

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Prepare one-page notes on 8–10 books you have actually read: author, year, thesis, characters, a quote, a critique and an administrative lesson.
- ☐ Memorise current literary facts: Jnanpith 58th and 59th, Booker and International Booker 2025 and 2026, Sahitya Akademi 2025 episode.
- ☐ Read at least one Indian-language classic in translation and one book by an author from your home state.
- ☐ Revise institutions and schemes: Sahitya Akademi, NBT, RRRLF, Rashtriya e-Pustakalaya, Gyan Bharatam, NEP 2020 reading goals, ASER findings.
- ☐ Practise answering 'last book you read' and 'favourite author, why' in under 60 seconds, ending with a governance link.

HOBBY 2**Creative Writing & Poetry**

Appears in DAFs as: writing poems, Hindi/Urdu poetry and shayari, free verse, short stories, blogging, journaling, Quora writing, publishing. Writing reveals how a candidate thinks and feels, so boards test whether the candidate knows the poetic tradition behind the hobby and can link self-expression with free-speech law and public communication.

What the board is really testing

- Authenticity: can you describe, or even recite, your own work and explain what drives it?
- Literary grounding: do you know the poets, movements and forms of the language you write in?
- Observation and empathy: do you write about people and society around you, and what did that teach you?
- Constitutional sense: limits of free expression, online speech regulation and creative freedom
- Communication skill: can a writer draft crisp, humane official communication and handle public messaging?

Forms, techniques and traditions

- Forms: sonnet, ghazal (sher, matla, maqta, radif, qafiya), haiku, doha, nazm, free verse, prose poem, short story, flash fiction, personal essay, blog post.
- **Free verse** abandons fixed metre and rhyme (Walt Whitman, T.S. Eliot); Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* (1986) is the opposite, a novel in rhymed tetrameter sonnets.
- Hindi poetry movements: Bhakti and Riti kaal, **Chhayavad** (Prasad, Pant, Nirala, Mahadevi Verma), Pragativad, Prayogvad (Agyeya's *Tar Saptak*, 1943) and Nayi Kavita.
- Dinkar's **Rashmirathi** (1952) retells Karna's life; the title means 'charioteer of the sun's rays', pointing to Karna as son of Surya. Dinkar won Jnanpith for *Urvashi*.
- Tamil classics boards use: Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural* (1,330 couplets on virtue, wealth and love) and Andal's *Thiruppavai* (30 verses sung in Margazhi month).

- Urdu tradition: Mir, Ghalib, Iqbal, Faiz, Sahir, Bashir Badr, Rahat Indori; be ready to explain one couplet's meaning if you list shayari.

India story and literary icons

- Tagore remains the only Indian Nobel laureate in Literature (1913); boards expect respect in naming, such as 'Gurudev'.
- Mahadevi Verma, called the 'modern Meera', won Jnanpith (1982) and wrote poetry of longing and essays on women's condition (Shrinkhala ki Kadiyan).
- Kabir, Tulsidas, Meera, Basavanna and Lal Ded show how vernacular poetry carried social reform and devotion to ordinary people.
- Protest and nationalist poetry: Bankim's Vande Mataram, Iqbal's Saare Jahan Se Achha, Subramania Bharati, Faiz's Hum Dekhenge, Dinkar's Samar Shesh Hai.
- Contemporary voices: Gulzar (Jnanpith, 58th, jointly), Vinod Kumar Shukla (59th Jnanpith, poet-novelist, died December 2025), Javed Akhtar, Arundhati Subramaniam, Jeet Thayil.

Institutions, policy and law

- Article 19(1)(a) protects expression; Article 19(2) permits reasonable restrictions for sovereignty, security, public order, decency, morality, defamation, contempt and incitement.
- **Shreya Singhal (2015)** struck down Section 66A of the IT Act for vagueness but upheld Section 69A blocking powers with safeguards.
- IT Rules, 2021 govern intermediaries and digital publishers; Section 79 safe harbour depends on due diligence and takedown on lawful orders.
- Copyright Act, 1957 protects literary works automatically from creation, for life plus 60 years; registration is optional but useful evidence in disputes.
- BNS 2023 provisions writers must know: Section 196 (promoting enmity), 299 (outraging religious feelings, old 295A), 356 (defamation, old 499).
- Press and Registration of Periodicals Act, 2023 replaced the colonial 1867 Press and Registration of Books Act for periodicals.

Current developments 2025–26

- **Imran Pratapgadhi v. State of Gujarat** (March 2025): Supreme Court quashed an FIR over the poem 'Ae khoon ke pyase', holding police must read speech as a reasonable person would.
- Sahitya Akademi's 18 December 2025 award announcement was cancelled at the Culture Ministry's direction under a July 2025 MoU; the awards were announced on 16 March 2026.
- Karnataka High Court (September 2025) dismissed X Corp's challenge to the **Sahyog portal** for takedown notices under Section 79(3)(b); X has appealed.
- In the India's Got Latent case (2025), the Supreme Court said self-regulation of online content is ineffective and asked the Centre for a neutral, autonomous regulatory mechanism.
- The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules were notified in November 2025, relevant to bloggers and newsletters that collect reader data.

Science, economics and social angle

- Expressive writing research (James Pennebaker) links journaling about difficult experiences with lower stress and better health; reflective writing is used in medical and teacher training.
- The **creator economy** lets bloggers and poets earn via newsletters, Instagram poetry and open-mic platforms, but income is uneven and platform-dependent.

- AI text generators raise authorship, copyright and plagiarism questions; Indian law currently assumes a human author for copyright.
- Open mics and slam poetry have revived spoken word in Indian cities, often bilingual (Hinglish), and in regional languages through YouTube.
- Translation is the bridge for Indian literature; shortages of skilled translators, including into Hindi, limit cross-language reach and official communication.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Writing trains clarity: a well-drafted note, order or press release prevents litigation and confusion; officers write constantly.
- Observational writing about everyday people, like a blog on a local vendor, trains the **empathy** and field sense a district officer needs.
- Officers can use poetry and storytelling in campaigns, such as Swachh Bharat jingles, Beti Bachao slogans and election awareness, in local dialects.
- Conduct Rules: All India Services (Conduct) Rules allow literary and artistic writing but bar criticism of government policy and unauthorised disclosure; officers must stay politically neutral.
- Ethical issues: plagiarism, AI-written work passed off as one's own, and respecting dignity of real people portrayed in stories.

Asked in real interviews

1. You write free verse poetry. Can you name some poets? Have you read any contemporary poets? [2025]
2. Have you heard of The Golden Gate? Does Vikram Seth write free verse? [2025]
3. Name one writer who talks about issues at the district level. [2025]
4. Do you like Thiruppavai or Thirukkural? You must choose one. [2024]
5. What types of blogs do you write? How many people read them? [2024]
6. Why is Rashmirathi named so? [2023]
7. What is the name of your blog and why that name? Do you observe people closely? Why do you write about human lives? [2022]
8. Tell us three things you learned from the story you wrote on your blog. [2022]
9. What do you mean by illustrating poetry? Have you read a particular Hindi poem? [2021]
10. Why is there so much difficulty in Hindi translation? Any suggestions? [2021]
11. Who are your favourite Hindi poets? What is the opening line of Dinkar's Rashmirathi? [2020]
12. Tell us something special about Mahadevi Verma. What is Chhayavaad? [2020]
13. The member recited shayari by Bashir Badr and Rahat Indori and asked the candidate to interpret it. [2020]

Expected questions

1. Recite two lines of your own poem and explain what inspired it.
2. What is the difference between free verse and a ghazal? Which suits your writing and why?
3. Can a poem be a crime? Where should the line be drawn between creative freedom and public order?
4. The Supreme Court quashed an FIR over a poem in 2025. What principle did it lay down?
5. Should civil servants publish poetry or blogs? What limits do the Conduct Rules impose?
6. Will AI tools make poets and writers irrelevant? Who owns an AI-written poem?

7. How would you use storytelling or poetry in a public campaign in your district?
8. Was the cancellation of the Sahitya Akademi announcement in December 2025 justified?

Model answer: Can poetry be a crime? Where would you draw the line?

Poetry can be provocative, and that is often its social value. I would draw the line only where the Constitution does, under Article 19(2): incitement to violence, defamation or threat to public order. In March 2025, in Imran Pratapgadhi's case, the Supreme Court quashed an FIR over a poem and said police must judge speech by the standard of reasonable, strong-minded people, not the most sensitive reader. As an officer, before registering such cases I would seek legal scrutiny of the actual text, protect the writer's events from mobs, and act firmly only against genuine incitement, not mere offence.

Model answer: As a civil servant, will you continue to write and publish? Is it compatible with service neutrality?

Yes, I would like to continue, within the rules. The All India Services (Conduct) Rules permit literary and artistic work, but bar criticism of government policy, disclosure of official information and political commentary. Many officers have been noted writers, which shows the two can coexist. I would keep my creative writing separate from official matters, avoid themes that use confidential information, and seek permission where required. My writing habit would also help in my work: clear notes, empathetic letters to citizens and campaign messages in local language. The test is simple: my writing should never compromise impartiality or public trust.

Common traps

- Writing in a language but not knowing its major poets, movements or forms; boards ask about Chhayavad, Dinkar or Ghalib immediately.
- Being unable to recite or explain even a few lines of one's own work, or claiming a blog with no real content.
- Taking extreme positions on free speech, either absolutist or censorious, without citing Article 19(2) and key judgments.

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Keep 3–4 of your own poems or pieces ready to recite in 30 seconds each, with the context and message.
- ☐ Revise the literary history of your writing language: movements, five key poets, two famous works each and one line you can quote.
- ☐ Know the free-speech law kit: Article 19(1)(a) and 19(2), Shreya Singhal, Imran Pratapgadhi 2025, IT Rules 2021, Sahyog portal ruling, BNS sections.
- ☐ Read the All India Services (Conduct) Rules on publications and media participation.
- ☐ Prepare one example of how storytelling or writing could improve a government campaign in your home district.

HOBBY 3

Movies & Cinema

Appears in DAFs as: watching movies, world cinema, Hollywood, regional films, OTT series, documentaries, film appreciation, film reviewing. Cinema is both mass culture and a policy domain spanning censorship, OTT regulation, the creative economy and soft power, so boards use it to test whether a casual hobby carries social and governance insight.

What the board is really testing

- Whether you watch critically: themes, direction, social message, not just stars and box office
- Your view on cinema's influence on society, from violence and stereotypes to social reform films
- Knowledge of regulation: CBFC, the Cinematograph Act, OTT rules and free speech
- Awareness of the industry: National Awards, Oscars and Cannes, soft power and the creative economy
- Balance and maturity on controversial films, bans and the heckler's veto

Basics, history and milestones

- Dadasaheb Phalke's Raja Harishchandra (1913) was India's first full-length feature; Ardeshir Irani's Alam Ara (1931) was the first talkie.
- Golden age and parallel cinema: Satyajit Ray (Pathar Panchali 1955, honorary Oscar 1992), Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan.
- Evolution of Hindi cinema: social and nation-building films (1950s), angry-young-man era (1970s), liberalisation-era romance (1990s), multiplex and content-driven cinema (2010s), OTT era (2020s).
- Regional cinema's rise: Malayalam realism, Tamil and Telugu pan-India spectacles (Baahubali, RRR), Kannada's Kantara (2022) built on Bhuta Kola folk ritual of coastal Karnataka.
- Oscars: RRR's Naatu Naatu (Best Original Song) and The Elephant Whisperers (Documentary Short) won in 2023; Payal Kapadia's All We Imagine As Light won Cannes Grand Prix 2024.

Awards, icons and recent films

- **71st National Film Awards** (films of 2023): 12th Fail best feature; Shah Rukh Khan (Jawan) and Vikrant Massey shared best actor; Rani Mukerji best actress; Mohanlal got Dadasaheb Phalke Award.
- **72nd National Film Awards** (films of 2024, announced 18 July 2026): Article 370 best feature; Kartik Aaryan and Mammooty shared best actor; Yami Gautam best actress; Rajkumar Periasamy best director (Amaran).
- The 72nd awards ceremony was held at Ekta Nagar, Gujarat, on 22 September 2026, the first outside New Delhi in decades.
- Veteran Kannada actor Anant Nag was named for the **Dadasaheb Phalke Award** for 2024 in September 2026.
- 12th Fail, based on IPS officer Manoj Kumar Sharma's struggle, is a board favourite for discussing coaching culture, poverty and the dignity of failure.

Institutions, policy and law

- **CBFC** certifies films under the Cinematograph Act, 1952 (Ministry of I&B); the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal was abolished in 2021, so appeals now go to High Courts.
- Cinematograph (Amendment) Act, 2023: UA 7+, UA 13+, UA 16+ sub-categories; perpetual certificates; piracy jail of three months to three years and fine up to 5% of production cost.
- OTT platforms are governed by Part III of the IT Rules, 2021: a code of ethics, self-classification (U, U/A 7+, 13+, 16+, A) and a three-tier grievance system.
- Key judgments: K.A. Abbas (1970) upheld pre-censorship; S. Rangarajan (1989) rejected the heckler's veto; courts cleared Padmaavat (2018) despite state bans.
- NFDC now absorbs Films Division, the Children's Film Society and the National Film Archive (merged 2022); IFFI Goa is India's premier FIAPF-accredited festival.

Current developments 2025–26

- Neeraj Ghaywan's **Homebound**, India's official Oscar entry, made the 15-film International Feature shortlist in December 2025 but missed the final nomination in January 2026.
- **WAVES 2025** (World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit), Mumbai, from 1 May 2025: Rs 391 crore Indian Institute of Creative Technology and a USD 1 billion creator-economy fund.
- 56th IFFI Goa (20–28 November 2025): Vietnamese film Skin of Youth won the Golden Peacock.
- US President Trump announced, in May and again in September 2025, a 100% tariff on films made outside the US, alarming Indian producers who depend on diaspora box office.
- In the India's Got Latent case (2025) the Supreme Court said self-regulation of online content had failed and asked the Centre to devise a neutral, autonomous mechanism.

Science, economics and social angle

- India produces the most films in the world, in over 20 languages; the M&E sector was valued at about USD 28 billion around WAVES 2025.
- **Soft power:** Indian films are popular in the Gulf, Africa, Russia, Central Asia and China (Dangal); the government offers incentives for foreign film shoots in India.
- Social influence: films shaped attitudes on toilets (Toilet: Ek Prem Katha), menstrual hygiene (Pad Man), sports and girls (Dangal), but can also glamorise violence and misogyny (debate over Animal).
- The 2023 Hollywood strikes by writers (WGA) and actors (SAG-AFTRA) were over streaming residuals and protection from **AI** replicas and AI-written scripts.
- Why National Award films struggle commercially: weak distribution, few screens per capita, star-driven marketing and limited exhibition for regional and independent cinema.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- District administration manages film-related law and order, cinema licensing and single-screen safety; the Uphaar fire (1997) remains the reference case for fire safety.
- Officers can use films and short videos for IEC campaigns, and film societies in schools to build critical thinking and media literacy.
- Film-shooting facilitation through single-window clearances and state film policies brings tourism and jobs; states compete through subsidies.

- Ethical issues: piracy as theft, stereotyping of communities and women, glamorising violence, and the officer's duty to protect lawful screenings against mobs.
- Biopics of officers and real crimes raise fairness questions: trial by cinema, privacy and portrayal of victims.

Asked in real interviews

1. How is society influenced by social movies? [2025]
2. A year or more ago there was a strike in Hollywood. What was it about? [2024]
3. Which recent Tamil movie have you watched? Describe the movie. [2024]
4. The board asked about Kannada movies, including Kantara, and older Kannada films. [2022]
5. How has Hindi cinema evolved? Which actor depicts social reality, and which movies deal with social issues? [2023]
6. Have you watched 12th Fail? What do you say about it? Doesn't it also show the lack of resources? [2023]
7. Are the violence and box-office success of Animal a concern? Would you censor such films? [2023]
8. You have a unique hobby with respect to cinema. What have you learnt from it? [2023]
9. National Award-winning movies are not doing well at the box office. Why? [2023]

Expected questions

1. Which film did you watch most recently, and what was its social message?
2. Should the CBFC certify films or censor them? Is pre-censorship compatible with Article 19?
3. OTT content is uncensored. Should it be brought under CBFC-type control?
4. What were the major outcomes of the WAVES summit, and what is the orange economy?
5. Why did Homebound get attention internationally, and what does it say about Indian cinema?
6. A film is facing protests and threats in your district on release day. As SP or DM, what will you do?
7. Does cinema glorify or criticise the bureaucracy? Name a film that portrays officers realistically.
8. Who won the latest Dadasaheb Phalke Award and best feature film at the National Awards?

Model answer: Should violent films like Animal be censored, given their huge box-office success?

I would not support banning a film merely for its violence or ideas, because adult viewers have the right to choose, and the CBFC already has an A certificate for this. The 2023 amendment added age-based UA 7+, 13+ and 16+ categories, which is the better tool: informed choice rather than prohibition. Concern is legitimate when films normalise misogyny for young viewers, so enforcement of age ratings, media literacy in schools and responsible marketing matter. As an administrator, I would ensure ratings are respected in theatres and protect lawful screenings, while encouraging public debate rather than mob-driven censorship.

Model answer: Should OTT platforms be regulated like films in theatres?

OTT needs regulation, but not a copy of theatrical pre-censorship. OTT viewing is on demand and private, so the IT Rules, 2021 use self-classification by age, parental locks and a three-tier grievance system. In the 2025 India's Got Latent case, the Supreme Court observed that self-regulation has not worked well and asked for a neutral, autonomous mechanism. I would favour an independent co-regulatory body with industry, child-rights and legal experts, clear statutory standards, and quick grievance redress, avoiding direct executive control over content, which could chill creative freedom.

Common traps

- Naming only blockbusters and stars without discussing direction, themes or social message.
- Not knowing basics of regulation: CBFC, certificate categories, OTT rules, and the 2023 amendment.
- Taking a moralistic 'ban it' stand on controversial films, or the opposite extreme, ignoring Article 19(2).

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Prepare 5–6 films (including one regional, one world cinema and one documentary) with director, year, theme and a governance takeaway.
- ☐ Memorise 2025–26 facts: 71st and 72nd National Awards, Phalke awardees, Homebound's Oscar run, IFFI 2025, WAVES outcomes.
- ☐ Revise the law: Cinematograph Act 1952 and 2023 amendment, IT Rules 2021 Part III, K.A. Abbas, S. Rangarajan, FCAT abolition.
- ☐ Prepare a situational answer on protests against a film release, covering law and order, dialogue and court orders.
- ☐ Watch 12th Fail and one film on your home state's society, and be ready to critique both, positive and negative.

HOBBY 4**Music & Indian Classical**

Appears in DAFs as: listening to music, singing, Hindustani/Carnatic classical, ghazals, sugam sangeet, bhajans, playing harmonium, guitar, tabla, violin, piano, flute. Music lets boards test technical depth (swara, raga, gharana), cultural knowledge and personality in one go, often by asking the candidate to sing or explain a classical concept on the spot.

What the board is really testing

- Genuineness and training: amateur or trained, which guru or gharana, how long?
- Technical grasp: swaras, ragas, taal, Hindustani versus Carnatic, instrument families
- Cultural literacy: icons, folk traditions of your home state, history and controversies such as the AIR harmonium ban
- Confidence and composure: willingness to sing or play a few lines when asked
- Linkage to society and administration: music therapy, livelihoods of folk artists, copyright and cultural policy

Basics, theory and history

- Seven **swaras**: Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni; with komal and tivra variants there are 12 semitones; Sa and Pa are fixed (achal).
- Raga needs at least five notes, aroha-avaroha, vadi-samvadi and characteristic phrases; taal is the rhythmic cycle, such as teentaal of 16 beats.
- Texts: Bharata's Natya Shastra, Matanga's Brihaddeshi (first defines raga), Sarngadeva's Sangita Ratnakara (13th century), the last text common to both systems.
- Natya Shastra classes instruments as tata (string), sushira (wind), avanaddha (membrane) and ghana (solid); harmonium is a free-reed wind instrument of European origin.
- Bollywood songs generally use tempered, fixed pitches and mixed scales, while classical music uses microtonal shading (shruti), meend and gamaka.

Hindustani, Carnatic and icons

- Hindustani: north, Persian influence, 10 **thaats** (Bhatkhande), improvisation-heavy, forms dhrupad, khayal, thumri, tappa; Carnatic: south, 72 melakarta ragas (Venkatamakhin), composition-centric, kriti form.
- Carnatic Trinity: Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Syama Sastri; Purandara Dasa is the 'Pitamaha'; modern proponents include M.S. Subbulakshmi, Balamuralikrishna and T.M. Krishna.
- Hindustani gharanas: Gwalior (oldest khayal), Agra, Kirana, Jaipur-Atrauli, Patiala, Mewati; tabla gharanas: Delhi, Lucknow, Ajrara, Farrukhabad, Benares, Punjab.
- Musician Bharat Ratnas: M.S. Subbulakshmi (1998), Ravi Shankar (1999), Lata Mangeshkar and Bismillah Khan (2001), Bhimsen Joshi (2009), Bhupen Hazarika (2019, posthumous).
- Light music: ghazal (Mehdi Hassan, Ghulam Ali, Jagjit Singh), abhang popularised by Bhimsen Joshi, Haryanvi ragini, Garhwali jagar; Kishore Kumar was born in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh.

Institutions, policy and law

- **Sangeet Natak Akademi** (1952–53, Ministry of Culture) gives Akademi Ratna fellowships, Akademi Puraskar and the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar.
- All India Radio banned the harmonium from 1940 to 1971; John Foulds and Lionel Fielden pushed it, and Tagore backed it. As I&B minister, B.V. Keskar also barred film songs in the 1950s.
- Copyright (Amendment) Act, 2012 gave lyricists and composers a non-waivable right to royalties; IPRS and PPL license public performance of music.

- Schemes: Guru-Shishya Parampara, Scheme for Pension and Medical Aid to Artistes, Zonal Cultural Centres, Kala Utsav in schools.
- UNESCO lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage include Vedic chanting, Kutiyattam, Ramlila and Sankirtana of Manipur; several instruments carry GI tags, such as Thanjavur veena.

Current developments 2025–26

- **Grammys 2026:** Ustad Amjad Ali Khan with sons Amaan and Ayaan won as composers on the Dalai Lama's album Meditations; Anoushka Shankar and Shakti were nominated but did not win.
- Sangeet Natak Akademi fellowships and awards for 2024 and 2025 (7 fellows, 115 artists) were conferred by the President on 13 August 2026.
- Deaths: Assamese singer **Zubeen Garg** (Singapore, September 2025), Padma Vibhushan thumri maestro Pt. Chhannulal Mishra (Mirzapur, October 2025); tabla legend Zakir Hussain died in December 2024.
- In December 2024 the Supreme Court restrained T.M. Krishna from being projected as recipient of the Music Academy's M.S. Subbulakshmi award, after objections by Subbulakshmi's grandson.
- WAVES 2025 and the creator-economy fund include music; streaming now dominates recorded-music revenue in India.

Science, economics and social angle

- Music engages reward circuits: listening and playing release **dopamine**, and group singing is linked to oxytocin and lower cortisol; music therapy helps in dementia, autism and stroke rehabilitation.
- Traditional raga-chikitsa claims need caution; evidence supports music's effect on mood and stress more than raga-specific cures.
- Old versus new songs: older film music had melody-led orchestration and poetic lyrics; digital production, Auto-Tune and short-video virality favour hooks and remixes.
- Folk musicians such as Langas and Manganiyars, Bauls and Pandavani singers face income insecurity; festivals, tourism circuits and digital platforms offer partial support.
- India is a large music-streaming market dominated by film music; independent and regional artists are growing via YouTube and streaming.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Officers can use folk music for public messaging, as in election awareness, Swachh Bharat and nutrition campaigns, using local forms for trust and reach.
- District festivals and cultural mapping can document dying traditions and connect artists to pensions, Guru-Shishya grants and tourism.
- Noise pollution rules (2000) and the Supreme Court's 2005 loudspeaker order (no loudspeakers 10 pm–6 am, with limited exceptions) require balancing religion, celebration and public health.
- Music teaches **discipline** (riyaz), patience and listening, qualities useful in grievance hearings and teamwork.
- Ethical issues: royalty theft, plagiarism in film music, exploitation of folk artists by intermediaries, and gender barriers in gharana traditions.

Asked in real interviews

1. You mention sugam sangeet. What do you listen to, which singers? Sing a ghazal of Ghulam Ali. [2025]
2. What is the difference between Hindustani and Carnatic music? Name two proponents of Carnatic music. [2025]
3. Your life seems to be about music. Do you want to become a singer? [2025]
4. Your hobby is singing: who is your favourite singer? Are old songs better than new ones, and is technology the reason? [2025]
5. Where was Kishore Kumar born? What was the name of his wife? [2025]
6. Who in the music industry popularised abhangs? Why is Haryanvi ragini famous and what is its purpose? [2023]
7. What does your multilingual music appreciation hobby mean? How is Garhwali jagar different from Punjabi folk songs? [2023]
8. Asked about the controversy over the harmonium, and the minister related to it. [2022]
9. Which instruments do you play? [2022]
10. A Physics student who sings: are you an amateur singer or trained in Hindustani classical? [2021]
11. What is the difference between piano and harmonium? Which hormones are released when you play, and what physical changes do you feel? [2021]
12. Tell me about sur. How many sur? How do Bollywood and classical sur differ? Name some high-pitch Bollywood songs. [2021]
13. Asked about violin-manufacturing companies. [2021]
14. Who is your favourite singer? [2019]

Expected questions

1. Sing or hum two lines of your favourite song or raga, and tell us its raga or mood.
2. What is a gharana? Name two gharanas and how they differ.
3. Why was the harmonium banned on All India Radio, and was it justified?
4. Which Indian musicians won at the 2026 Grammys, and for what?
5. How can music be used in public health or education programmes in your district?
6. Folk artists of your home state are struggling. What would you do as Collector?
7. Is copyright law fair to lyricists and composers? What changed in 2012?
8. Loudspeakers at a religious event exceed noise limits at night and locals complain. What do you do?

Model answer: Was the AIR ban on harmonium (1940–71) justified?

I find it understandable but excessive. The objection was technical: as a fixed-pitch, tempered instrument, the harmonium cannot produce meend, gamaka or microtonal shruti, which define Indian classical music. John Foulds and Tagore argued this, and AIR banned it in 1940 until 1971. But the instrument had already become integral to khayal, thumri, qawwali, Gurbani kirtan and theatre, and masters showed it could accompany sensitively. A public broadcaster should promote quality and authenticity, but through standards and diversity rather than prohibitions. As an administrator, I take the lesson that cultural policy should support traditions without imposing a single idea of purity.

Model answer: How would you use music in administration as a District Collector?

Music builds trust faster than circulars. I would use local folk forms in campaigns, as states have done with nukkad songs for immunisation, nutrition and voter awareness, because people respond to their own idiom. Research shows group singing lowers stress, so music therapy could be added in district hospitals, de-addiction centres and old-age homes. I would map folk artists in the district, link them to Sangeet Natak Akademi programmes, artist pensions and tourism circuits, and showcase them in district festivals. Finally, I would ensure noise rules are enforced sensitively, balancing celebration with citizens' right to rest.

Common traps

- Claiming 'Indian classical music' as a hobby without knowing swara, raga, thaata or a single gharana; boards probe theory instantly.
- Freezing or refusing when asked to sing or play; a short, confident rendition is better than an apology.
- Knowing only film music and nothing of the folk music of one's home state or current music news.

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Prepare two short pieces, a song and a raga or bandish, that you can sing or hum confidently in 20–30 seconds.
- ☐ Revise theory: seven swaras, shruti, thaata versus melakarta, five ragas with their time and mood, taals such as teentaal and adi taal.
- ☐ Make notes on icons and history: Carnatic Trinity, major gharanas, musician Bharat Ratnas, AIR harmonium ban, B.V. Keskar.
- ☐ Update current affairs: Grammys 2026, Sangeet Natak Akademi 2024–25 awards, deaths of Zubeen Garg and Chhannulal Mishra, the T.M. Krishna case.
- ☐ Study your home state's folk music forms and one scheme for artists, and prepare one administrative idea using music.

HOBBY 5**Painting, Sketching & Art**

Appears in DAFs as: painting (oil, acrylic, watercolour), pencil sketching, fabric/folk painting, doodling, Madhubani. Art lets the board test cultural literacy, aesthetic sensibility and creativity, and probe whether a candidate can turn heritage and folk art into livelihood and governance ideas.

What the board is really testing

- Genuineness: medium, themes, technique and whether you can discuss your own work
- Knowledge of Indian art history, movements, masters and folk or tribal traditions
- Ability to answer conceptual questions, such as whether sketching is copying, or art versus science
- Awareness of the art economy: artisans, middlemen, GI, auctions and cultural policy
- Use of creativity, visual thinking and communication in administration

Basics, media and movements

- Media: **oil** (slow-drying, rich blending), **acrylic** (water-based, fast-drying, plastic sheen), watercolour (transparent), tempera, gouache; pencil grades run from hard H to soft B.
- Classical Indian theory lists six limbs of painting (**Shadanga**): form, proportion, emotion, grace, likeness and colour, cited in Yashodhara's commentary on the Kamasutra.
- **Cubism** (Picasso and Braque, c. 1907-14) broke objects into geometric planes and multiple viewpoints; Gaganendranath Tagore experimented with it in India.
- Other movements: Impressionism (light and moment), Expressionism, Surrealism, Abstract art; doodling and sketching build observation and are basic tools of design thinking.
- Copying from a reference is a classic training method; originality comes from interpretation, composition and style rather than subject alone.

India story and icons

- **Bhimbetka** rock shelters (MP, UNESCO 2003) hold prehistoric paintings; archaeologist V.S. Wakankar identified them in 1957.
- Ajanta murals, Mughal and Rajput miniatures, Pahari schools (Kangra, Basohli), Company painting and Tanjore art form the classical arc.
- **Raja Ravi Varma** popularised oil painting and mass lithographs; Abanindranath Tagore founded the Bengal School ('Bharat Mata'); Nandalal Bose illustrated the Constitution.
- Amrita Sher-Gil fused Western and Indian idioms; the Progressive Artists' Group (Bombay, 1947) included Souza, Raza, Husain, Ara, Bakre and Gade.
- Folk and tribal traditions: Madhubani/Mithila (Bihar), Warli (Maharashtra), Pattachitra (Odisha), Gond (MP), Kalamkari (Andhra), Pithora, Phad and Cheriya scrolls.

Institutions, policy and law

- **Lalit Kala Akademi** (1954) and the National Gallery of Modern Art (1954, Jaipur House, Delhi) are the national institutions for visual arts.
- The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 declared works of nine artists, including Ravi Varma, Sher-Gil and Rabindranath Tagore, as **national art treasures** that cannot be exported.
- Copyright Act, 1957 protects artistic works for life plus 60 years; Section 57 moral rights were upheld in Amar Nath Sehgal v. Union of India (Delhi HC, 2005).
- Kalamkari has two styles: Srikalahasti (freehand pen) and Machilipatnam/Pedana (block-printed, GI-tagged); Madhubani painting also has a GI.
- Schemes such as PM Vishwakarma, Hunar Haat-style melas and ODOP help artisans; Padma awards have honoured folk artists like Dulari Devi.

Current developments 2025-26

- In March 2025, M.F. Husain's 1954 mural **Gram Yatra** sold for about USD 13.8 million at Christie's New York, then a record for Indian modern art.
- In April 2026 Raja Ravi Varma's **Yashoda and Krishna** sold for Rs 167.2 crore at Saffronart, Mumbai, to Cyrus Poonawalla, setting a new Indian auction record.
- On Budget day, 1 February 2025, the Finance Minister wore a saree with Madhubani art gifted by Padma Shri artist **Dulari Devi**, spotlighting Mithila painting.
- Deepavali's December 2025 UNESCO inscription, India's 16th intangible heritage element, renewed attention on festival arts such as rangoli and diyas.
- Repatriation of stolen antiquities and artworks from the US, UK and Australia continues to be a priority for the Ministry of Culture and ASI.

Science, economics and social angle

- Art and science both rely on observation and experiment; perspective drawing uses geometry, and pigments involve chemistry, from natural ochres to synthetic acrylics.
- Folk artists often earn little because **middlemen** capture value; direct e-commerce, GI branding, cooperatives and design training raise their share.
- India's art auction market boomed after 2023, but it remains concentrated in a few modern masters while living folk artists stay poor.
- Art therapy helps mental health, children with special needs and trauma survivors; art education is encouraged by NEP 2020's emphasis on arts integration.
- Women dominate many folk traditions such as Madhubani, so art livelihoods double as women's economic empowerment.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Collectors use wall art and murals for **IEC campaigns** on sanitation, voting (SVEEP), vaccination and girl-child education.
- Drawing and visual mapping help in planning, presenting data and simplifying complex schemes for citizens.
- District branding through ODOP and GI-tagged crafts can link artists with markets, exhibitions and export portals.
- Cultural heritage protection: preventing vandalism of rock art, checking idol and art theft, and supporting museums.
- Ethically, officers should respect artistic freedom and avoid censorship while handling sensitive content under the law.

Asked in real interviews

1. Have you visited art galleries or exhibitions? Have you bought or sold any paintings? **[2024]**
2. Pointing to a painting in the room: is it acrylic or oil? What themes do you paint? **[2024]**
3. What is cubism in art, and whom did cubism inspire? **[2024]**
4. How can traditional fabric arts like Madhubani and Kalamkari be promoted among children? How did you start fabric painting? **[2025]**
5. Which state does Kalamkari belong to? Which region of Andhra is famous for it, and why? **[2025]**
6. Which painter do you like? What is creative journaling? **[2025]**

7. Middlemen take most of the profit in Madhubani painting. What is the situation now and what is the government doing? [2023]
8. You do pencil sketching; isn't it just copying? [2022]
9. What is the difference between art and science? Is history a science or an art? [2022]
10. What is doodling of abstract emotional constructs? Describe a doodle you have done. How can this be used in administration? [2022]
11. Who was V.S. Wakankar? Have you visited Bhimbetka? What was the theme of the painting you made? [2022]

Expected questions

1. Who are the members of the Progressive Artists' Group and what did they change in Indian art?
2. What is the difference between Bengal School and Company School painting?
3. Why do folk artists remain poor even when Indian art fetches record prices at auctions?
4. Can art be taught, or is it innate?
5. Should the State fund art that some people find offensive?
6. As collector, how would you use art to promote a public campaign like voter awareness?
7. Which folk art of your home state would you promote and how?
8. What is the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act and why can't some paintings be exported?

Model answer: Isn't pencil sketching from a photograph just copying?

In part it is practice, and every tradition, from guru-shishya painting to European academies, trained artists by copying masters. But a sketch is never a mechanical copy: the artist chooses what to emphasise, how to shade and what to leave out, which makes it interpretation. Copyright law also recognises an artistic work by its original expression. For me, sketching sharpens observation. As an administrator, the same skill helps me read a site, map a problem visually and communicate schemes through simple drawings, which matters when many citizens respond better to images than to dense text.

Model answer: Madhubani paintings sell for high prices in cities, yet artists earn little. What would you do?

The gap comes from middlemen, weak branding and artists' limited market access. Madhubani has a GI tag and public visibility, such as the saree Padma Shri Dulari Devi gifted the Finance Minister for Budget 2025, but most value is captured downstream. As a district officer I would register artists as authorised GI users, organise them into cooperatives or producer companies, onboard them to GeM and e-commerce, and link them with PM Vishwakarma training and credit. I would also commission local artists for public murals, giving them income and pride while keeping the tradition alive.

Common traps

- Not being able to name the medium, technique or theme of your own work, or to identify oil versus acrylic
- Knowing only Western artists, or only famous names, without Indian movements, folk forms and their regions
- Giving purely aesthetic answers with no link to artisans' livelihoods, heritage law or administration

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Prepare a short portfolio narrative: your medium, five works, themes and influences
- ☐ Revise Indian art history: Bhimbetka, Ajanta, miniatures, Ravi Varma, Bengal School, PAG, Sher-Gil
- ☐ Learn your state's folk art, its GI status, and artisan schemes like PM Vishwakarma and ODOP
- ☐ Know current events: the 2025 Husain and 2026 Ravi Varma auction records, and the Dulari Devi saree
- ☐ Prepare conceptual answers: art versus science, copying versus creativity, art and censorship

HOBBY 6**Photography**

Appears in DAFs as: nature/wildlife/bird photography, street photography, mobile photography, travel and food photography. Photography lets the board test technical knowledge, visual storytelling and ethics, and it links naturally to wildlife, privacy, media freedom and deepfakes.

What the board is really testing

- Genuineness: your camera, lenses, settings and the kind of photographs you take
- Knowledge of famous photographers, Indian and global, and their genres
- Grasp of the technical vocabulary: exposure, aperture, bokeh, composition, editing
- Ethical sense on consent, privacy, manipulation and photojournalism
- How visual storytelling and imagery can serve governance and communication

Basics, history and technique

- Joseph Nicéphore Niépce made the earliest surviving photograph (c. 1826-27); the **daguerreotype** was announced in 1839, and 19 August is World Photography Day.
- The **exposure triangle**: aperture (f-number, controls depth of field), shutter speed (motion), and ISO (sensor sensitivity and noise).
- **Bokeh** is the aesthetic quality of out-of-focus blur, produced by wide apertures like f/1.8 and longer focal lengths.
- Bird and wildlife work needs telephoto lenses of about 400-600 mm, fast shutter speeds and continuous autofocus; macro lenses suit insects and flowers.

- Composition rules: rule of thirds, leading lines, framing, golden hour light; RAW files preserve more data for editing than JPEG.

India story and icons

- Lala **Deen Dayal** was court photographer to the Nizam of Hyderabad; **Homai Vyarawalla**, India's first woman photojournalist, received the Padma Vibhushan in 2011.
- **Raghu Rai** (Padma Shri 1972), famed for Bangladesh war and Bhopal gas tragedy images, died on 26 April 2026 aged 83.
- Danish Siddiqui and the Reuters team won Pulitzers (2018, 2022); Siddiqui was killed covering Afghanistan in 2021.
- Other names: Dayanita Singh, Sudhakar Olwe (Padma Shri), Raghubir Singh; nature photographers include Sudhir Shivaram, Dhritiman Mukherjee and Sandesh Kadur.
- Global masters: Henri Cartier-Bresson (decisive moment, Magnum founder), Ansel Adams (landscapes), Steve McCurry (Afghan Girl), Sebastião Salgado.

Institutions, policy and law

- Copyright Act, 1957 makes the person taking a photograph its author; protection lasts 60 years from publication.
- Privacy: **Puttaswamy (2017)** recognised privacy as a fundamental right; the DPDP Act, 2023 governs digital personal data, including images.
- Voyeurism is punishable under BNS Section 77 and IT Act Section 66E; photographing prohibited places can attract the Official Secrets Act, 1923.
- Drone Rules, 2021 use the Digital Sky platform with green, yellow and red airspace zones; nano drones under 250 g face lighter rules.
- ASI allows still photography at most protected monuments, with exceptions such as inside the Taj Mahal mausoleum; MIB's Photo Division runs National Photography Awards.

Current developments 2025-26

- MeitY notified **IT Amendment Rules, 2026** on 10 February 2026, effective 20 February, requiring labels and provenance metadata for AI-generated images and faster takedowns.
- Some lawful takedown orders must now be actioned within three hours instead of 36, a big change for viral morphed photos.
- Pune's Rahul Sachdev won a Highly Commended title at the Natural History Museum's **Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2025**.
- The death of Raghu Rai in April 2026 prompted national tributes and renewed discussion of documentary photography's role in democracy.
- Smartphone computational photography and AI editing blur the line between capture and creation, raising authenticity questions for journalism.

Science, economics and social angle

- A camera works like the eye: the lens focuses light on a sensor (CMOS) much as the retina; aperture equals pupil, and dynamic range equals contrast perception.
- **Citizen science** platforms like eBird and iNaturalist use amateurs' photographs to track species distribution and migration.
- Camera traps underpin India's tiger census; the 2022 estimate put India's tigers at about 3,682, around 75% of the world's wild tigers.

- Photography drives tourism, social media and the creator economy, but image manipulation and deepfakes fuel misinformation.
- Street photography raises consent questions: public-space photography is generally legal, but dignity, children and vulnerable people need care.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- **Geo-tagged photographs** verify works under MGNREGA, PMAY-G and Swachh Bharat; officers must also check for reused or fake images.
- Photographic documentation helps in disaster damage assessment, crop-loss surveys, encroachment cases and evidence under BNSS e-procedures.
- Visual storytelling makes campaigns effective; before-and-after images build public trust in development projects.
- Officers must respect privacy of victims, children and patients when sharing images on official handles.
- Ethical rule: do not stage or manipulate images; distinguish documentation from publicity and avoid photo-ops at disaster sites.

Asked in real interviews

1. Explain nature photography. Which camera and lens do you have? Which lens is preferred for bird photography? [2021]
2. Tell us about nature photography. Who are some famous nature photographers in India? [2023]
3. What type of camera and lens do you use? Is the picture quality good? Do you travel to different places to photograph? [2023]
4. Name two famous photographers. Any Indian photographer? What type of photography do they do? [2020]
5. Name a famous book on photography. [2022]
6. You mention food photography, which does not involve cooking. How do you choose the images to capture? [2020]
7. What kind of photography do you like? Questions on Photoshop and editing. [2019]
8. You are interested in mobile photography; what is bokeh? [2019]
9. What is street photography? [2019]
10. You said street photography can tell a story. How can storytelling benefit administration? [2019]

Expected questions

1. What is the exposure triangle? Explain with an example from your own photographs.
2. Should AI-generated or edited photographs be labelled? What do the 2026 IT Rules say?
3. Is it ethical to photograph people on the street without consent?
4. Who was Raghu Rai and why is he important for Indian photojournalism?
5. How can photography help in wildlife conservation?
6. As collector, how will you stop fake geo-tagged photographs being used to claim scheme payments?
7. What is the difference between a DSLR and a mirrorless camera?
8. Which is your best photograph and what story does it tell?

Model answer: Is it ethical to photograph people in public without their consent?

Legally, photographing people in public is generally allowed, but ethics goes beyond legality. After Puttaswamy, privacy is a fundamental right, and the DPDP Act, 2023 governs digital personal data. In my street photography I avoid capturing people in distress, children or intimate moments without permission, and I ask when a face is the subject. As an administrator I would apply the same principle: official social media must not show victims, patients or children in ways that harm their dignity, and departments should have a clear consent protocol before publishing photographs of beneficiaries.

Model answer: With AI editing and deepfakes, does photography still have documentary value?

It does, but trust must now be earned through verification. Morphed and AI-generated images spread fast, which is why MeitY's IT Amendment Rules, 2026 require labelling and provenance metadata for synthetic content and faster takedowns. A photographer's credibility rests on disclosure: minor corrections are acceptable, adding or removing elements is not. In administration, geo-tagged photographs are used to verify works under MGNREGA and PMAY-G; I would add metadata checks, random field inspections and AI tools to detect reused or manipulated images, so that evidence remains reliable.

Common traps

- Not knowing the make, lens and settings of your own camera, or basic terms like aperture, ISO and bokeh
- Being unable to name Indian photographers beyond one name, or missing major news like Raghu Rai's death in 2026
- Ignoring ethics and law: consent, privacy, drone rules, protected sites and image manipulation

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Know your equipment and settings, and be ready to describe three of your best photographs
- ☐ Revise photography history and key Indian and global photographers with their signature works
- ☐ Learn the legal framework: Copyright Act, Puttaswamy, DPDP Act, BNS 77, Drone Rules 2021, IT Rules 2026
- ☐ Follow current news: Wildlife Photographer of the Year, Pulitzer winners and Indian photography awards
- ☐ Prepare governance links: geo-tagging, citizen science, camera traps and visual IEC campaigns

HOBBY 7

Dance (Classical & Folk)

Appears in DAFs as: Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam; folk forms such as Ghoomar, Bhangra, Garba, Karakattam. Dance opens questions on Indian culture, gender, caste and heritage policy, so it is a natural bridge from the DAF to GS-I and to ethics.

What the board is really testing

- Training depth: guru, years, repertoire, arangetram or performances, and core grammar (nritya, nritya, natya)
- Cultural literacy: Natyashastra, classical versus folk forms, regional origins and exponents
- Social sensitivity: devadasi history, caste and gender in art, appropriation and inclusion
- Heritage policy: Sangeet Natak Akademi, UNESCO lists, copyright and support schemes for artists
- Discipline and soft power: what dance taught you, and how culture can serve diplomacy and administration

Basics, history and rules

- Bharata Muni's **Natyashastra** codifies rasa, bhava and abhinaya; four abhinayas are angika (body), vachika (speech), aharya (costume) and sattvika (inner state).
- Three elements: **nritya** (pure rhythmic dance), nritya (expressive, with bhava) and natya (drama). Questions often test whether a dancer can succeed with only two.
- Sangeet Natak Akademi recognises eight classical forms: Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Sattriya, Manipuri and Mohiniyattam; the Culture Ministry also lists Chhau.
- Kathak gharanas: Lucknow (expressive), Jaipur (rhythmic footwork) and Banaras; Raigarh developed under royal patronage in Chhattisgarh.
- Folk dances are community, seasonal and ritual based (Ghoomar, Bhangra, Garba, Bihu, Lavani, Karakattam) and less codified than classical forms.

India story and icons

- **Rukmini Devi Arundale** founded Kalakshetra (1936) and helped reframe Sadir as Bharatanatyam; E. Krishna Iyer campaigned for its revival.
- Vallathol founded Kerala Kalamandalam (1930) to revive Kathakali and Mohiniyattam; Sattriya, from Srimanta Sankardeva's satras, gained classical status in 2000.
- Icons: Pandit Birju Maharaj (Kathak, d. 2022), Kelucharan Mohapatra (Odissi), Vempati Chinna Satyam (Kuchipudi), Balasaraswati, Yamini Krishnamurti, Sonal Mansingh, Mallika Sarabhai.
- Uday Shankar fused Indian and Western staging and took Indian dance worldwide in the 1930s.
- Mohiniyattam guru **Kalamandalam Vimala Menon** received the Padma Shri in 2026.

Institutions, policy and law

- Sangeet Natak Akademi (1952) is the national academy; Zonal Cultural Centres promote folk arts; SPIC MACAY takes classical arts to schools.

- Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act 1947 ended temple dedication; Karnataka (1982) and Andhra Pradesh (1988) passed similar laws.
- Copyright Act 1957 treats **choreographic works** as dramatic works, so original choreography can be protected; traditional forms themselves are in the public domain.
- Culture Ministry schemes include the Guru–Shishya Parampara and repertory grants, fellowships for artists, and pension support for veteran artists.
- UNESCO Intangible Heritage entries from India include Chhau, Kalbelia and Mudi yettu (2010), Manipuri Sankirtana (2013), Garba (2023) and Deepavali (2025).

Current developments 2025–26

- In April 2025 the **Natyashastra** and Bhagavad Gita manuscripts were inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.
- India hosted UNESCO's 20th Intergovernmental Committee session on intangible heritage at the Red Fort, Delhi (8–13 December 2025).
- **Deepavali** was inscribed at that session, India's 16th element on the UNESCO intangible heritage list.
- Garba of Gujarat, inscribed in December 2023, remains the most recent dance-specific Indian inscription and is often asked in folk-dance contexts.

Science, economics or social angle

- Classical revival had a **caste and gender** cost: hereditary devadasi and isai vellalar artists were displaced as dance moved to upper-caste urban stages.
- Folk forms such as Karakattam carry stigma and low pay, while classical forms gain prestige; this shows how art can reproduce social stratification.
- Dance improves cardiovascular fitness, balance and mental health; dance movement therapy is used for autism, Parkinson's and trauma recovery.
- The cultural and creative economy (festivals, tourism, digital content) offers livelihoods, but most folk artists remain informal workers without social security.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Officers use folk dance and street theatre for behaviour change: SBM, Beti Bachao, voter awareness (SVEEP) and anti-trafficking campaigns.
- District festivals (Hornbill, Konark, Khajuraho) promote tourism; officers must ensure artists are paid fairly and not reduced to props.
- Ethics: guard against harassment in guru–shishya settings (Kalakshetra case, 2023) by applying POSH Act committees to cultural institutions.
- Cultural diplomacy: ICCR uses dance for soft power; Indian diaspora schools keep forms alive abroad.

Asked in real interviews

1. Bharatanatyam needs three elements. Can a dancer do well with only two of them? [2021]
2. Who are the main proponents of Bharatanatyam? [2021]
3. Apart from Ghoomar, which dance do you do? When is Ghoomar performed? [2022]
4. How is Bhangra different from other classical and folk dances? [2023]
5. What type of dance is Bhangra, and what is its history? [2023]
6. Why do South Indian states have more classical dance forms? [2023]

7. Which form of intellectual property right applies to Kathak? [2024]
8. Name some foreign dance forms and their places of origin. [2024]
9. What is the social significance of Bharatanatyam and Karakattam? [2025]
10. Do these traditional art forms inadvertently reinforce social stratification? [2025]

Expected questions

1. What is the difference between nritta, nritya and natya? Demonstrate a mudra.
2. Did the twentieth-century revival of Bharatanatyam erase its devadasi roots?
3. Why is Chhau sometimes called classical and sometimes folk? Who decides classical status?
4. Should the government fund classical arts when folk artists are poorer?
5. What did Natyashastra's inscription on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register mean for India?
6. Is fusion and Bollywood-style dance diluting tradition, or keeping it alive?
7. As DM, how would you use folk dance to promote a welfare scheme in a tribal district?
8. Female students at a dance institution in your district allege harassment by a guru. What will you do?

Model answer: Do classical dance forms reinforce caste hierarchy?

Historically, partly yes. Bharatanatyam came from Sadir, performed by devadasi communities. After the Madras Devadasis Act of 1947, the form was reframed by largely upper-caste practitioners, and many hereditary artists lost both livelihood and credit. Folk forms such as Karakattam still carry stigma. But art also democratises: today dancers from every background train and perform. As an officer I would make cultural funding inclusive, document hereditary artists' contributions, and include folk and Dalit art forms in district festivals on equal terms, so heritage honours all its makers.

Model answer: What has dance taught you that will help you as a civil servant?

Dance taught me discipline and patience: years of practising adavus before I could perform a full item. It also taught me empathy, because abhinaya means expressing someone else's emotion convincingly, which is close to understanding citizens' problems from their side. The Natyashastra speaks of rasa, the shared experience between performer and audience, and governance also depends on that connection. Practically, I would use folk dance and street theatre for awareness campaigns, as has been done for sanitation and voter turnout, because people respond to their own cultural idiom far more than to pamphlets.

Common traps

- Naming a classical form without being able to explain its grammar, gharana or bani, guru, or a basic item from its repertoire.
- Romanticising tradition while ignoring devadasi history, caste and gender questions, which boards often raise.
- Getting counts wrong (eight SNA classical forms versus nine with Chhau, India's UNESCO intangible heritage elements) or confusing folk and classical forms.

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Prepare a two-minute self-introduction on your training: guru, years, repertoire, performances and the item you would demonstrate.
- ☐ Revise Nattyashastra concepts: rasa, bhava, abhinaya types, nritta/nritya/natya, tandava and lasya, key mudras.
- ☐ Make a state-wise table of eight classical forms and twenty folk dances, with origins, exponents and costumes.
- ☐ Know heritage institutions and lists: SNA, Zonal Cultural Centres, UNESCO intangible heritage (including Garba 2023 and Deepavali 2025) and Memory of the World 2025.
- ☐ Prepare balanced views on devadasi history, appropriation, copyright in choreography and welfare for folk artists.

PART II**Sports, Fitness and Adventure**

Cricket, football, badminton, chess, yoga, running, trekking

HOBBY 8**Cricket**

Appears in DAFs as: playing cricket, watching cricket, following IPL/Test cricket, captaining college team. Cricket is India's most-followed sport, so boards use it to test whether a candidate can move from scores and stars to money, law, gender, diplomacy and governance.

What the board is really testing

- Whether the candidate genuinely follows the game (recent results, records, roles) or listed it as filler
- Ability to extract leadership and teamwork lessons and link them to administration
- Balanced views on money, equal pay, BCCI autonomy and the cricket-versus-other-sports gap
- Awareness of legal and civic angles: liability, crowd safety, betting and gaming law
- Composure and honesty when a fact is unknown

Basics, history and rules

- Codified in England; MCC (founded 1787) remains the **custodian of the Laws of Cricket**, while the ICC (est. 1909, HQ Dubai) runs international cricket.
- Three formats: Test (5 days, red ball; pink ball for day-night Tests), ODI (50 overs, white ball) and T20 (20 overs); World Test Championship links bilateral Tests.
- Key rules: LBW, no-ball and free hit, DRS with ball-tracking, impact-player rule in IPL; an illegal bowling action ('chucking') means straightening the elbow beyond **15 degrees**.
- Team roles: openers, middle order, finisher, all-rounders, wicketkeeper; sides usually carry 2-3 all-rounders in white-ball cricket to balance batting depth and bowling options.

- Adaptive forms: blind cricket (B1-B3 sight categories, audible ball), wheelchair and deaf cricket; India's blind men's team has won multiple T20 World Cups.

India story and icons

- **1983 World Cup win** under Kapil Dev at Lord's was the watershed that turned cricket into a mass passion; 2011 ODI and 2007 T20 titles under Dhoni consolidated it.
- India women won their **maiden ODI World Cup** on 2 November 2025, beating South Africa by 52 runs at DY Patil Stadium, Navi Mumbai, under Harmanpreet Kaur.
- India men won the T20 World Cup 2026 on home soil, beating New Zealand by 96 runs in the final (8 March 2026), retaining the 2024 title.
- Records boards like: Tendulkar's 100 international centuries, Kohli's 50+ ODI centuries, Rohit's ODI 264; Vaibhav Suryavanshi became the youngest IPL centurion at 14 in 2025.
- Captaincy styles: Ganguly built an aggressive overseas-winning side, Dhoni was calm and process-driven, Kohli fitness- and intensity-driven; compare by context, not ranking alone.

Institutions, policy and law

- BCCI is a society registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act; **Zee Telefilms v Union of India (2005)**: not 'State' under Article 12 but amenable to writs under Article 226.
- BCCI v Cricket Association of Bihar (2015) and the **Lodha Committee** reforms (2016) brought tenure limits, cooling-off, one-state-one-vote and conflict-of-interest rules, later diluted in 2022.
- National Sports Governance Act 2025 (assent 18 August 2025) creates a National Sports Board and National Sports Tribunal; RTI applies only to bodies receiving government aid, so BCCI stays outside RTI.
- Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act 2025 banned real-money games; Dream11 exited the jersey deal and **Apollo Tyres** became Team India's lead sponsor till 2027; challenges are pending in the Supreme Court.
- Spot-fixing and betting: no dedicated central anti-match-fixing law; the Law Commission (2018) recommended regulating betting; BCCI has an Anti-Corruption Unit.
- Liability if a struck ball kills a spectator: civil negligence turns on foreseeability (Bolton v Stone, 1951); criminally, causing death by negligence is Section 106 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Current developments 2025–26

- India won the 2025 Champions Trophy, the 2025 women's ODI World Cup and the 2026 men's T20 World Cup, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.
- Bangladesh refused to play its T20 World Cup 2026 games in India and sought Sri Lankan venues; the ICC refused and replaced Bangladesh with **Scotland** (January 2026).
- Royal Challengers Bengaluru won IPL 2026, beating Gujarat Titans by 5 wickets at Ahmedabad on 31 May 2026, a second straight title after 2025.
- Cricket returns to the Olympics at **LA28**: six-team men's and women's T20 events at a purpose-built venue in Pomona; qualification pathway confirmed 29 June 2026.
- Australia won the Women's T20 World Cup 2026, beating hosts England by 7 wickets at Lord's on 5 July 2026.
- Mithun Manhas was elected BCCI president in September 2025; BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru (opened 2024) replaced the old National Cricket Academy.

Science, economics or social angle

- IPL media rights for 2023–27 sold for about **Rs 48,390 crore**, making the IPL one of the costliest leagues per match in the world.
- Equal match fees for India men and women were announced in October 2022; retainers and central contracts still differ sharply, so pay equity remains partial.
- Science: swing depends on seam position and air flow, reverse swing on an old, rough ball; ball-tracking and Snickometer have reshaped umpiring.
- Social reach: the Women's Premier League (from 2023) and the 2025 World Cup win changed girls' participation; but cricket's dominance crowds out funding and sponsors for other sports.
- Associates' rise (Afghanistan, USA, Nepal) shows cricket as soft power and a social glue in conflict-hit societies.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- District officers use cricket tournaments for drug-awareness, voter-awareness (SVEEP) and community policing; inclusive formats such as blind and women's cricket build social capital.
- Crowd management lessons: the June 2025 Bengaluru stampede at RCB's victory celebration showed the need for SOPs, permissions, ticketing control and inter-agency coordination.
- **Team versus group**: a team shares a common goal and complementary roles; this maps directly onto district task forces and inter-departmental convergence.
- Ethical issues: fixing, conflict of interest, surrogate advertising, gaming sponsorships, and overcrowded schedules versus player welfare.
- India–Pakistan: government policy since 2025 allows matches only in multilateral events, not bilateral series; an officer should state this policy neutrally.

Asked in real interviews

1. Why was 2 November 2025 a notable day for Indian cricket? **[2025]**
2. Which cricketer inspires you most and why? How can an aggressive player like Kohli be called calm? **[2025]**
3. Name one past and one current player who stayed composed under pressure. **[2025]**
4. Should men and women cricketers get equal pay? **[2023, 2025]**
5. Should there be a balance between money in cricket and the game itself? What is BCCI's Centre of Excellence? **[2025]**
6. What position do you play? How many all-rounders should a side have in ODI, T20 and Tests, and how many did India play in its last ODI? **[2025]**
7. If a ball you hit leaves the ground and kills a passer-by, who is liable? **[2025]**
8. What did you learn from organising a cricket tournament for visually impaired women? **[2025]**
9. Who is the youngest Indian ODI centurion? Any other young record-setter, including domestic cricket, and roughly how old is he? **[2025]**
10. Which cricket record do you think is hardest to break? **[2025]**
11. Why did Bangladesh want its matches moved to Sri Lanka and refuse to play in India? **[2025]**
12. What is adaptive cricket? **[2025]**
13. Compare T20 cricket with Swiggy. **[2025]**
14. Why is Afghanistan a successful cricket nation despite its domestic turmoil? **[2024]**
15. What life lessons has cricket taught you, especially as a captain? **[2023]**
16. Do you watch cricket or movies during exam time? **[2023]**

17. What types of balls are used in cricket? Is the red ball no longer used, and when is the pink ball used? [2023]
18. Rank Kapil Dev, Ganguly, Dhoni and Kohli by impact on Indian cricket; compare captaincy of Tendulkar, Dhoni and Kohli. [2023]
19. BCCI is a private body and cricket thrives; should other sports bodies be privatised too? [2023]
20. Who is a chucker? What role do psychologists play in cricket? [2023]
21. What watershed moment made cricket popular in India? Why can't football be promoted the same way? [2022]
22. Is it justified that cricketers, footballers and film stars earn so much more than doctors and engineers? [2022]
23. Should India play cricket with Pakistan? Why? [2022]
24. Your DAF lists a cricket team: how is a team different from a group? [2021]
25. Why is cricket more popular than other sports in India, and what has government done to promote sports? [2021]

Expected questions

1. Who won the 2026 IPL and the 2026 T20 World Cup, and what made those teams succeed?
2. Should BCCI be brought under RTI now that the National Sports Governance Act 2025 is law?
3. Is the ban on real-money gaming fair to fantasy-sports firms that funded Indian cricket?
4. Does cricket's inclusion in LA28 help or hurt other Indian Olympic sports?
5. As DM, a victory parade is announced at short notice in your city. How will you manage it?
6. Your district has one stadium: cricket academies want it, but athletes need a track. How will you decide?
7. What did the 2025 women's World Cup win change for girls' sport in small towns?
8. Name the Lodha Committee's key recommendations. Which ones survived?

Model answer: BCCI is rich and successful as an autonomous private body. Should other federations be privatised the same way?

I would separate autonomy from privatisation. BCCI succeeded because it built a commercial product early, but even it needed the Lodha reforms after the 2013 spot-fixing scandal, so autonomy without accountability fails. Most federations depend on public stadiums and TOPS funding, so full privatisation could neglect athletes in poorer regions. The National Sports Governance Act 2025 offers a middle path: professional, athlete-represented bodies under a National Sports Board and Tribunal. As an administrator I would push federations towards private partnerships for leagues and sponsorship, while keeping transparent elections, safeguarding policies and public audit of government money.

Model answer: If a ball you hit kills a passer-by, who is liable?

Liability depends on foreseeability and reasonable care. In *Bolton v Stone* (1951), the club was not held negligent because balls rarely cleared the fence, but a ground that regularly sends balls onto a road would be. Criminally, causing death by a rash or negligent act falls under Section 106 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, though a batter playing a normal shot inside a permitted ground usually lacks criminal negligence. Organisers and the ground owner share civil duty through netting, boundaries and signage. As an officer I would make safety netting and insurance conditions for permits for public grounds next to roads.

Common traps

- Quoting outdated facts: calling India 2024 T20 champions only, missing the 2026 title, or naming the wrong BCCI president
- Turning answers into fan commentary on favourite stars, with no governance, economic or ethical angle
- Taking a one-sided line on India–Pakistan matches or equal pay instead of giving policy plus a balanced view

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Make a one-page results sheet for 2024–26: ICC events (men and women), IPL and WPL winners, major records and current captains
- ☐ Read the Lodha reforms, Zee v Union of India, the National Sports Governance Act 2025 and the Online Gaming Act 2025
- ☐ Prepare three personal stories (captaincy, a loss, organising a match) with a clear lesson for administration
- ☐ Learn the rules boards like: LBW, DRS, ball types, chucking (15 degrees), the impact player and adaptive cricket categories
- ☐ Prepare balanced 60-second views on equal pay, cricket versus other sports, betting regulation, LA28 and India–Pakistan policy

HOBBY 9**Football**

Appears in DAFs as: playing football, watching EPL/ISL, football analysis, virtual football management. Football is the world's game but India's underperformer, so boards use it to probe governance failure, sports economics and grassroots development.

What the board is really testing

- Whether the candidate can explain why Indian football lags despite mass popularity
- Awareness of AIFF governance, the ISL crisis and Supreme Court intervention
- Views on money in sport: EPL wealth, player pay, club ownership and sustainability
- Leadership and inclusion on the field, such as playing with juniors without bullying
- Ability to propose practical grassroots and district-level solutions

Basics, history and rules

- Modern rules were codified by England's Football Association in 1863; the **IFAB** (1886) still makes the Laws of the Game, while FIFA (founded 1904, Paris) governs worldwide.
- Eleven a side, 90 minutes plus stoppage time, offside law, VAR since the 2018 World Cup, and five substitutions now standard.
- Shared ground with cricket: team formation, set pieces, and data analytics on expected goals (xG) and pitch maps; differences lie in continuous play and fewer stoppages.

- Confederations: AFC for Asia (India's body), UEFA for Europe, CONMEBOL for South America; the World Cup expanded to **48 teams** from 2026.
- Women's football: FIFA Women's World Cup since 1991; India hosted the U-17 Women's World Cup in 2022 after the men's U-17 in 2017.

India story and icons

- Golden era under coach **Syed Abdul Rahim**: Asian Games golds in 1951 and 1962 and fourth place at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.
- India qualified for the 1950 World Cup but did not travel, owing to travel costs, AIFF priorities and lack of preparation; the barefoot story is largely a myth.
- The **Durand Cup** (1888) is among the world's oldest club tournaments; Bengal, Goa, Kerala, Manipur and Mizoram are traditional football heartlands.
- Sunil Chhetri, India's record scorer with 90-plus international goals, retired in 2024 and returned in March 2025; Gurpreet Singh Sandhu is the long-serving goalkeeper.
- Khalid Jamil was appointed in August 2025 as the first Indian head coach of the men's team in 13 years.

Institutions, policy and law

- **AIFF** (founded 1937) is the national federation; FIFA suspended it in August 2022 for third-party influence, lifting the ban after about 11 days once elections were held.
- Supreme Court final judgment on the AIFF constitution (19 September 2025): eminent players on the General Body and Executive Committee, a 70-year age cap and mandatory promotion-relegation.
- The SC ruled AIFF may delegate commercial rights (as to FSDL) but not governance powers, and any constitutional amendment needs court approval.
- National Sports Governance Act 2025 and National Sports Policy 2025 (Khelo Bharat Niti) set governance norms and a grassroots-to-podium approach for federations including AIFF.
- Khelo India and the FIFA Football for Schools programme support school football; sport is a **State subject** (Entry 33, State List).

Current developments 2025–26

- **Spain won the 2026 FIFA World Cup**, beating Argentina 1-0 after extra time (Ferran Torres, 106') at New York New Jersey Stadium on 19 July 2026.
- ISL crisis: the AIFF–FSDL master rights agreement expired without a new partner; the 2025–26 season ran as a shortened single-leg league from 14 February to 21 May 2026.
- East Bengal won the 2025–26 ISL on the final day, their first top-flight league title in 22 years.
- Club distress: City Football Group sold its Mumbai City stake, Kerala Blasters were put up for sale, and Tata-owned **Jamshedpur FC** said in August 2026 it would leave the ISL.
- India fell to 142nd in the FIFA rankings after a 0-1 loss to Bangladesh, missed the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, and stood 138th in June 2026.
- Messi's 'GOAT Tour' (December 2025) ended in chaos at Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium; the organiser was arrested, exposing gaps in event licensing and crowd control.

Science, economics or social angle

- The Premier League's global broadcast revenue makes even mid-table clubs richer than most leagues; parachute payments and squad-cost rules try to curb unequal spending.

- High player pay reflects global audiences and short careers, not social worth; a fairer comparison is with other entertainers rather than with doctors.
- Sports science: GPS vests, recovery and load management; heat stress at the 2026 World Cup revived debate over playing in high temperatures.
- Football as social inclusion: slum-soccer models, girls' leagues in Jharkhand and Manipur, and the game as an identity marker in the North-East and Kerala.
- Indian football's weak economics: low broadcast value, a short league season and few grassroots academies, so clubs depend on corporate patrons.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Districts can revive local leagues, upgrade school grounds through MGNREGA and CSR convergence, and partner with clubs for scouting under Khelo India.
- Using football for youth engagement in Left Wing Extremism and border areas, for example police-run tournaments in tribal districts.
- Ethics on the pitch: fair play, respecting referees, and inclusive play with juniors and girls rather than dominance.
- Governance issues: conflict of interest in federations, age fraud in youth football, and match-fixing in lower leagues.
- Event management: the Messi tour chaos and stadium stampedes show why ticket audits, capacity limits and SOPs are administrative duties.

Asked in real interviews

1. You say you analyse football: do you only do analysis and not watch it? [2022]
2. Who is the greatest footballer of all time? [2022]
3. Is it justified that footballers, cricketers and film stars earn huge sums? Should there be parity with doctors and engineers? [2022]
4. What do cricket and football have in common? Can any cricket rules be applied to football? [2022]
5. What is wrong with the All India Football Federation? Is its administration poor? [2022]
6. Why is Indian football in a poor state, why can't it be promoted like cricket, and what recent initiatives exist? [2022]
7. Tell us about your online virtual football management tournaments. Do you play football in real life? [2022]
8. The English Premier League is flush with money. What is your view, and does money matter? [2022]
9. Your state is famous for wrestling, so why did you take up football and badminton? [2023]
10. Do you follow only Indian football? [2024]
11. Name the top three international footballers playing today, and the most prominent current Indian footballer. [2024]
12. What steps would you take to improve Indian football? [2024]
13. Whom do you play football with? Might younger players feel bullied? [2025]
14. What was the recent issue involving the AIFF, and what are its implications for Indian football? [2025]

Expected questions

1. Who won the 2026 World Cup? What explains Spain's success model?

2. Why did the ISL lose its commercial partner, and what is the new club-led model?
3. What did the Supreme Court change in AIFF's constitution in 2025?
4. Jamshedpur FC is quitting the ISL. Should government step in to save clubs?
5. India is 1.4 billion people yet ranked below 130. Give three structural reasons.
6. As DM of a football-loving district in Kerala or Manipur, how would you build a talent pipeline?
7. A celebrity football event in your district turns chaotic. Who is accountable, and what will you do?
8. Is the 48-team World Cup good for football or only for FIFA's revenue?

Model answer: Why has Indian football failed to grow like cricket despite huge popularity?

I think the problem is structural, not cultural. Cricket had a 1983 moment, television money and a strong BCCI; football lost its 1950s base and never built a grassroots league pyramid. AIFF's governance crises, including the 2022 FIFA suspension and the expiry of the ISL commercial deal in 2025, left clubs dependent on a few corporate patrons. India is now ranked below 130. The Supreme Court's 2025 order mandating promotion-relegation and player representation is a start. Administratively, I would build district leagues, use school grounds after hours, and link Khelo India centres to clubs for scouting.

Model answer: The Premier League is flush with money while Indian clubs shut down. What does this teach us?

Money follows audiences and good governance. The Premier League sells broadcast rights globally and shares revenue fairly evenly, so even small clubs survive; Indian clubs rely on owners because media value is low and the season was cut to a single leg in 2025–26. Jamshedpur FC's planned exit in 2026 shows how fragile this model is. The lesson is a stable calendar, transparent rights tenders and a youth-development pipeline that creates players and fans together. As an officer I would support community ownership and local sponsors so clubs become civic institutions, not corporate projects.

Common traps

- Repeating the 'India refused the 1950 World Cup for lack of boots' myth as fact
- Not knowing the 2025–26 AIFF–ISL crisis, the Supreme Court constitution ruling or India's current FIFA ranking
- Answering GOAT or club-loyalty questions with fan emotion instead of reasons and data

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Prepare a timeline of AIFF events: 2022 FIFA suspension, the 2025 SC judgment, the FSDL deal expiry, the 2025–26 ISL and 2026 club exits
- ☐ Memorise the 2026 World Cup facts: hosts, format, champion, final score and award winners
- ☐ Know India's football history: 1951 and 1962 golds, 1956 Olympics, Rahim, Chhetri, the current coach and ranking
- ☐ Prepare a five-point district plan for grassroots football using Khelo India, schools, CSR and local leagues
- ☐ Form balanced views on player pay, EPL wealth, franchise leagues and promotion-relegation

HOBBY 10

Badminton

Appears in DAFs as: playing badminton, following BWF tour, PV Sindhu/Satwik-Chirag fan. Badminton is India's most successful Olympic racquet sport and an everyday neighbourhood game, so boards test both technical knowledge and sports-infrastructure thinking.

What the board is really testing

- Technical command: court dimensions, shuttle making, service and in/out rules, scoring
- Up-to-date knowledge of Indian players, results and controversies such as India Open 2026
- Thinking on sports infrastructure, rural access and getting children to play
- Ethical sensitivity, for instance animal welfare in feather shuttles
- Ability to connect the hobby with India's hosting ambitions (2030 Commonwealth Games, 2036 Olympic bid)

Basics, history and rules

- Developed by British officers in Poona (Pune) as 'Poona' in the 1870s; named after the Duke of Beaufort's **Badminton House**; BWF (founded 1934 as IBF) is based in Kuala Lumpur.
- Court 13.40 m x 6.10 m (44 x 20 ft), singles width 5.18 m (17 ft); **net** 1.55 m (5 ft 1 in) at posts, 1.524 m (5 ft) at centre.
- Service boxes: singles is long and narrow, doubles is short and wide (the back service line sits 0.76 m inside the baseline); a shuttle landing on a line is **in**.
- A shuttle has **16 feathers**, traditionally from the left wing of a goose or duck, set in a cork base and weighing 4.74–5.50 g; feathers give a stable, decelerating flight.
- Scoring: currently best of three games to 21, rally-point; BWF members approved a switch to **3x15** in April 2026, effective January 2027 (capped at 21).
- Courts use sprung wooden floors with synthetic mats for shock absorption, grip and joint safety; concrete raises injury risk and gives an uneven bounce for footwork.

India story and icons

- **Prakash Padukone** won the All England in 1980 and Pullela Gopichand in 2001; Gopichand's Hyderabad academy produced Saina and Sindhu.
- Saina Nehwal won India's first Olympic badminton medal (bronze, London 2012); **PV Sindhu** won silver at Rio 2016 and bronze at Tokyo 2020, losing the Tokyo semi-final to Tai Tzu-ying.
- Styles: Sindhu is tall and attack-first, using reach and steep smashes; Saina relied on retrieving, defence, consistency and footwork.
- India won the **Thomas Cup in 2022** in Bangkok, beating 14-time champions Indonesia 3-0 in the final; Lakshya Sen, Kidambi Srikanth, HS Prannoy and Satwik-Chirag starred.
- Satwiksairaj Rankireddy set a Guinness record for the fastest badminton hit, **565 km/h** (2023), beating Tan Boon Heong's 493 km/h; Satwik-Chirag later became world No. 1.
- Lakshya Sen finished fourth at Paris 2024 and won the Australian Open in November 2025.

Institutions, policy and law

- **Badminton Association of India (BAI)**, founded 1934, is the national federation; India Open is a BWF World Tour Super 750 event in New Delhi.
- TOPS (2014) funds elite players; Khelo India (2017–18) builds grassroots infrastructure and runs Youth, University and Para Games with badminton as a core sport.
- National Sports Governance Act 2025: federation recognition by a National Sports Board, a National Sports Tribunal for disputes, and Safe Sport and athlete-representation rules for BAI.
- National Sports Policy 2025 (Khelo Bharat Niti) and India's hosting push: Ahmedabad will host the 2030 Commonwealth Games, and India is bidding for the 2036 Olympics.
- Sport is a State subject; State sports authorities and SAI centres run most public indoor halls.

Current developments 2025–26

- India Open 2026 controversy: players flagged AQI, bird droppings halting a Prannoy match, a monkey in the stands and cleanliness; Anders Antonsen withdrew and was fined \$5,000.
- BAI rejected the claims, while BWF said hygiene and animal control 'required attention' but cleared Delhi's Indira Gandhi Stadium for the August 2026 World Championships.
- BWF World Championships 2026, New Delhi (first in India since Hyderabad 2009): India's only medal was a women's doubles bronze for **Treesa Jolly–Gayatri Gopichand**.
- Thomas & Uber Cup 2026 (Horsens, Denmark): India's men won bronze, losing the semi-final to France; China won the Thomas Cup and South Korea the Uber Cup.
- BWF approved the **3x15 scoring system** on 25 April 2026, to apply from 4 January 2027, the biggest rule change since 21-point rally scoring in 2006.

Science, economics or social angle

- Physics: the shuttle is a high-drag projectile; a smash leaves the racquet very fast but loses speed quickly, and feathers flip it cork-first for stability.
- Feather versus plastic: feather shuttles leave the racquet faster and decelerate more sharply with truer flight; plastic (nylon) shuttles are cheaper, more durable and favoured for recreation.
- Animal welfare: feather supply depends on the goose and duck meat industry and bird-flu outbreaks have caused shortages; synthetic-feather shuttles are being tested.
- Urban middle-class growth: indoor courts, low equipment cost and a short game time suit cities; rural players lack halls, coaching and leisure time.
- Health: an aerobic and agility sport that improves cardiovascular fitness and reaction time, which is why it suits a Fit India push.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Multipurpose indoor halls under Khelo India or MPLADS can serve badminton, kabaddi and table tennis, which is cheaper than single-sport stadiums.
- A woman officer's priorities: safe, well-lit halls, women coaches, separate changing rooms and Safe Sport complaint mechanisms against harassment.
- Hosting credibility: venue hygiene, AQI planning and animal control are administrative tasks; India Open 2026 shows how lapses affect the 2036 Olympic bid narrative.
- Getting children to play: school inter-house leagues, subsidised shuttles, weekend coaching camps and visible local champions.

- Ethics: fair line calls, respect for opponents, anti-doping (NADA), and rejecting age fraud in junior events.

Asked in real interviews

1. Which badminton players are performing well currently? [2024]
2. What would you do to get children interested in badminton? [2024]
3. What is needed to upgrade badminton infrastructure? [2024]
4. Why do rural people rarely take up sports while the urban middle class does? [2024]
5. Why are badminton courts made of wood and not concrete? [2024]
6. As a woman officer, what would you prioritise in sports infrastructure? [2024]
7. What recent issue arose at the India Open? [2025]
8. Why can India host international cricket tournaments but struggle with a badminton one, and how does this affect its 2036 Olympic bid? [2025]
9. Why are shuttlecocks made of bird feathers: which birds, how many feathers, and is there an animal-rights concern? [2023, 2025]
10. Why are feathered shuttles still preferred in international tournaments? [2025]
11. Explain the side and back boxes on a badminton court. When is a shuttle in or out? [2025]
12. Which badminton player do you admire most and why? How does PV Sindhu's style differ from Saina Nehwal's? [2025]
13. Give the dimensions of a badminton court and the net height in feet. [2022]
14. Tell us about the Khelo India scheme. [2022]
15. Tell us about badminton. What were India's sporting achievements last year? [2023]
16. Who won the Thomas Cup, and who were the team members? [2023]
17. What was the fastest smash in that competition, who hit it, and what was the previous record? [2023]
18. Which travels faster, a feather shuttlecock or a plastic one? [2023]
19. Your state is known for wrestling, so why did you take up football and badminton? [2023]
20. Why did PV Sindhu lose in the semi-final? [2020]

Expected questions

1. What is the new 3x15 scoring system? Will it help or hurt Indian players?
2. How did India perform at the 2026 World Championships in New Delhi?
3. Who are India's current top singles and doubles players, and what are their recent results?
4. As DM, a sports hall in your district is in poor shape before a national event. Your 10-day plan?
5. Should India host the 2036 Olympics when it struggles to run the India Open smoothly?
6. Why do Andhra Pradesh and Telangana produce so many badminton champions?
7. Should feather shuttles be banned on animal-welfare grounds?
8. How would you promote badminton among girls in rural areas?

Model answer: The India Open 2026 drew complaints about hygiene and pollution. How does this affect India's 2036 Olympic ambitions?

I see it as an early warning, not a verdict. Players flagged bird droppings, a monkey and Delhi's AQI; BAI disputed some claims, while BWF said hygiene needed attention yet cleared the venue for the 2026 World Championships. Olympic hosting is judged on such details. India has hosted cricket well because private bodies with deep resources run it, while public venues suffer from fragmented maintenance. As an administrator I would set venue-readiness audits, pest and bird control contracts, AQI-linked scheduling and a single nodal officer for each event, so that accountability is clear before the international spotlight arrives.

Model answer: Shuttlecocks use goose feathers. Is this ethically defensible?

It is a fair concern. A shuttle uses 16 feathers, traditionally from the left wing of a goose or duck, and supply comes largely from the poultry meat industry, so birds are not usually killed for shuttles, though welfare and bird-flu shortages remain issues. Feather shuttles are preferred at elite level because their flight is truer and decelerates consistently. I would support research into synthetic-feather shuttles and their use in schools and recreation, where cost and durability matter more. As an officer I would supply nylon shuttles for public courts, reducing cost and demand for feathers at the same time.

Common traps

- Getting court or net measurements wrong, or confusing singles and doubles service areas
- Still describing the 21-point system as permanent, unaware of the 2026 decision to move to 3x15 in 2027
- Naming only Saina and Sindhu and missing Satwik-Chirag, Lakshya Sen, Treesa-Gayatri and the 2026 results

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Memorise court, net and shuttle specifications in metres and feet, plus service and in/out rules
- ☐ Make a results card for 2022–26: 2022 Thomas Cup, Olympics 2012–2024, 2026 Thomas Cup bronze, 2026 Worlds bronze
- ☐ Read up on the India Open 2026 controversy and the BAI and BWF responses; prepare a hosting-readiness answer
- ☐ Learn the schemes: Khelo India, TOPS, Fit India, National Sports Policy 2025 and the National Sports Governance Act 2025
- ☐ Prepare views on feather ethics, rural access, girls' participation and the new 3x15 scoring

HOBBY 11

Chess

Appears in DAFs as: playing chess, online chess (rapid/blitz), following world championship. India is now a chess superpower, so boards test whether the candidate knows the boom (Gukesh, Vaishali, Tamil Nadu) and can link strategic thinking to administration.

What the board is really testing

- Whether the candidate knows their own rating, the Elo system and the format basics
- Awareness of India's chess boom and the reasons behind Tamil Nadu's dominance
- Translating chess skills (planning, patience, calculation) into governance qualities without arrogance
- Mathematical and cultural trivia: the wheat-and-chessboard problem, origin in chaturanga, Go and xiangqi
- Humility, especially on questions like 'Are you among the most intelligent people?'

Basics, history and rules

- Originated in Gupta-era India as **chaturanga** (about 6th century CE), spread via Persia (shatranj) to Europe; FIDE was founded in Paris in 1924 and is now led by Arkady Dvorkovich.
- Time controls: classical (typically 90 minutes plus a 30-second increment, or longer), rapid (10–60 minutes) and blitz (under 10 minutes); Freestyle (Chess960) randomises the back rank.
- The **Elo system**, devised by physicist Arpad Elo and adopted by FIDE in 1970, predicts results from rating differences; a 400-point gap implies about a 91% expected score.
- Titles: Grandmaster needs three GM norms plus a 2500 rating; top GMs rate 2700–2800-plus, and Magnus Carlsen holds the record peak of 2882.
- Wheat-and-chessboard problem: doubling over 64 squares gives $2^{64} - 1$ grains, about 1.8×10^{19} , a classic lesson in exponential growth.
- Contrast: Go (weiqi) is about territory and has vastly more positions; xiangqi (Chinese chess) has a river, cannons and a confined general.

India story and icons

- **Viswanathan Anand** became India's first GM (1988) and five-time world champion; his success built the Chennai chess culture.
- **D Gukesh** became the youngest undisputed world champion at 18, beating Ding Liren in Singapore in December 2024.
- Divya Deshmukh won the FIDE Women's World Cup (Batumi, July 2025), beating Koneru Humpy, and became India's 88th GM.
- **R Vaishali** won the 2026 Women's Candidates and will challenge Ju Wenjun; her brother Praggnanandhaa and coach RB Ramesh are part of the same Chennai ecosystem.
- Aswath S became India's 98th GM in July 2026; Tamil Nadu has 38 of them, the largest share by state.
- India won double gold at the 2024 Budapest Olympiad and silver (open) and bronze (women) at Samarkand 2026, retaining the Gaprindashvili Trophy for best overall nation.

Institutions, policy and law

- The **All India Chess Federation (AICF)** is the national body; India hosted the 2022 Chess Olympiad at Mamallapuram, organised by Tamil Nadu, and the FIDE World Cup 2025 in Goa.
- Tamil Nadu's ecosystem: early clubs and coaches since the Anand era, school chess, state-backed tournaments, and players supported by corporate sponsors and the WestBridge Anand Chess Academy.
- Chess counts as a sport under the Sports Ministry; top players get TOPS-type support and awards such as the Khel Ratna (Gukesh, 2024).
- National Sports Governance Act 2025 applies to AICF: athlete representation, ethics and safe-sport policy and dispute resolution through the National Sports Tribunal.
- Fair-play issues: online cheating via engines; FIDE and platforms use statistical anti-cheating tools, and over-the-board events use scanners and broadcast delays.

Current developments 2025–26

- Uzbekistan's **Javokhir Sindarov** won the FIDE World Cup in Goa (2025) and the 2026 Candidates, earning a title match against Gukesh.
- World Championship 2026: Gukesh vs Sindarov, 24 November – 12 December 2026, at Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny near Geneva.
- Women's World Championship 2026: Vaishali, winner of the April 2026 Women's Candidates, challenges China's Ju Wenjun.
- 46th Chess Olympiad, Samarkand (ended 27 September 2026): Uzbekistan won the open and China the women's; India took open silver and women's bronze.
- India's GM count reached 98 by July 2026 and is nearing 100; India has several 2700-plus players including Gukesh, Arjun Erigaisi and Praggnanandhaa.

Science, economics or social angle

- Cognitive science: chess trains working memory, pattern recognition and planning; evidence on wider transfer to school grades is mixed, so claims should be modest.
- AI: IBM's Deep Blue beat Kasparov in 1997, and AlphaZero (2017) learned by self-play; engines are now training partners, raising questions on cheating and creativity.
- Economics: online platforms, streaming and franchise leagues (Global Chess League) have created livelihoods beyond prize money; the cost of a chessboard is low, so it is democratic.
- Gender: separate women's titles and events persist; Divya and Vaishali show rising women's participation but the gender gap at the top remains wide.
- Social uses: chess in prisons, for elderly cognitive health and in schools; Kerala's Marottichal village is known for near-universal chess playing.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Strategic thinking: calculating consequences several moves ahead mirrors policy design, risk assessment and anticipating second-order effects.
- **Should civil servants learn chess?** It is useful for patience and decision-making under time pressure, but administration also needs empathy, consultation and field sense, which chess does not teach.
- Officers can use chess for school engagement (as in the Tamil Nadu and Kerala models), de-addiction camps and prison reform programmes at low cost.

- Ethics: fair play, accepting defeat (resigning gracefully), and anti-cheating integrity parallel probity in public office.
- Avoid elitism: being good at chess does not mean being 'most intelligent'; multiple intelligences and humility matter in public service.

Asked in real interviews

1. What qualities has chess helped you develop to improve yourself? [2025]
2. Chess is called the most intelligent game. Do you consider yourself among the most intelligent people? [2025]
3. What skills or qualities does playing chess help develop? [2025]
4. Why does Tamil Nadu produce so many chess Grandmasters? [2025]
5. Is chess just a board game for you, or more? Should civil servants be required to learn chess? [2025]
6. What is your chess rating? What are the Elo ratings of Grandmasters? [2024]
7. What have you learnt from chess for life? [2024]
8. You play chess; have you watched The Queen's Gambit? [2024]
9. One grain of wheat on the first square, doubling on each square: how much wheat across all 64 squares? [2022]
10. How does the approach in chess differ from a Chinese board game the member named? [2022]
11. Do you still play chess? What is rapid chess, how does it differ from classical, and what is the time control? [2022]
12. What is the Elo rating system, why and how are ratings assigned, and who was Elo? [2021]
13. India is doing well in chess; what significant events happened in the last year? Who has qualified for the Candidates? [2023]
14. Recent national awards went to R Vaishali and coach R B Ramesh; follow-up on a related player's nickname. [2023]
15. Why is India doing well in IT, chess, cricket, billiards and financial services? [2023]

Expected questions

1. Gukesh defends his title against Sindarov in November 2026. What are his chances, and why?
2. Why is Uzbekistan suddenly a chess power, and what can India learn from it?
3. How has AI changed chess, and is it good or bad for the game?
4. Should chess be taught compulsorily in government schools?
5. Women play in separate chess events; is that fair in a mind sport?
6. As DM, how would you use chess to engage youth in a district with a drug-abuse problem?
7. Online cheating is rising. How should fair play be policed?
8. Explain exponential growth with the chessboard, and link it to a policy problem such as population or compounding debt.

Model answer: Why does Tamil Nadu produce so many Grandmasters?

It is an ecosystem effect rather than a genetic or cultural mystery. Anand's success from 1988 created role models and coaches in Chennai; clubs, school chess and dense tournaments gave children rated games early; and families and sponsors invested. Tamil Nadu now has 38 of India's 98 GMs. The state also backed events such as the 2022 Chess Olympiad at Mamallapuram, which fuelled interest further. Administratively, the lesson is replicable: a low-cost sport grows when schools, coaches, regular tournaments and recognition are combined. I would copy this through district chess leagues and teacher-coaches in government schools.

Model answer: Chess is called the most intelligent game. Are you among the most intelligent people?

Respectfully, no. Chess trains one kind of intelligence: calculation, pattern recognition and patience. Even world champions like Gukesh credit work ethic and psychology more than raw genius. Administration needs other intelligences too: emotional intelligence to listen to a grieving family, social intelligence to build consensus, and practical wisdom in the field. Chess has taught me to think about the consequences of a move and to accept defeat gracefully, which I value. As an officer I would see chess as a tool for disciplined decision-making, not as proof of being superior to anyone.

Common traps

- Not knowing your own rating, or claiming a rating or title you cannot back up
- Outdated facts: missing Gukesh vs Sindarov 2026, Vaishali's Candidates win or the current GM count
- Over-claiming: implying chess makes you smarter or a better administrator than others

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Know your own FIDE/online rating, preferred openings and one memorable game you can describe
- ☐ Learn Elo basics, time controls, title requirements and the wheat-and-chessboard calculation
- ☐ Make a 2024–26 timeline: Gukesh's title, Divya's World Cup, Goa World Cup, 2026 Candidates, Samarkand Olympiad, GM count
- ☐ Prepare the Tamil Nadu ecosystem answer and a district plan for school chess
- ☐ Prepare humble, balanced answers linking chess to administration, AI, gender and fair play

HOBBY 12**Yoga & Meditation**

Appears in DAFs as: yoga, pranayama, Surya Namaskar, Vipassana, mindfulness, transcendental meditation, aerial/acro yoga, yoga certification course. Yoga is India's best-known soft-power export and a stated government priority, so boards test whether the candidate lives the practice or only lists it.

What the board is really testing

- Depth: can you go beyond asanas to the philosophy (Patanjali, Gita's karma-bhakti-jnana, Vipassana) and recite or interpret a text?
- Authenticity: what you practise, under whom, since when, and what measurable change it has made in you
- Scientific temper: can you explain the physiology of pranayama and meditation without exaggerated claims?
- Policy awareness: International Day of Yoga, Ministry of Ayush, WHO traditional medicine work, yoga as soft power
- Temperament: whether calm and self-regulation show up in how you handle stress and pointed questions in the room

Basics, history and texts

- **Patanjali's Yoga Sutras:** 196 sutras in four padas (Samadhi, Sadhana, Vibhuti, Kaivalya); defines yoga as 'chitta vritti nirodha' (stilling the fluctuations of mind).
- **Ashtanga (eight limbs):** yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi. The first five are external (bahiranga), the last three internal (antaranga).
- Gita's paths: karma yoga (selfless action), bhakti yoga (devotion), jnana yoga (knowledge); Vivekananda's Raja Yoga (1896) presented Patanjali's meditative path to the West.
- Hatha Yoga Pradipika (Swatmarama, c. 15th century) systematised asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha; modern postural yoga owes much to T. Krishnamacharya and his students Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois.
- **Vipassana:** Buddhist insight meditation observing breath and bodily sensations with equanimity; revived globally by S.N. Goenka (Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri, 1976) through free 10-day residential courses.
- Transcendental Meditation (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi) is mantra-based and became famous in the West after the Beatles' 1968 Rishikesh visit; mindfulness (Jon Kabat-Zinn's MBSR) is its secular clinical cousin.

India story and icons

- Paramahansa Yogananda founded the Self-Realization Fellowship (1920) and wrote 'Autobiography of a Yogi' (1946), introducing Kriya Yoga to the West.
- Gandhi is described as a karma yogi: anasakti (detached action) from the Gita guided his politics; he called the Gita his 'mother'.
- B.K.S. Iyengar (Padma Vibhushan 2014) made props-based alignment yoga global; Swami Kavalayananda founded Kaivalyadhama, Lonavla (1924), the first scientific yoga research institute.
- **Yoga in UNESCO list:** inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.
- Tihar Jail's Vipassana programme (1993, under Kiran Bedi) is a well-known case study of meditation in prison reform; Goenka received the Padma Bhushan in 2012.

Institutions, policy and law

- **International Day of Yoga (21 June):** proposed by PM Modi at the 69th UNGA (Sept 2014); resolution 69/131 adopted December 2014 with a record 177 co-sponsors; summer solstice chosen.
- Ministry of Ayush (department 2003, full ministry November 2014) runs MDNIY Delhi, the Yoga Certification Board, the Common Yoga Protocol and the National Ayush Mission.
- Yogasana was recognised as a competitive sport in December 2020 and features in Khelo India Games; Fit India Movement launched 29 August 2019.
- WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine, Jamnagar (foundation laid April 2022) is the only WHO global centre for traditional medicine; WHO mYoga app launched 2021; Y-Break app for office workers 2021.
- Santhara/sallekhana (Jain fast unto death) was held illegal by Rajasthan HC in 2015 and stayed by the Supreme Court; distinguish it from yogic samadhi and from passive euthanasia (Common Cause, 2018).

Current developments 2025–26

- **IDY 2025 (11th):** theme 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health'; PM led the main event at Visakhapatnam; about 3 lakh people set a Guinness record for most people doing yoga at one venue.
- IDY 2025 also saw over 22,000 tribal students perform 108 Surya Namaskars in 108 minutes, a second Guinness record.
- **IDY 2026 (12th):** theme 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing'; national event led by PM at Red Road, Kolkata, linking yoga to India's ageing population and preventive care.
- Second **WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine** in New Delhi (December 2025) adopted the Delhi Declaration; WHO launched the Traditional Medicine Global Library with about 1.6 million resources.
- Ayush outreach initiatives: Yoga Samavesh (chair yoga for underserved groups), Yoga Sangam events, Namaste Yoga app and disease-specific protocols for non-communicable diseases.

Science, economics and social angle

- Slow pranayama (about six breaths per minute) raises vagal tone and heart-rate variability, shifting the body towards parasympathetic 'rest and digest' and lowering stress hormones.
- Long-term evidence is moderate: yoga helps with blood pressure, low back pain, anxiety and glycaemic control as an adjunct, not a substitute for medicine. Avoid miracle-cure claims.
- India's non-communicable disease burden (diabetes, hypertension) makes low-cost preventive yoga a public-health tool; IDY 2026 tied it to the silver economy.
- Yoga is a global wellness industry worth billions; India's soft power gains, but debates on patents/copyright over asanas led to the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) documenting postures.
- Social debates: secular framing versus religious roots (Om, Surya Namaskar), commercialisation ('McYoga'), and new fusion forms like aerial yoga and acroyoga.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Stress management for officers: meditation builds equanimity, impulse control and focus, which Gita's 'sthitaprajna' and the Second ARC's emphasis on emotional intelligence both value.

- Field use: yoga camps at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, school wellness periods, police and jail wellness programmes, and de-addiction centres combined with counselling.
- Yama-niyama read as a code of conduct: satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), aparigraha (non-possessiveness) map directly onto integrity and probity in public life.
- Governance caution: an officer should keep yoga voluntary and inclusive, avoid religious compulsion, and insist on certified trainers and evidence-based health messaging.
- Counter-view to handle: meditation as 'passive living'. Answer that Vipassana trains awareness for better action, not withdrawal; Gandhi combined inner discipline with intense public work.

Asked in real interviews

1. What are karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga? What is raja yoga? [2021]
2. Who was Paramahansa Yogananda and what did he do in the West? [2021]
3. What kind of yogi was Mahatma Gandhi? [2021]
4. You mention pranayama: name a doctor who recently spoke about its benefits. What are its immediate and long-term benefits? [2021]
5. What is the actual physiological process that takes place inside the body during pranayama? [2021]
6. Why was 21 June chosen for International Day of Yoga? [2022]
7. Which yoga do you practise? Why Surya Namaskar? What change have you seen in yourself? Who was your teacher? [2022]
8. You have a yoga certificate course; have you participated in any 21 June event? [2022]
9. Recite a long Sanskrit shloka from Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and interpret it. [2022]
10. Tell me the origin of yoga and the eight limbs of Ashtanga yoga. At which stage are you? [2022]
11. What is acroyoga? [2022]
12. Are euthanasia and samadhi in yoga the same? (with counter-questions) [2022]
13. What is aerial yoga? [2022]
14. Travelling unsettles you and meditation settles you; how did you develop both? What meditation do you do, under a guru or by yourself? [2022]
15. You did Vipassana, which is perceived as a way to passive living. Your take? [2022]
16. What is Vipassana? Then who is your real friend (breath and sensation)? [2023]
17. Question on Ashtanga yoga from the DAF. [2024]
18. Tell me unique things about Vipassana. How did it help you? [2024]
19. Who started Vipassana, what is its core idea, how do you practise it, and can it be practised while running? [2024]
20. Why transcendental meditation? Why is TM famous in the West and how is it different from other forms of meditation? [2020]

Expected questions

1. What is the theme of International Day of Yoga 2026 and why was Kolkata chosen for the main event?
2. Is yoga a religious practice? Should Surya Namaskar be compulsory in government schools?
3. What is the difference between dhyana, dharana and samadhi? Which have you experienced?
4. Yoga is being commercialised abroad as fitness. Has India lost ownership of yoga? What is TKDL?

5. As DM, how would you use yoga in your district's NCD and mental-health strategy without making it coercive?
6. What does the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine at Jamnagar do, and what is the Delhi Declaration?
7. Your interview board is stressing you right now. Show me how your meditation helps here.
8. Can meditation make an officer passive or indifferent to injustice?

Model answer: Isn't meditation an escape from the world? A civil servant needs action, not withdrawal.

I see it the opposite way. Vipassana, as S.N. Goenka taught it, trains you to observe sensations without reacting, which is the gap between stimulus and response that good decisions need. The Gita's karma yoga asks for detached action, not inaction, and Gandhi meditated daily while leading the most intense public movement of his age. For an officer facing a riot, a flood or an angry delegation, that equanimity prevents knee-jerk orders. I will admit meditation can become self-absorption if practised as escape. The test is whether it makes you more responsive to people, and that is how I judge my own practice.

Model answer: Should yoga be made compulsory in government schools?

I would support making it universally available, not compulsory. The health case is real: India faces a rising burden of diabetes and hypertension, and Ayush's own IDY 2026 theme, 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing', shows the preventive logic. But compulsion invites the objection that yoga carries religious elements, such as chanting Om, and that can turn a health tool into a political controversy. As an administrator, I would offer a secular Common Yoga Protocol within physical education, use certified trainers, allow opt-outs, and track outcomes such as fitness scores and attendance. Voluntary participation that children enjoy will last longer than a mandate.

Common traps

- Listing 'yoga and meditation' but being unable to name your style, teacher, routine or a single sutra, which collapses credibility when a member asks you to recite or interpret one
- Making unscientific health claims (yoga cures diabetes or cancer) instead of saying 'evidence-based adjunct to medicine'
- Getting defensive or preachy on the religion and secularism question rather than giving a balanced, constitutional answer

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Memorise and be able to explain 3–4 Yoga Sutras (1.2, 2.46, 2.29) and two Gita verses on karma yoga, with your own interpretation
- ☐ Write a one-page note on your own practice: style, teacher, years, daily routine, certifications, IDY events attended, and one concrete change in you
- ☐ Learn the physiology of pranayama and meditation (vagus nerve, HRV, cortisol) in plain language, plus one or two credible studies
- ☐ Revise IDY facts: 2014 resolution, 177 co-sponsors, solstice logic, 2025 and 2026 themes and venues; Ayush institutions; WHO GCTM and the Delhi Declaration
- ☐ Prepare balanced views on secularism and yoga, commercialisation and TKDL, and the 'meditation means passivity' critique, each with an administrative application

HOBBY 13**Running, Cycling & Fitness**

Appears in DAFs as: running, jogging, marathons, half marathons, endurance running, cycling, endurance cycling/randonneuring, gym, resistance training, fitness. Endurance sport signals discipline and grit, and it opens easy links to public health, urban mobility, road safety, doping and India's sporting ambitions.

What the board is really testing

- Genuineness: distances, timings, races run, how often you train, and the vocabulary (pace, splits, VO2 max) a real runner or cyclist uses
- Awareness of India's athletics story and its weak spots: middle and long-distance running, doping and grassroots infrastructure
- Urban governance lens: why Indian cities are hostile to walking and cycling, and what an administrator can fix
- Whether you connect fitness to public policy: Fit India, Khelo India, NCDs, sports governance reforms
- Mental endurance: how the loneliness and pain of long-distance training translate into resilience in service

Basics, history and rules

- **Marathon** recalls Pheidippides' run from Marathon to Athens (490 BCE); distance fixed at 42.195 km at the 1908 London Olympics and standardised in 1921.
- Pace is time per unit distance (min/km); speed is distance per unit time (km/h). Runners train by pace zones, tempo runs, intervals and long slow distance.
- Men's marathon world record: Kelvin Kiptum, 2:00:35 (Chicago 2023). Kipchoge's 1:59:40 (Vienna 2019) was unofficial, using rotating pacers.
- **Endurance cycling** includes randonneuring (BRMs of 200–1,200 km under Audax Club Parisien rules) and ultra races like Race Across America (RAAM, about 4,800 km).
- Grand Tours: Tour de France (since 1903), Giro d'Italia, Vuelta a España; India has no rider at that level and is weak in road and track cycling internationally.

- 'The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner' (Alan Sillitoe, 1959) is a story of a borstal boy who deliberately loses a race as rebellion: a metaphor for inner freedom.

India story and icons

- Milkha Singh ('Flying Sikh') finished fourth in the 400 m at Rome 1960; PT Usha finished fourth in the 400 m hurdles at Los Angeles 1984 and is now IOA president.
- **Gulveer Singh** set national records in 2025: 10,000 m in 27:00.22 and 5,000 m in 13:11.82; he won 10,000 m and 5,000 m gold at the 2025 Asian Championships, Gumi.
- Avinash Sable (steeplechase national record holder, 2023 Asian Games gold) and Parul Chaudhary (women's steeplechase national record holder) are India's leading distance runners.
- Fauja Singh ran marathons past age 100 and became a global symbol of ageing well; he died in a road accident in Punjab in July 2025.
- Lt Col Srinivas Gokulnath was the first Indian to complete RAAM solo (2017); Tata Mumbai Marathon is a World Athletics Gold Label race.

Institutions, policy and law

- **Fit India Movement** (29 August 2019) and its 'Sundays on Cycle' drive (December 2024); Khelo India for grassroots talent; TOPS for elite athletes.
- **National Sports Governance Act, 2025**: National Sports Board to recognise or suspend federations, National Sports Tribunal with appeals to the Supreme Court, athletes and women on executive committees.
- **National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Act, 2025** amends the 2022 Act, aligns with the UNESCO Convention against Doping, and creates a National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports overseeing NADA.
- Athletics Federation of India governs running; World Athletics and its Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) handle global rules and doping cases.
- Cycling infrastructure: India Cycles4Change Challenge (Smart Cities Mission, 2020); National Urban Transport Policy 2006 prioritises people over vehicles; World Bicycle Day is 3 June (UN, 2018).

Current developments 2025–26

- **Fit India Sundays on Cycle** reached its 82nd edition in July 2026 at over 15,000 locations, with more than 30 lakh participants since its launch.
- **Doping**: WADA's 2024 testing figures (released December 2025) show India's 260 adverse findings from 7,113 samples, a 3.6% rate, highest among major testing nations; athletics led with 76.
- Women's marathon record holder Ruth Chepngetich (2:09:56, Chicago 2024) received a three-year ban in October 2025, but her record stands because that race's sample was clean.
- **Ahmedabad was awarded the 2030 Commonwealth Games** (November 2025); India is pursuing a 2036 Olympic bid, which makes doping and governance reforms urgent.
- Tata Mumbai Marathon 2026 drew a record of about 69,000 runners on the Coastal Road and Sea Link route; Ethiopians Tadu Abate Deme and Yeshi Kalayu Chekole won the elite races.

Science, economics and social angle

- Aerobic exercise improves VO2 max, insulin sensitivity and mood (endorphins, BDNF); WHO recommends 150–300 minutes of moderate activity a week for adults.
- Physical inactivity is a major driver of India's diabetes and hypertension burden; Lancet Global Health (2024) estimated about half of Indian adults are insufficiently active.
- Cycling is cheap, zero-emission mobility, but Indian bicycle use fell as cities sprawled; India is the world's second-largest bicycle producer, centred on Ludhiana.
- Barriers: no segregated lanes, heat, unsafe roads, social status attached to motor vehicles, and fewer women cycling due to harassment risk.
- The running economy is booming: city marathons, gear and wearables, though participation is skewed towards urban middle classes.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- Road safety: India records over 1.7 lakh road deaths a year; pedestrians and cyclists are the most vulnerable; cyclist helmets are not legally mandated under the Motor Vehicles Act.
- A DM can run 'Sundays on Cycle', open school grounds after hours, create car-free streets and push cycle tracks in Smart City and AMRUT projects.
- Doping is an ethics issue: win-at-all-costs culture, ignorance among rural athletes, and supplement contamination; the answer is education, testing and protecting whistle-blowers.
- Running teaches pacing and delayed gratification, useful for long projects; fitness is also an officer's duty, given long hours and disaster duty.
- Inclusion: promote safe running and cycling spaces for women, persons with disabilities (para-athletics) and elderly people in every district plan.

Asked in real interviews

1. What is 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner'? [2020]
2. A debate with the board about India's marathon runners. [2020]
3. Why the name marathon? Where all have you run? What is the distance? [2021]
4. How would you define running? How much and how often do you run? [2021]
5. What is the difference between pace and speed in running? [2021]
6. What is endurance cycling? Where have you done endurance cycling? [2021]
7. Why is India not favourable to cycling? What needs to be done? [2021]
8. Tell me about cycle races in the world and India's position. [2022]
9. What are the cycling issues in our country? Why don't people wear helmets while cycling? Why are cycles costly in India? [2022]
10. Give two similarities between you as a marathon runner and Sunita Williams. [2024]
11. Can Vipassana be practised while running? [2024]
12. Name a famous Indian 200 m runner of the past. [2025]
13. What do we learn from sports in general? [2025]

Expected questions

1. What is your personal best in a 10 km, half or full marathon, and how did you train for it?
2. Why does India, a country of 1.4 billion, win so few Olympic medals in distance running?
3. India tops WADA's doping list. Is it more testing or more cheating? What should be done?
4. What are the key features of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025?

5. As Municipal Commissioner, how would you make your city safe for cyclists and pedestrians?
6. Is 'Sundays on Cycle' tokenism or a real behaviour-change campaign?
7. Has fitness become an elite hobby in India? How do we make it accessible to the poor?
8. What does a runner's 'wall' teach you about handling setbacks in service?

Model answer: India has the highest doping positivity rate among major nations. Is this a sign of better testing or a deeper rot?

Both. WADA's 2024 figures show 260 adverse findings out of 7,113 samples, a 3.6% rate, and athletics alone had 76 cases. More testing explains part of it, but that rate is far above other large testers, so a culture problem exists: coaches chasing medals, cheap supplements and poor awareness among rural athletes. The National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Act, 2025 strengthens NADA's independence, and the 2030 Commonwealth Games raise the stakes. As an administrator, I would back education in district sports hostels, regulate supplement shops, and protect athletes who report coaches. Clean sport is a question of national credibility, not only medals.

Model answer: Why don't Indians cycle to work, and what would you do about it as a city administrator?

Mostly because our roads punish cyclists. There are no segregated lanes, the heat is intense, motor traffic is fast, and a bicycle is often seen as a poor man's vehicle. Yet over 1.7 lakh people die on our roads every year, many of them cyclists and pedestrians. The National Urban Transport Policy already says streets are for people first. I would start with a connected network around schools and metro stations, shaded and protected, then add public bicycle sharing, secure parking and car-free Sundays like Fit India's 'Sundays on Cycle'. Ridership follows safety, so I would track crashes and usage data.

Common traps

- Claiming 'marathons' without knowing your own timings, the 42.195 km distance, or basic terms like pace, tempo run or negative split
- Confusing Neeraj Chopra (javelin) or field events with running achievements; not knowing current distance runners like Gulveer Singh or Avinash Sable
- Treating fitness as a personal lifestyle story only and missing the governance angles of road safety, urban design, doping and sports administration

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Keep a factual log ready: races run, distances, personal bests, weekly mileage or cycling kilometres, injuries and how you recovered
- ☐ Learn athletics basics and history: marathon origin and distance, current world records, the Kiptum and Chepngetich stories, India's icons from Milkha to Gulveer
- ☐ Revise policy: Fit India and Sundays on Cycle, Khelo India, TOPS, the 2025 Sports Governance and Anti-Doping Acts, the CWG 2030 award and 2036 bid
- ☐ Prepare a 5-point district plan on cycling and pedestrian safety using NUTP 2006, Cycles4Change and road-safety data
- ☐ Rehearse two personal stories: one where endurance training helped you through a setback, and one on what sport taught you about teamwork or fairness

HOBBY 14**Trekking & Mountaineering**

Appears in DAFs as: trekking, hiking, mountaineering, rock climbing, Himalayan treks, camping, basic/advanced mountaineering course (NIM, HMI). Mountains combine personal courage with geography, ecology, border strategy and disaster governance, so boards can probe both character and knowledge in one thread.

What the board is really testing

- Authenticity: exact treks, altitudes, routes, villages, gear and whether you used oxygen; boards cross-check numbers
- Conceptual clarity: hiking versus trekking versus mountaineering; the role of IMF and liaison officers; acclimatisation and safety protocols
- Ethical reflection on adventure: Everest queues, deaths, commercialisation, Sherpa labour and the 'conquest' narrative
- Himalayan governance: fragile ecology, overtourism, waste, GLOFs, disaster response and border-area development
- Risk judgement and leadership: when to turn back, how you managed a team, stay and local communities on the trail

Basics, history and rules

- Hiking is a day walk on trails; trekking is a multi-day walk, often at altitude, without technical gear; mountaineering involves ropes, ice axes and crampons on snow, ice or rock.
- **Acute Mountain Sickness** can progress to HAPE (fluid in lungs) or HACE (brain swelling); rule: 'climb high, sleep low', gain under about 500 m sleeping altitude a day above 3,000 m.
- Mount Everest's height was jointly re-announced by Nepal and China as 8,848.86 m in December 2020; first ascent by Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary, 29 May 1953.
- Bachendri Pal became the first Indian woman to summit Everest (1984); Arunima Sinha became the first woman amputee to summit (2013).
- Popular Indian treks: Triund (Dhauladhar, Kangra), Nag Tibba (about 3,022 m, Tehri), Dodital (Uttarkashi, source of the Assi Ganga), Kedarkantha, Roopkund and Hampta Pass.

- Leave No Trace principles: carry out all waste, stay on trails, avoid camping on fragile meadows, respect wildlife and local cultures.

India story and icons

- Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling was set up in 1954 after the Everest ascent, with Tenzing Norgay as its first field director.
- Key institutes: NIM Uttarkashi (1965), ABVIMAS Manali, JIM&WS Pahalgam, and NIMAS Dirang in Arunachal Pradesh under the Ministry of Defence.
- Dashrath Manjhi, the 'Mountain Man' of Gaya, Bihar, cut a path through a hill with hammer and chisel over 22 years: a story of perseverance, not mountaineering.
- Draupadi ka Danda-II avalanche (October 2022) killed 27 or more NIM trainees and instructors, the deadliest accident in Indian mountaineering training.
- Sahastra Tal tragedy (June 2024): nine members of a 22-member Karnataka trekking group died in a blizzard in Uttarkashi, exposing weak regulation of commercial trek operators.

Institutions, policy and law

- **Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF, 1961)** issues peak permissions; for foreign expeditions it appoints a liaison officer to accompany the team for safety and border compliance.
- Many Himalayan areas need Inner Line or Protected Area Permits; climbing in national parks and sanctuaries requires forest department permission under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Ministry of Tourism issued Indian Adventure Tourism Guidelines (2018) and a National Strategy for Adventure Tourism (2022) covering safety standards, accreditation and rescue.
- In 2018 Uttarakhand High Court restricted overnight camping on alpine meadows (bugyals) to protect them; the Supreme Court has pressed for carrying-capacity studies of Himalayan states.
- Nepal's Everest royalty for foreigners rose from US\$11,000 to US\$15,000 (spring) from 1 September 2025; a bill proposing a 7,000 m climbing prerequisite was still pending.

Current developments 2025–26

- **Uttarakhand opened 83 Himalayan peaks** (5,700–7,756 m, including Kamet, Nanda Devi East, Shivaling, Changabang) in February 2026, waiving state fees for Indian climbers and launching an online UKMPS single window.
- **Record Everest day:** on 20 May 2026, 274 climbers (150 Nepali Sherpas among them) summited from Nepal's side in one day, beating 2019's 223; Nepal issued 502 permits that spring.
- Nepal opened 97 lesser-known peaks with no permit fee for two years (2025) to spread climbers away from Everest, and made at least one guide mandatory for every two climbers on 8,000 m peaks.
- Climate stress: glacial retreat and GLOF risk (South Lhonak, Sikkim, October 2023) make glacier lakes and moraine routes more dangerous for trekkers each season.
- Vibrant Villages Programme (2023) develops border villages in Arunachal, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal and Ladakh, with homestays and treks as a livelihood pillar.

Science, economics and social angle

- At about 5,500 m air holds roughly half the oxygen of sea level; most Everest climbers use bottled oxygen above 7,000 m, and few climb without it.
- Adventure tourism sustains porters, guides, mule-owners and homestays in remote villages, reducing distress migration from Himalayan districts.
- Costs of overtourism: plastic waste, sewage at camps, trampled meadows, human-wildlife encounters and crowding on popular routes like Kedarkantha and Triund.
- Critique of 'conquest' language: colonial-era expeditions treated peaks as trophies and locals as porters; today's debate covers Sherpa risk, pay and recognition.
- Mountains are sacred to many communities, and some peaks (Kanchenjunga's summit in Sikkim, Kailash) are left unclimbed or restricted out of respect.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- District role: register trek operators, mandate certified guides, health checks, weather alerts and GPS tracking, and pre-position SDRF and ITBP rescue teams.
- Carrying capacity: permit caps per day on fragile trails, eco-fees used for waste collection, and community-run trail management on the Sikkim and Ladakh model.
- Leadership lesson: the best mountaineering decision is often turning back; 'summit fever' is a classic case of sunk-cost bias that officers must also resist.
- Ethical dilemma: should rescuers risk lives for climbers who ignored rules? Answer: duty to rescue remains, but recover costs and enforce insurance requirements.
- Strategic link: trekking routes on the LAC and border passes need coordination with ITBP and the Army, and adventure tourism can support border-area presence.

Asked in real interviews

1. What do you see when you look at a mountain or rock face? [2019]
2. Why not mountaineering (as a pursuit)? [2019]
3. What places have you visited in Ladakh? What is the highest road in Ladakh? [2020]
4. There are queues and deaths on Mount Everest; what drives people to climb mountains? [2021]
5. Do you think the sport of mountaineering is an example of white supremacy? [2021]
6. What is the maximum height you have climbed? Did you use oxygen? [2021]
7. Who appoints the liaison officer for mountaineering expeditions? [2021]
8. Which places did you trek? Where is Triund and how was it? Are you still trekking after college? [2021]
9. What preparation is required before going on a trek? [2021]
10. What is the highest altitude you have trekked, and which places? [2022]
11. Are mountaineering and trekking the same thing? [2022]
12. What kind of travelling do you like? What is the difference between hiking, mountaineering and trekking? [2022]
13. What pleasure do you get from trekking? What is the height of Nag Tibba? [2023]
14. What is the difference between trekking and hiking? [2023]
15. Which peaks are you planning to trek next? What safety protocols are needed for trekking? [2024]

16. Aren't trekking training institutes too few in India? What should be done to promote trekking among school and college students? [2024]
17. What trekking equipment do you use? (with counter-questions) [2024]
18. Which treks have you done? Name a village on the Dodital route. How did you manage stay? Any wildlife conflict? What gear do you have? [2025]

Expected questions

1. What is the difference between AMS, HAPE and HACE, and how do you prevent them?
2. After the Sahastra Tal tragedy, how should trek operators be regulated?
3. Uttarakhand has opened 83 peaks free for Indian climbers. Good for adventure tourism or a threat to fragile ecology?
4. Is commercial Everest climbing exploitative of Sherpas?
5. As DM of Uttarkashi, how would you manage overtourism on popular treks like Kedarkantha or Dayara Bugyal?
6. What role does the Indian Mountaineering Foundation play, and why do foreign expeditions need a liaison officer?
7. Tell us about a time on a trek when you had to turn back or change plans.
8. How is climate change making Himalayan trekking more dangerous?

Model answer: Hundreds queue on Everest and people die every year. Is this courage or vanity?

It can be either; the mountain does not decide, the climber does. Commercialisation has made Everest accessible to people with money but limited experience, and on 20 May 2026 a record 274 climbers summited from Nepal in a single day. Crowding at high altitude means more time in the death zone, which explains many fatalities. Courage includes the humility to turn back. Nepal's fee rise to US\$15,000 and the proposed 7,000 m prerequisite show regulators trying to put competence before ego. As an administrator in a Himalayan district, I would apply the same logic on our treks: certify operators, cap numbers and treat safety as non-negotiable.

Model answer: Should the state promote adventure tourism in fragile Himalayan areas?

Yes, but on the mountains' terms. Adventure tourism gives livelihoods to guides, porters and homestays in border villages, which supports the Vibrant Villages Programme and reduces out-migration. Uttarakhand's February 2026 decision to open 83 peaks and waive fees for Indian climbers can nurture a new generation of mountaineers. The risks are real too: waste, trampled bugyals and accidents like Sahastra Tal in 2024, where nine trekkers died. I would pair promotion with carrying-capacity limits, online registration, certified guides, mandatory insurance and eco-fees spent locally on waste and rescue. Growth that degrades the trail is a loss for everyone.

Common traps

- Inflating altitudes or difficulty; boards ask exact heights (Nag Tibba, Triund, your highest point) and whether you used oxygen, so wrong numbers expose you quickly
- Using 'trekking', 'hiking' and 'mountaineering' interchangeably, a distinction asked repeatedly across years
- Romanticising adventure while ignoring local communities, waste, Sherpa and porter safety, and the regulatory failures behind tragedies

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Make a trek sheet: name, region, district, maximum altitude, days, route villages, operator or self-guided, stay arrangements, gear list and one incident from each trek
- ☐ Learn high-altitude physiology (AMS, HAPE, HACE, acclimatisation rules) and a safety protocol you can recite in five points
- ☐ Revise institutions and rules: IMF and liaison officers, HMI, NIM, JIM&WS, NIMAS, ILP/PAP permits, Adventure Tourism Guidelines 2018 and the 2022 strategy
- ☐ Track current facts: Uttarakhand's 83 peaks, Nepal's Everest fee and rules, the record summit day of 2026, Sahastra Tal and Draupadi ka Danda-II lessons
- ☐ Prepare views on overtourism, the 'conquest' and Sherpa debate, GLOF risk, and promoting trekking among students, each ending with a district-level action

PART III**Life, Nature and Service**

Travel, cooking, gardening, social work, astronomy, birding

HOBBY 15**Travelling**

Appears in DAFs as: travelling, solo travel, backpacking, exploring new places, visiting historical sites, travel vlogging/blogging, travel documentaries. Travel claims invite instant cross-examination on places visited and open the whole tourism economy, heritage, infrastructure and overtourism debate.

What the board is really testing

- Observation: did you learn the history, people, economy and problems of the places you visited, or only take photographs?
- Recall under pressure: your last trip, what you saw at a monument, its museum, emblem or local story
- Tourism economics: why India underperforms on foreign arrivals despite its assets; medical, religious, rural and eco-tourism potential
- Governance of tourism: carrying capacity, overtourism protests, sustainability of air travel, infrastructure status and schemes
- Values: openness, adaptability and respect for diversity, plus the ability to compare India with other countries without cynicism

Basics, types and concepts

- Forms: cultural/heritage, religious, eco, adventure, rural, medical and wellness, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions), cruise and film tourism.
- **Carrying capacity:** the maximum visitors a place can host without degrading ecology, infrastructure or residents' quality of life; overtourism is its breach.
- Responsible tourism: minimise negative impacts, maximise local benefit; Kerala's Responsible Tourism Mission (2017), built on the Kumarakom model (2008), is a global reference.
- A blog is written content; a vlog is video content. Travel influencers shape demand, but 'Instagram tourism' can concentrate crowds at viral spots.
- Tourism Satellite Accounts estimate tourism's share of India's GDP at about 5% and a large share of jobs, much of it informal.

India story and heritage

- **Sarnath became India's 45th World Heritage Site** (July 2026, 48th WHC session, Busan) as a serial property including Dhamekh and Chaukhandi stupas and the Ashokan pillar.
- The Sarnath Lion Capital (four lions, Dharma Chakra of 24 spokes) is India's national emblem, adopted on 26 January 1950; it sits in ASI's Sarnath Museum, India's oldest site museum (1910).
- Maratha Military Landscapes (12 forts) became India's 44th site in July 2025; India now has 37 cultural, 7 natural and 1 mixed (Khangchendzonga) World Heritage Sites.
- Lohagarh Fort, Bharatpur: the 'iron fort' with mud ramparts that withstood British sieges in 1805; Keoladeo National Park nearby is a World Heritage Site.
- Mussoorie hosts LBSNAA (1959), the hill climate and the former Charleville Hotel estate made it a natural campus; Ladakh's high passes and roads attract motor tourists.

Institutions, policy and schemes

- Ministry of Tourism schemes: **Swadesh Darshan 2.0** (destination-centric sustainable tourism), PRASHAD (pilgrimage), Dekho Apna Desh and the Incredible India campaign.
- Union Budget 2025-26: develop 50 top destinations with states in challenge mode; hotels at these sites placed in the infrastructure Harmonised Master List; 'Heal in India' medical tourism push.

- Infrastructure status gives cheaper long-term credit and longer loan tenure, which helps hotels with high capital costs and long payback periods.
- e-Tourist Visa (2014) and later e-Medical visas eased entry; UDAN regional connectivity (2016) opened smaller airports; PRASHAD and Swadesh Darshan fund last-mile facilities.
- Heritage law: Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (100 m prohibited and 200 m regulated zones); Adopt a Heritage 2.0 for private amenities.

Current developments 2025–26

- **2025 data:** foreign tourist arrivals fell 8.1% to 91.49 lakh; foreign exchange earnings dropped 9.5% to US\$31.69 billion; arrivals from Bangladesh fell 73%.
- Domestic tourist visits rose 45.5% to 428.55 crore in 2025, with Uttar Pradesh (155.74 crore, boosted by the Maha Kumbh) accounting for most of the increase.
- **WEF Travel and Tourism Development Index 2026:** India rose nine places to 31st; Japan ranked first. India scores well on price competitiveness and cultural and natural resources.
- Pahalgam terror attack (22 April 2025) hit Kashmir tourism hard and showed how security shocks hurt tourism-dependent economies.
- Overtourism protests in Spain and other European hotspots (2024–25), and crowding at Himalayan hill stations and char dham sites, have pushed carrying-capacity rules onto India's agenda.

Science, economics and social angle

- Tourism has a high employment multiplier and supports women, artisans and homestay owners; it is a key source of foreign exchange.
- Why foreign arrivals lag: image and safety concerns, especially for women; poor last-mile infrastructure and sanitation; visa and tax complexity; weak global marketing compared with Thailand or Turkey.
- Aviation emissions are a sustainability concern; rail, buses and longer, slower trips reduce footprint. Air connectivity still matters for the North-East and islands.
- Medical tourism draws patients from South Asia, West Asia and Africa for cost-effective quality care; about 4.5 lakh foreigners came for medical purposes in January–November 2025.
- Lessons from abroad: Switzerland's rail-linked mountain tourism and strict zoning offer J&K and Himachal a model of high-value, low-volume tourism.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- A district collector manages tourism through destination plans, solid waste and sewage capacity, permit caps, crowd management at fairs and coordination with ASI and forest departments.
- Travel builds empathy for diversity and the 'unity in diversity' outlook needed in All India Services, where officers serve far from home cadres.
- Ethical traveller: respect local customs and sacred sites, avoid exploitative voluntourism and wildlife selfies, and pay fairly for local services.
- Tourism can drive rural renewal: Best Tourism Villages (UN Tourism) and community homestays spread benefits beyond hotspots; renewable energy and connectivity unlock remote destinations.
- Overtourism protests show that residents' consent matters; tourism plans must include local communities, not just visitors and investors.

Asked in real interviews

1. You like exploring new places; where do you like to explore, mountains? What about the costs? [2021]
2. Where all have you travelled? [2022]
3. What can J&K learn from Switzerland in tourism development? How can we increase the number of foreign tourists? [2022]
4. What kind of travelling do you like? You like travelling, so where all have you been? [2022]
5. What is the difference between a blog and a vlog? [2022]
6. Travelling unsettles you and meditation settles you; how did you develop both? What did you learn from a place? Where did you travel last? [2022]
7. What steps did the government take for tourism in the budget? What will happen if tourism is given infrastructure status? [2022]
8. We are building new airports and promoting air travel. Is it sustainable? [2022]
9. What is tourism's share in Kerala's GDP and what is its potential for development? [2023]
10. Travelling to rural areas: what is the potential of renewable energy in rural areas? [2023]
11. What do you think about travelling: is it only for photos, videos and show-off, without caring about a place's history and importance? [2024]
12. Why have we been unable to achieve our potential in foreign tourist arrivals? What are the opportunities in medical and religious tourism? [2024]
13. Places to visit in Bharatpur apart from Lohagarh Fort and Keoladeo? Why do Lohagarh's 'mud fort' walls look like stone? [2024]
14. Why is Mussoorie called Mussoorie, and why was LBSNAA set up there? [2024]
15. Where did you travel last? You visited Sarnath; did you see the museum? Tell me about the Sarnath lion (capital). [2025]
16. Why are we seeing protests against the overflow of tourists at tourist sites? [2025]
17. How can Kerala's tourism success be emulated by other states? Why are foreign tourists declining, as in Goa, and how can we improve? [2025]

Expected questions

1. Tell us about the last place you visited: its history, economy and one problem you noticed there.
2. Sarnath is now a World Heritage Site. What does that status bring, and what are its obligations?
3. Domestic tourism is booming but foreign arrivals fell in 2025. Why, and what should be done?
4. As DM of a hill district, how would you handle overtourism and residents' protests?
5. Is travel a privilege of the rich? How can tourism benefit local communities and not just hotel chains?
6. Compare tourism in India with a country you have visited or studied. What can we learn?
7. How do social media influencers affect tourism, safety and heritage sites?
8. What is carrying capacity and how would you calculate it for a destination?

Model answer: India has world-class heritage, yet foreign tourist arrivals fell in 2025. Why do we underperform?

Our assets are not the problem; the experience around them is. In 2025, foreign arrivals fell 8.1% to about 91.5 lakh, partly because Bangladesh arrivals collapsed, but long-standing issues remain: safety perceptions, especially for women, poor last-mile connectivity and sanitation, touts at monuments, and weak global marketing. The WEF's 2026 index, where India rose to 31st, shows the strengths are real. As an administrator, I would focus on what a district can fix: clean, signposted sites, trained local guides, tourist police, digital ticketing and homestays. Sarnath's new World Heritage status is exactly the kind of place where that work can show results quickly.

Model answer: Residents in many tourist towns are protesting against tourists. Should we limit tourism?

We should manage it, which sometimes means limiting it. Protests in Spain and crowding in our own hill towns arise when visitors' gains go to outsiders while residents bear the costs: traffic, water shortages, garbage and rising rents. Carrying capacity is the key concept: what roads, sewage and ecology can actually sustain. Kerala's Responsible Tourism Mission shows the alternative, where local groups supply food, crafts and experiences, so residents become stakeholders. As DM, I would use daily permit caps at fragile sites, staggered entry, eco-fees spent locally and planned parking at town edges. Tourism that residents resent is not sustainable over time.

Common traps

- Naming places without knowing their history, monuments, museums, emblems or local issues; boards test recall of what you actually saw, as with the Sarnath lion capital
- Presenting travel as a photo or Instagram pursuit, which boards challenge directly, instead of learning about people, economy and governance
- Giving generic tourism answers with no data: not knowing 2025 FTAs, the WEF 2026 rank, key schemes or the latest World Heritage additions

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Build a travel log of 8–10 places: state and district, monuments, museum, history, local economy, one problem and one administrative fix for each
- ☐ Revise heritage facts: India's 45 World Heritage Sites with the 2025 and 2026 additions, national emblem and Sarnath, the AMASR Act and Adopt a Heritage
- ☐ Learn tourism data and policy: 2025 FTAs, earnings and domestic visits, WEF TTDI 2026, Swadesh Darshan 2.0, PRASHAD, Budget 2025-26 measures and infrastructure status
- ☐ Prepare comparative examples: Switzerland, Bhutan's high-value low-volume model, Kerala's responsible tourism, and overtourism responses in Venice or Barcelona
- ☐ Prepare views on sustainable air travel, medical and religious tourism, carrying capacity and safety for women travellers, each with a district-level action

HOBBY 16

Cooking

Appears in DAFs as: *cooking, regional/millet cooking, baking, experimenting with traditional recipes.* Cooking opens easy doors into nutrition, food security, agriculture prices, regional culture and climate, letting the board test whether a domestic skill has public-policy depth.

What the board is really testing

- Whether the hobby is genuine: what you cook, how often, and the method behind a signature dish
- Awareness of India's food diversity: regional cuisines, GI-tagged foods and the ingredients behind them
- Ability to link the kitchen to policy: food inflation, crop seasons, millets, nutrition and food safety
- Balanced views on contested food questions such as vegetarianism, meat bans and dietary choice
- Practical sense of how food habits connect to health, climate and administration

Basics, history and techniques

- Core methods: dry heat (roasting, tandoor, baking), moist heat (boiling, steaming, **dum** slow-cooking in sealed pots) and fat-based (tadka, deep-frying); each changes texture, nutrients and fuel use.
- **Dum pukht** biryani layers par-cooked rice over marinated meat and seals the handi with dough; 'normal' or kachchi/pakki styles differ in whether meat is raw or pre-cooked.
- Indian cooking rests on the spice tempering (tadka/chhaunk), regional fats (mustard oil in the east, coconut oil in Kerala, ghee in the north) and souring agents like tamarind, kokum and amchur.
- Ayurveda classifies food by taste (shad-rasa) and effect; modern nutrition counts macronutrients, micronutrients and fibre, so a cook should know both vocabularies.
- Food chemistry basics: Maillard browning, fermentation (idli, dhokla, kanji), and that pressure cooking raises water's boiling point to about 120 degrees C, saving fuel.

India story and regional cuisines

- Broad zones: wheat-and-dairy north, rice-fish-mustard east, rice-coconut-tamarind south, millet-pulse west; within each, sub-regions like **Malwa** (dal bafla), Awadh, Chettinad and Kashmiri Wazwan.
- Rajasthan's **ker-sangri** uses desert berries and Khejri beans, dried for storage: a classic drought-adapted cuisine built on scarcity.
- Hyderabad's Haleem (GI), Dharwad Pedha, Bikaneri Bhujia, Odisha Rasagola and Darjeeling Tea (India's first GI, 2004) show food as protected intellectual property.
- India had 822 registered GIs after 125 were added in 2025-26; Uttar Pradesh (79) and Tamil Nadu (74) lead the cumulative tally.
- **Deepavali** became India's 16th UNESCO intangible heritage element in December 2025, at the committee session hosted at Red Fort, New Delhi; festival foods are part of that living heritage.

Institutions, policy and law

- **FSSAI** was set up under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006; it runs Eat Right India, Eat Right Campus, hygiene ratings and labelling rules.
- National Food Security Act, 2013 covers up to 75% rural and 50% urban population; PMGKAY gives free foodgrains to about 81 crore people.
- **PM POSHAN** (school meals) and Mission Poshan 2.0 target child and maternal nutrition; millets and fortified rice are being added to menus.
- India led the UN **International Year of Millets 2023**; millets were rebranded 'Shree Anna' in Budget 2023-24, with IIMR Hyderabad as the Global Centre of Excellence.
- ICMR-NIN's Dietary Guidelines for Indians (2024) advise limiting salt, sugar, ultra-processed food and protein supplements, and recommend diverse plant-based diets.

Current developments 2025-26

- PM's call to cut cooking-oil use by 10% to fight **obesity**; FSSAI asked states/UTs in May 2025 to scale up awareness and measures.
- In August 2025 FSSAI was reported to be preparing a voluntary advisory for restaurants to display **sugar and oil boards** showing content in dishes.
- A Lancet study projects more than 440 million Indians will be overweight or obese by 2050, shifting focus from hunger alone to the double burden of malnutrition.
- Food inflation swings in tomatoes, onions and potatoes (the 'TOP' crops) remain politically sensitive; potato is mainly a **rabi** crop in the Indo-Gangetic plains.
- GI registrations surged with 125 new tags in 2025-26, Madhya Pradesh topping additions (26), reflecting a push to market regional foods.

Science, economics and social angle

- Food systems cause roughly a third of global greenhouse emissions; **rice paddies** emit methane, ruminant meat has the highest footprint, millets need little water.
- Food is a caste, community and gender marker: unpaid cooking falls mostly on women, and meat or beef bans raise questions of choice, livelihood and Article 21 privacy.
- UNEP's Food Waste Index 2024 estimates about 55 kg of household food waste per Indian per year; cold-chain gaps also cause large post-harvest losses.
- The food-processing sector qualifies for **PLI** support and PMKSY; street food sustains millions of informal livelihoods under the PM SVANidhi scheme.
- Fermented and traditional foods support gut health; ultra-processed foods with high fat, sugar and salt drive diabetes and hypertension.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- A collector who cooks understands the **mid-day meal** kitchen: hygiene, menu cost norms, fuel, and why food-poisoning incidents need audits, not just suspensions.
- Food safety enforcement: Designated Officers under FSSA 2006, sampling during festivals, and adulteration of milk, sweets and spices.
- Promoting millets through PDS, anganwadis and self-help group cafes links nutrition with farmer incomes and water conservation.
- Disaster and relief management depends on community kitchens; COVID-era kitchens showed the importance of quick, nutritious and culturally acceptable meals.

- Ethically, an officer must respect diverse food choices and avoid imposing personal dietary preferences in public institutions.

Asked in real interviews

1. Should we make the whole country vegan? [2025]
2. Just like gambling and alcoholism, should non-vegetarian food also be banned? Can the government do this? [2025]
3. Which dish do you like? [2025]
4. What inspires you to cook? Is cooking a hobby for you or a compulsion? [2025]
5. Compare the carbon footprint of Hyderabadi cuisine and Chennai cuisine. Why the difference? [2025]
6. You like cooking; what is the price of potatoes these days? Is potato a kharif or rabi crop? [2025]
7. You cook; what are the different Indian cuisines? [2024]
8. If someone says they know cooking, what would you ask them to cook? [2024]
9. Tell me about the cuisine of Malwa. What is dal bafra? [2024]
10. What do you cook? What is the difference between normal and dum biryani, and why is dum special? [2022]
11. Some say it is biryani only if it is mutton biryani. What do you say? [2022]
12. How is cooking your hobby? What are famous vegetable dishes of the Barmer region, and what is special about ker and sangri? [2021]
13. Why are millets not popular? How will you popularise millets? [2020]
14. Tell us something about cooking. What do you cook? [2020]

Expected questions

1. What is the Eat Right India movement and how is FSSAI enforcing food safety in street food?
2. Why is India's obesity rate rising, and is a 10% cut in cooking oil a realistic target?
3. Which dishes of your home state have GI tags, and how does a GI help producers?
4. Should the State regulate what people eat, for example through meat bans on festival days?
5. As collector, a mid-day meal poisoning case is reported in your district. What will you do?
6. How can millets be made part of the daily urban diet rather than a niche health food?
7. How does your cooking hobby connect with your academic background or optional subject?
8. Why do onion, tomato and potato prices fluctuate so sharply, and what can the government do?

Model answer: Should the government ban non-vegetarian food, the way it restricts alcohol or gambling?

I would respectfully disagree. Alcohol and gambling are regulated because of proven social harm, whereas diet is part of personal liberty, culture and livelihood; the Supreme Court's Puttaswamy judgment places such choices within privacy. Meat and fish are also affordable protein for many poor households and coastal communities. The State's legitimate role is in food safety, animal welfare under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, and hygienic slaughter. As an administrator I would ensure licensed, clean meat shops and FSSAI compliance rather than prohibition, while encouraging balanced, plant-rich diets through awareness.

Model answer: Compare the carbon footprint of a meat-heavy cuisine with a rice-based one. Which is greener?

Both have costs, so it depends on the plate. Ruminant meat has the highest emissions per kilogram, but flooded rice paddies emit methane and need heavy irrigation; food systems overall cause about a third of global emissions. A cuisine using millets, pulses, seasonal vegetables and local fish is generally the most sustainable. As a cook I see that pressure cooking and soaking also cut fuel use. As an administrator I would promote millets in PDS and mid-day meals, support direct-seeded rice, and reduce food waste, which UNEP estimates at about 55 kg per Indian household member every year.

Common traps

- Listing cooking but being unable to explain the method, ingredients or regional origin of the dishes you claim to cook
- Ignoring the policy side: not knowing current vegetable prices, crop seasons, FSSAI or millet initiatives
- Taking an extreme or moralising position on vegetarianism, veganism or meat bans instead of a balanced, rights-based view

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Master 3-4 signature dishes fully: ingredients, method, regional history and nutrition profile
- ☐ Learn the cuisine, GI-tagged foods and key crops of your home state and district
- ☐ Track current retail prices of staples (atta, rice, dal, onion, tomato, potato, edible oil) before the interview
- ☐ Revise FSSAI, NFSA, PM POSHAN, Poshan 2.0, millets/Shree Anna and the 2025 anti-obesity push
- ☐ Prepare balanced answers on food choice and the State, food waste, and the carbon footprint of diets

HOBBY 17

Gardening & Kitchen Gardening

Appears in DAFs as: kitchen gardening, terrace/balcony gardening, fruit gardening, potted plants, organic/vegetable farming. Gardening lets the board move quickly from your terrace pots to agriculture, horticulture, soil health, food security and climate, testing both practical knowledge and policy depth.

What the board is really testing

- Whether you actually garden: what you grow, which season, which inputs and what goes wrong
- Scientific grasp of soil, composting, fertilisers, pests and plant biology
- Ability to scale up from a kitchen garden to urban food security, nutrition and waste management
- Informed views on agricultural debates: GM crops, organic and natural farming, cropping patterns
- Administrative imagination: how a collector would use horticulture and nutri-gardens for development

Basics, science and practice

- Plants need light, water, air and nutrients; macronutrients are **N, P, K** (plus Ca, Mg, S), and most vegetables prefer soil pH of about 6 to 7.
- **Vermicompost** is made by feeding kitchen and farm waste to earthworms such as *Eisenia fetida* in shaded beds; castings are ready in roughly 45 to 60 days.
- Systemic pesticides and fertilisers are absorbed and moved through plant tissues, unlike contact products that act only on surfaces; systemic insecticides like neonicotinoids harm pollinators.
- Good practices: crop rotation, companion planting (marigold with tomato), mulching, drip irrigation, and neem-based or biological pest control.
- Season planning: kharif (monsoon), rabi (winter) and zaid (summer) crops apply to kitchen gardens too; leafy greens, tomato, chilli and brinjal suit most Indian terraces.

India story: horticulture and pioneers

- India is the world's second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables; horticulture output was a final 3,707 lakh tonnes in 2024-25, exceeding foodgrains.
- 2025-26 first advance estimates put horticulture at about 3,708 lakh tonnes, with fruits near 1,187 lakh tonnes and vegetables about 2,162 lakh tonnes.
- **Sikkim** became India's first fully organic state in 2016; Subhash Palekar's Zero Budget Natural Farming inspired Andhra Pradesh's community-managed natural farming.
- Exotic crops such as avocado, dragon fruit (kalamansi) and kiwi are spreading in Kerala, Karnataka and the North-East as farmers diversify.
- Average operational landholding is about 1.08 hectares (Agriculture Census 2015-16); over 86% of holdings are small and marginal.

Institutions, policy and law

- **MIDH** (Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture) and the National Horticulture Board support nurseries, protected cultivation and post-harvest infrastructure.
- The **Clean Plant Programme** (approved 2024, about Rs 1,766 crore) aims to provide virus-free planting material for fruit crops.
- Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 lets farmers save and sell seed; GI Act, 1999 protects regional produce through the Chennai GI Registry.

- GM crops need GEAC approval under Environment Protection Act rules; Bt cotton is the only commercial GM crop; GM mustard remains before the Supreme Court.
- **Terminator seeds** (genetic use restriction technology) produce sterile seed; India's PPV&FR Act bars registration of varieties containing such technology.

Current developments 2025-26

- The **National Mission on Natural Farming** (November 2024, Rs 2,481 crore) targets 1 crore farmers on 7.5 lakh hectares through 15,000 clusters and 30,000 Krishi Sakhis.
- In May 2025 India released the world's first **genome-edited rice** varieties, DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala) and Pusa DST Rice 1, developed by ICAR using SDN-1/2 editing.
- Horticulture final estimates for 2024-25 and first advance estimates for 2025-26 were released in March 2026, both above 3,700 lakh tonnes.
- India registered 125 new GIs in 2025-26, taking the total to 822, many of them fruits, vegetables and spices.
- Kitchen and nutri-gardens (Poshan Vatika) are promoted in anganwadis and schools under Poshan 2.0 and PM POSHAN to diversify diets.

Science, economics and social angle

- Home and community gardens cut food miles, divert wet waste from landfills and offer fresh, pesticide-free produce to urban households.
- About 40% of food is lost or wasted across the chain in some estimates; cold storage gaps hurt perishable fruits and vegetables most.
- Punjab's **paddy-wheat cycle** has driven groundwater depletion and stubble burning; crop diversification needs MSP, procurement and market support for alternatives.
- India's share of world agri exports is only about 2 to 2.5%, limited by small holdings, quality standards, residue limits and weak branding.
- Gardening has proven mental-health benefits (horticultural therapy) and is used in prisons, hospitals and old-age homes.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- A collector can scale kitchen gardens through MGNREGA works, self-help groups and anganwadi nutri-gardens to fight anaemia and stunting.
- Urban local bodies can link terrace farming with **decentralised composting** under Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) 2.0 and bulk waste generator rules.
- Extension matters: Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Krishi Sakhis and soil health cards help farmers cut chemical overuse.
- Officers must balance farmer income with sustainability, for example when convincing Punjab farmers to shift away from water-intensive paddy.
- Ethical angle: honest labelling of organic produce, preventing spurious seeds and pesticides, and protecting farmers' seed rights.

Asked in real interviews

1. What are you growing? Do you use fertilisers or go organic? What are the benefits of growing your own fruits and vegetables? [2020]
2. How can kitchen gardening be a model to tackle shortage of fruits and vegetables in urban areas? How is it different from conventional farming? [2020]

3. What can be done with day-to-day kitchen waste? [2020]
4. Explain farm to fork. About 40% of food is wasted; why, and how can it be tackled? [2020]
5. Our share of global agricultural exports is only about 2%; why? What is the average landholding in India? [2020]
6. Since you do fruit gardening, what can be done in horticulture given the state of Indian agriculture? [2023]
7. Which exotic fruit crop has become popular in Kerala recently? Are you aware of different avocado varieties? [2023]
8. You do gardening. How is vermicompost made? [2022]
9. Name two GI-tagged agricultural products from Jammu and Kashmir. Who grants GI tags and where is the office? [2023]
10. How do you do kitchen gardening, and which plants do you cultivate? [2021]
11. What are systemic fertilisers? [2021]
12. What do you grow? What is your view on GM crops and on terminator seeds? [2019]
13. Your hobby is organic farming. Where did organic farming start in India and what is happening now? [2019]
14. Should the government pass a law to stop rice cultivation in Punjab? As collector, how would you convince farmers not to sow rice? [2022]

Expected questions

1. What is the difference between organic farming and natural farming? Which suits India better?
2. How would you promote terrace gardening in a city like yours?
3. What is the National Mission on Natural Farming and what are its targets?
4. Are genome-edited crops different from GM crops? Should India adopt them?
5. What is the role of earthworms and microbes in soil health?
6. As collector, how would you use nutri-gardens to reduce malnutrition in tribal blocks?
7. Which crops in your kitchen garden fail most often and why?
8. How does your gardening hobby relate to your optional subject or home state's agriculture?

Model answer: Can kitchen gardening really address urban food and nutrition problems, or is it just a hobby?

It cannot replace farms, but it is more than a hobby. A few square metres of terrace can supply leafy greens and herbs year-round, improving dietary diversity cheaply. In my own garden, composting kitchen waste cuts what goes to the landfill. At scale, community and school gardens build awareness, as Poshan Vatikas in anganwadis show. As an administrator I would link terrace gardening with decentralised composting under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0, offer seed kits through horticulture departments, and use resident welfare associations, while being realistic that staple supply still depends on farmers and markets.

Model answer: What is your view on GM and genome-edited crops?

I take an evidence-based, cautious view. Bt cotton raised yields but also showed pest resistance and seed-price issues. Genome editing without foreign DNA is different: in May 2025 India released DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala) and Pusa DST Rice 1, which promise higher yield and stress tolerance. I support such research, with strong biosafety review by GEAC, transparent field data, and protection of farmers' seed rights under the PPV&FR Act. As an administrator I would focus on honest extension through KVKs so farmers adopt new seeds based on local trials, not hype or fear.

Common traps

- Claiming a kitchen garden but not knowing the basics of soil, compost, pests or which season your plants grow in
- Romanticising organic farming without acknowledging yield, certification and cost challenges
- Confusing natural, organic and genome-edited or GM concepts, or giving outdated figures on schemes and production

Preparation checklist

- ☐ List every plant you grow with its season, inputs, pests and last harvest
- ☐ Learn composting and vermicomposting steps, NPK basics and the difference between systemic and contact inputs
- ☐ Revise MIDH, NMNF 2024, Clean Plant Programme, PPV&FR Act, GI Act and GEAC's role
- ☐ Note the latest horticulture production estimates and India's GI tally
- ☐ Prepare views on GM and genome-edited crops, Punjab's cropping pattern and urban farming

HOBBY 18**Social Work & Teaching Kids**

Appears in DAFs as: teaching underprivileged children, volunteering with NGOs, NSS/NCC service, mentoring, relief work, community service. Boards treat it as a rehearsal for public service and probe whether the candidate has really worked on the ground and understands India's learning and welfare gaps.

What the board is really testing

- Is the work real: who, where, how often, what changed, and can you give specifics?
- Do you understand the education system behind your classroom (RTE, NEP, ASER, UDISE+, NIPUN)?
- Empathy without saviour complex: do you see children as rights-holders or as charity cases?
- Can you scale personal effort into policy, convergence and institutional design as a DM?
- Ethical sensitivity: safeguarding of minors, consent, NGO accountability and fund transparency

Basics, history and rules

- Indian voluntarism runs from **seva** and dana traditions to reform bodies: Brahmo Samaj, Servants of India Society (Gokhale, 1905), Ramakrishna Mission (1897) and Gandhian constructive work.
- **National Service Scheme** began on 24 September 1969 (Gandhi centenary) under the Youth Affairs Ministry; motto 'Not Me But You'.
- **MY Bharat** (Mera Yuva Bharat), launched 31 October 2023, is an autonomous body and phygital platform for youth volunteering and experiential learning.
- Good practice in teaching volunteers: diagnose with **Teaching at the Right Level** (Pratham's TaRL), group by level not age, track attendance and learning, and avoid one-off visits.
- Distinguish charity, service and empowerment: sustainable work builds community ownership (SMCs, parents) rather than volunteer dependency.

India story and icons

- **Kailash Satyarthi** founded Bachpan Bachao Andolan (1980) against child labour and trafficking; shared the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize with Malala Yousafzai.
- Savitribai and Jyotirao Phule opened a girls' school at Bhide Wada, Pune, in 1848: India's founding moment for teaching the excluded.
- Baba Amte's Anandwan and Prakash Amte's **Hemalkasa** (Lok Biradari Prakalp) model serve Madia Gond tribals with health, school and wildlife care.
- Pratham (ASER, TaRL), Akshaya Patra (mid-day meals), Teach For India, CRY and SEWA show varied NGO models: research, delivery, fellowship, rights and collective organising.
- Anand Kumar's Super 30 and community libraries show how one committed educator can shift outcomes for poor students.

Institutions, policy and law

- **Article 21A** (86th Amendment, 2002) and the RTE Act 2009 make education free and compulsory for ages 6–14; Section 12(1)(c) reserves 25% private-school seats for disadvantaged children.
- NEP 2020 targets universal foundational literacy and numeracy; **NIPUN Bharat** (2021) aims for every child to read and do basic maths by end of Grade 3.
- Juvenile Justice Act 2015, POCSO Act 2012 and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016 frame child protection; Mission Vatsalya funds child care institutions.
- Companies Act 2013 **Section 135** mandates 2% CSR spending for qualifying companies; education is the largest CSR head.
- FCRA 2010 (amended 2020) caps admin spending of foreign funds at 20% and mandates an SBI New Delhi account; NGO Darpan registers voluntary organisations with NITI Aayog.
- Vidyanjali portal (2021) lets volunteers and CSR donors contribute services or assets to government schools.

Current developments 2025–26

- **ASER 2024** (released 28 January 2025): 23.4% of rural Class 3 children read a Class 2 text, up from 16.3% in 2022; government schools drove the recovery.

- ASER 2024 arithmetic: Class 3 subtraction 33.7% and Class 5 division 30.7%, both above 2018 levels. ASER is biennial; ASER 2026 is being conducted.
- **PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024** (4 December 2024, results July 2025) tested about 21 lakh students; only 53% of Class 6 knew tables up to 10.
- UDISE+ 2024-25: enrolment fell to 24.69 crore; teachers crossed one crore for the first time; secondary dropout fell to 8.2% from 10.9%.
- Secondary retention is only about 47%, so the drop-out problem shifts to Classes 9–12, exactly where volunteer mentoring helps most.

Science, economics or social angle

- Learning poverty compounds: a child who cannot read by Grade 3 falls further behind every year, so **foundational learning** has the highest returns.
- Mid-day meals (PM POSHAN) raise attendance and nutrition; hunger, child marriage, migration and child labour are major dropout drivers.
- Caste, gender and the digital divide shape who drops out; first-generation learners lack home support, which volunteers can partly fill.
- Volunteering builds social capital (Putnam) and civic trust; poorly designed 'voluntourism' can instead create dependency and disrupt children's routines.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- DMs replicate volunteer models at scale: adopt-a-school, community reading campaigns, Anganwadi-school convergence, and Mission Shiksha-type drives using SMCs and self-help groups.
- Ethics: **safeguarding** of minors (background checks, two-adult rule, no photos without consent) and respecting children's dignity in publicity.
- Officers must treat NGOs as partners yet audit them: social audits, outcome contracts and transparent fund use prevent capture and fraud.
- Disaster relief volunteering (cyclones, floods) shows that inclusion of the most vulnerable (elderly, disabled, Dalit hamlets) must be planned, not left to chance.

Asked in real interviews

1. What do you mean by underprivileged children? [2021]
2. Do you know a Nobel laureate who works for underprivileged children? What kind of children does he work for, and what is his organisation called? [2021]
3. How did you make sure the children you taught did not drop out of school? [2021]
4. What do you learn from teaching children? [2021]
5. What do you teach, whom do you teach, and how does it help you? [2021]
6. Whom do you teach? [2022]
7. You list teaching as a hobby. How do you pursue teaching nowadays? [2023]
8. Are we teaching children too many things in schools while they still cannot read and write properly? [2023]
9. In Gujarat, ministers and secretaries visit villages and teach. Can the Maharashtra government do something similar, and why hasn't it? [2023]
10. What are the issues in school education and what steps would you take? [2023]
11. Tell me about Anganwadis. How are they different from primary schools? [2024]
12. What is your work in the NGO, and which classes did you teach? [2024]

13. Can you give a popular example of a community-driven social healthcare model? Explain the Hemalkasa model. [2024]
14. What did you do as a police mitra? Police volunteers now also help senior citizens; what sensitivities must they keep in mind? [2024]
15. What did you do in Cyclone Fani relief work, and how can we avoid the problems underprivileged people face during calamities? [2024]
16. Why did you found a social service group, and what has the group done? [2024]
17. How do you teach? Give details about your NGO. [2024]
18. What did you learn while working against child labour and while raising funds from companies? [2024]
19. Why did you join NSS and what activities were you involved in? [2025]
20. You mentor students at an academy. What do you do there, and how would you advise them on the Personality Test? [2025]

Expected questions

1. ASER 2024 shows learning recovery. Is it real, and what should the next phase focus on?
2. Should RTE be extended to ages 3–6 and 14–18?
3. Is the 25% RTE quota in private schools working? What has gone wrong?
4. Your DAF says you taught slum children. If you are DM, how will you scale that to 2,000 schools?
5. Are NGOs partners of the state or substitutes for it? Should FCRA be tightened or relaxed?
6. A volunteer in your NGO is accused of misbehaving with a child. What do you do?
7. Is CSR in education crowding out public spending or complementing it?
8. Does charity perpetuate inequality? Comment, citing Ambedkar or Gandhi.

Model answer: If government schools are improving, why do volunteers like you still need to teach children?

I see volunteers as a supplement, not a substitute. ASER 2024 shows real recovery: 23.4% of rural Class 3 children can read a Class 2 text, up from 16.3% in 2022. That still leaves three in four behind, mostly first-generation learners without help at home. In my sessions I grouped children by level, not age, which teachers with crowded classrooms find hard. As an administrator I would formalise this: community reading volunteers through SMCs and MY Bharat, linked to NIPUN targets, with safeguarding rules and simple learning tracking, so that goodwill strengthens the public system rather than bypassing it.

Model answer: Is NGO work a form of charity that lets the state escape responsibility?

It can be if NGOs become permanent substitutes, but the best ones are pathfinders. Pratham's Teaching at the Right Level began as an NGO method and is now used in many state programmes, which shows how civil society can innovate and the state can scale. Education is a right under Article 21A, so the duty stays with government. As an officer I would use NGOs for innovation, community mobilisation and independent monitoring, while insisting on transparency through NGO Darpan and social audits. Partnership with accountability, not outsourcing, is my position.

Common traps

- Calling it a hobby while unable to name a single child's progress, the NGO's registration, or the number of sessions; vagueness signals DAF padding.
- Saviour tone ('I uplifted poor children'); the board prefers rights language and humility about what one volunteer can achieve.
- Not knowing the basic data (ASER, UDISE+ dropout, RTE provisions) behind the cause you claim to care about.

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Write a one-page fact sheet of your own work: NGO name, place, years, hours a week, age group, method, one measurable result and one failure.
- ☐ Memorise headline numbers from ASER 2024, PARAKH 2024 and UDISE+ 2024-25, with release dates.
- ☐ Revise Article 21A, RTE Act sections (12(1)(c), 16, 29), NEP 2020 FLN goals, NIPUN Bharat, PM POSHAN, POCSO and the JJ Act.
- ☐ Prepare views on NGO accountability: FCRA 2020 amendments, CSR Section 135, NGO Darpan and social audits.
- ☐ Rehearse two situational answers: child-safety complaint against a volunteer, and scaling a volunteer model across a district.

HOBBY 19**Astronomy & Stargazing**

Appears in DAFs as: stargazing, amateur astronomy, sky watching, astrophotography, interest in space and the universe. It lets the board test scientific temper and depth in physics, and link the night sky to India's heritage, the space programme and light-pollution governance.

What the board is really testing

- Do you actually observe: what, where, with what equipment, and under what conditions?
- Conceptual depth: black holes, event horizon, stellar evolution, the Big Bang, explained simply
- Scientific temper: astronomy versus astrology, myth versus evidence (Article 51A(h))
- Awareness of India's space and observatory ecosystem and the latest missions
- Governance sense: light pollution, dark-sky tourism, space commercialisation and debris

Basics, history and rules

- Naked-eye basics: constellations, planets, Milky Way and meteor showers (Perseids August, Geminids December); the **Bortle scale** (1-9) grades sky darkness.
- **Saptarishi** is the Big Dipper in Ursa Major; its pointer stars lead to Dhruva (Polaris). Vasishta and Arundhati are the Mizar-Alcor pair.
- Visibility hindrances: light pollution, aerosols and smog, humidity, moonlight, atmospheric turbulence ('seeing') and low horizons in cities.

- **Event horizon:** the boundary of a black hole beyond which no light escapes; its radius for non-rotating holes is the **Schwarzschild radius**, $2GM/c^2$.
- Stellar life: nebula to main sequence to red giant; remnants are white dwarf, neutron star or black hole depending on mass.

India story and icons

- Vedanga Jyotisha, **Aryabhata** (Aryabhatiya, 499 CE: rotating Earth, eclipse explanation), Varahamihira and Bhaskara II built a strong mathematical-astronomy tradition.
- Sawai Jai Singh II built five Jantar Mantars; Jaipur's became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010.
- **S. Chandrasekhar's** white-dwarf mass limit (about 1.4 solar masses) won the 1983 Physics Nobel; Meghnad Saha gave the ionisation equation.
- Key facilities: 3.6 m Devasthal Optical Telescope (ARIES, Nainital), GMRT near Pune, Indian Astronomical Observatory at Hanle (about 4,500 m), and AstroSat (2015).
- LIGO-India, a gravitational-wave detector in Hingoli, Maharashtra, received Cabinet approval in 2023.

Institutions, policy and law

- Department of Space and ISRO; IN-SPACe (2020) authorises private players; **Indian Space Policy 2023** defines roles for ISRO, NSIL and the private sector.
- Research bodies: Indian Institute of Astrophysics (Bengaluru), ARIES, PRL, IUCAA, NCRA-TIFR; Astronomical Society of India supports outreach.
- **Hanle Dark Sky Reserve** (Ladakh, 2022) was India's first; Pench Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra) became India's first certified Dark Sky Park in 2024.
- Tamil Nadu has opened its first dark sky park in Ariyur Shola, Kolli Hills; states are linking dark skies to astro-tourism.
- UN Outer Space Treaty 1967 bars national sovereignty claims; India signed the Artemis Accords in 2023.

Current developments 2025–26

- **Shubhanshu Shukla** flew Axiom-4 (June–July 2025), the first Indian aboard the ISS; the crew undocked on 14 July and splashed down on 15 July 2025.
- ISRO's SpaDeX docked two satellites in January 2025, making India the fourth nation to dock in orbit.
- Gaganyaan G1, the uncrewed test flight with Vyommitra, has slipped repeatedly; as of mid-2026 ISRO expects it in Q4 2026 after a crew-module air-drop test in April 2026.
- A total lunar eclipse on 7–8 September 2025 was visible across India; Vera Rubin Observatory released first images in June 2025.
- Interstellar comet **3I/ATLAS**, discovered in July 2025, is only the third known interstellar object after 'Oumuamua and Borisov.

Science, economics or social angle

- **Light pollution** harms astronomy, migratory birds, insects and human sleep; full-cutoff LED fixtures and warm colour temperatures are cheap fixes.
- Mega-constellations (Starlink and others) streak telescope images and raise radio interference; space commercialisation needs coordination with observatories.

- Astronomy versus astrology: astronomy is testable science; astrology lacks predictive validity. Article 51A(h) asks citizens to develop **scientific temper**.
- Astro-tourism (Hanle's trained local 'astro-ambassadors', homestays) creates rural livelihoods while giving communities a stake in keeping skies dark.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- A DM can notify dark-sky zones, regulate outdoor lighting in bylaws and promote astro-tourism in tribal or hill districts.
- Public outreach (telescope nights, eclipse viewing with safe filters) counters superstition, such as eclipse-time food taboos for pregnant women.
- Satellite and space data aid governance: NISAR, Bhuvan and IMD imagery for floods, crops and disaster planning.
- Ethics: space debris, militarisation (ASAT test 2019, Mission Shakti) and equitable access to orbital slots for developing countries.

Asked in real interviews

1. What type of stargazing do you do, and what do you see? [2022]
2. Where do you live, since stargazing is difficult in Delhi? What are the possible hindrances to visibility? [2022]
3. Have you seen the Saptarishi? Name the seven rishis and their importance. [2022]
4. What is the event horizon of a black hole? [2022]
5. What is the event horizon, and why is it called the event horizon? [2020]
6. What is the Schwarzschild radius? [2020]
7. How do you practise your hobby? (asked of an astronomy-hobby candidate) [2020]
8. What is the difference between astronomy and astrology? Is there any scientific basis for astrology? [2021]
9. How does space commercialisation affect astronomical observation, and what can be done about it? [2021]
10. Do you believe in alien civilisations? (DAF interest: space and universe) [2024]
11. Question on Carl Sagan's link between the Big Bang and the Rigveda; what happened before the Big Bang? [2024]

Expected questions

1. What did you last observe, and with what equipment? Name three constellations visible this season.
2. Why does Pluto no longer count as a planet?
3. Explain a black hole to a Class 8 student.
4. Is India's space programme a luxury for a poor country?
5. How will you reduce light pollution in your district without compromising safety?
6. Aryabhata knew the Earth rotates. Why did Indian science not sustain that lead?
7. What is the significance of Shubhanshu Shukla's Axiom-4 flight for Gaganyaan?
8. Villagers in your district refuse to step out during an eclipse. Will you intervene?

Model answer: Is astrology a science? Many people in your district will consult it before every decision.

Astrology is not a science in the sense astronomy is: it makes predictions that have not held up under controlled tests. Astronomy explains eclipses through orbital mechanics, which Aryabhata already did in the fifth century. Still, I would not mock people's beliefs; for many it is cultural comfort. As an officer my approach would follow Article 51A(h): avoid endorsing astrology in official work, but build scientific temper through outreach such as public eclipse-viewing camps with safe filters. That shows people that nothing harmful happens, which persuades better than lectures.

Model answer: Stargazing is a niche hobby. What public value does it have?

It has more value than it appears. The Hanle Dark Sky Reserve in Ladakh trained local residents as astro-ambassadors and created homestay income while protecting the night sky for India's high-altitude observatory. Light pollution also disrupts migratory birds, insects and human sleep, so dark skies are an environmental issue. As a district officer I could add shielded street lighting to municipal bylaws, promote astro-tourism in hill or tribal blocks, and run school telescope nights. A personal hobby can thus support livelihoods, ecology and scientific temper together.

Common traps

- Claiming astronomy as a hobby but faltering on basics such as the Saptarishi, Polaris, phases of the Moon, or why stars twinkle.
- Muddling astronomy with astrology, or giving a dismissive, sneering answer about astrology instead of a balanced one.
- Quoting outdated mission status (for example, saying Gaganyaan has already flown) without checking current timelines.

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Keep an observation log: dates, locations, Bortle class, objects seen, equipment; be ready to describe one memorable night.
- ☐ Revise concepts with one-line explanations: event horizon, Schwarzschild radius, Chandrasekhar limit, redshift, dark matter, exoplanets, gravitational waves.
- ☐ Learn Indian heritage: Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Jantar Mantar, nakshatras and Saptarishi names (Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasishtha).
- ☐ Update space-programme status: Chandrayaan-3, Aditya-L1, SpaDeX, Axiom-4, NISAR, Gaganyaan G1 timeline, Bharatiya Antariksh Station.
- ☐ Prepare a governance note on light pollution, dark-sky reserves (Hanle, Pench, Kolli Hills) and satellite constellations.

HOBBY 20

Bird Watching & Wildlife

Appears in DAFs as: birding, bird photography, wildlife watching, nature walks, trekking, watching wildlife documentaries. Boards use it to test ecological literacy and local knowledge, then pivot quickly to sanctuaries, conservation law and the development-versus-environment dilemma.

What the board is really testing

- Field reality: which birds you have logged, where, which season, and with what method (eBird, counts)
- Local knowledge of your home district and state: sanctuaries, state bird and animal, Ramsar sites
- Grasp of conservation law and institutions (WPA 1972, CAMPA, NTCA, Ramsar, CMS)
- Balance on development versus ecology: renewable power lines versus the Great Indian Bustard
- Ability to use citizen science and communities in administration

Basics, history and rules

- India records about 1,350 bird species; the **Central Asian Flyway** brings winter migrants such as bar-headed geese, Amur falcons and shorebirds.
- Birding ethics: no nest photography or playback near breeding birds, keep distance, stay on trails, and never bait or disturb roosts.
- **Citizen science:** eBird checklists, Great Backyard Bird Count (February), Asian Waterbird Census (January, run in India by BNHS and Wetlands International) and the Big Bird Day.
- Habitats to know: wetlands, grasslands, Western Ghats and North-East forests, mangroves, and the Thar desert.

India story and icons

- **Salim Ali** (1896–1987), the 'Birdman of India', wrote *The Book of Indian Birds*; his birthday, 12 November, is observed as National Bird Day in India.
- Bombay Natural History Society (1883), Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON, Coimbatore) and Nature Conservation Foundation anchor bird research.
- Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, is a Ramsar site and UNESCO World Heritage Site; Chilika is India's first Ramsar site (with Keoladeo, 1981).
- Pangti, Nagaland, turned from Amur falcon hunting to protection after community campaigns from 2012–13, a model of community conservation.
- Nature photographers and filmmakers often cited: Sudhir Shivaram, Dhritiman Mukherjee, and Mike Pandey (Green Oscars).

Institutions, policy and law

- **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972**, amended in 2022, cut schedules to four and added CITES provisions; Article 48A and 51A(g) give constitutional backing.
- Ramsar Convention 1971; Convention on Migratory Species (India hosted CMS COP13 at Gandhinagar, 2020); National Action Plan for the Central Asian Flyway.

- Vulture crisis: veterinary diclofenac banned 2006; ketoprofen and aceclofenac banned for animals in 2023; Vulture Action Plan 2020–25.
- **M.K. Ranjitsinh v Union of India**: the Supreme Court links the Great Indian Bustard to the right to be free from climate change effects (March 2024).
- Forest Conservation Amendment Act 2023 (Van Sanrakshan evam Samvardhan Adhiniyam) and Biological Diversity Amendment Act 2023 reshape forest and biodiversity governance.

Current developments 2025–26

- On 19 December 2025 the Supreme Court set GIB **priority areas** at 14,013 sq km in Rajasthan and 740 sq km in Gujarat, with undergrounding of critical power lines within two years.
- India's Ramsar sites reached 103 by October 2026 with Sukhna Wetland (Chandigarh) and Sauj Jheel (UP); Tamil Nadu leads with 20.
- Great Backyard Bird Count 2026 (13–16 February): about 7,300 Indian participants logged nearly 65,000 checklists and about 1,092 species; India ranked second globally in checklists.
- The Delhi Bird Atlas 2025 recorded 471 species, calling Delhi the world's second most bird-diverse capital.
- **State of India's Birds 2023** remains the key benchmark: 178 species of high conservation concern; grassland, wetland and specialist insectivore birds decline fastest.

Science, economics or social angle

- Birds are **indicator species**: declines signal habitat loss, pesticide load, wetland drainage and climate shifts.
- Ecosystem services: pollination, seed dispersal, pest control and carcass disposal by vultures; the vulture crash raised rabies and public-health costs.
- **Invasive species** (Lantana, Senna spectabilis in Wayanad, Prosopis juliflora) degrade habitats, cut fodder for herbivores and push wildlife into farms.
- Bird tourism and festivals (Chilika, Mangalajodi, Thol) give boatmen and ex-poachers guide jobs, aligning livelihoods with conservation.

Administrative and ethical linkages

- District officers can use **wetland mitras**, eco-development committees and waterbird census data for planning.
- Human–wildlife conflict needs quick compensation, early-warning systems, invasive species removal and corridor protection.
- Development projects require bird-safe design: bird diverters on power lines, wind-farm siting outside flyways, and wetlands kept out of urban zoning.
- Ethical issue: balancing renewable-energy targets with endangered species, and livelihoods of fishers and graziers with protected-area rules.

Asked in real interviews

1. What is citizen science? (asked of a bird-photography candidate) [2023]
2. Tell us about nature photography. Who are some famous nature photographers in India? [2023]
3. What is the state animal of Madhya Pradesh and where is it found? Which special species is found in Kanha National Park? [2023]
4. How many wildlife sanctuaries are there in Tamil Nadu? (hobby: watching wildlife) [2024]

5. What issues do invasive species cause? Which invasive species is behind human-wildlife conflict in Wayanad? [2025]
6. What is the status of Sariska Tiger Reserve and how has the government rehabilitated tigers there? [2021]
7. Is India doing enough for the environment? How does development threaten the environment, in layman's terms? [2021]
8. Tell us about a famous bird sanctuary in your area. [2022]
9. What is waterfall trekking? Have you been to Dudhsagar? Which is the longest trek you have done? [2024]

Expected questions

1. Name five birds you have seen in your home district and one winter migrant. Where does it come from?
2. Why are vultures disappearing, and what has the government done?
3. Should renewable-energy transmission lines be stopped to save the Great Indian Bustard?
4. What is the Central Asian Flyway and why does it matter to India?
5. How many Ramsar sites does India have? Name the ones in your state.
6. As DM, how would you resolve conflict between fishers and a bird sanctuary on a wetland?
7. Is eBird data reliable enough for policy?
8. A wind-power company wants land in a bustard habitat in your district. What will you do?

Model answer: Renewable energy or the Great Indian Bustard: which should India prioritise?

I don't think it has to be either-or. Only about 150 bustards survive, and overhead power lines are a leading cause of their deaths. In December 2025 the Supreme Court set revised priority areas of about 14,013 sq km in Rajasthan and ordered critical lines undergrounded within two years, while allowing clean energy outside them. That is a sensible balance. As an administrator I would map habitats into land-allocation decisions, move power corridors early, fit bird diverters where undergrounding is not possible, and involve local Bishnoi and grazier communities in monitoring.

Model answer: How can a bird watcher's hobby help district administration?

Birds are cheap indicators of ecosystem health. Data from citizen-science platforms such as eBird and the Great Backyard Bird Count, where India ranked second in checklists in 2026, can show which wetlands are degrading. As a collector I would use Asian Waterbird Census results to prioritise wetland restoration under the Amrit Dharohar approach, train local youth as bird guides, and enlist wetland mitras to report encroachment. Pangti in Nagaland shows that when communities earn from birds, former hunters become protectors. So the hobby gives me data and also a model of participation.

Common traps

- Listing birding but unable to name common birds of your own district, the state bird, or the nearest sanctuary and Ramsar site.
- Taking an absolutist 'stop all development' stance; boards want a balanced, solution-oriented view.
- Confusing national parks, sanctuaries, tiger reserves and Ramsar sites, or quoting stale Ramsar counts.

Preparation checklist

- ☐ Make a personal checklist of 25 birds you have actually seen, with locations and seasons; know one migrant's route.
- ☐ List your home state's national parks, sanctuaries, Ramsar sites, state bird and state animal.
- ☐ Revise WPA 1972 (2022 amendment), Ramsar, CMS, the GIB judgments (2021, March 2024, December 2025) and vulture drug bans.
- ☐ Read State of India's Birds 2023 highlights and the latest GBBC and Asian Waterbird Census results.
- ☐ Prepare views on invasive species, human-wildlife conflict compensation and bird-safe infrastructure.

Sources

280 web sources were used, mainly: *forumias.com* (153), *newsonair.gov.in* (11), *en.wikipedia.org* (7), *theprint.in* (6), *nextias.com* (6), *outlookindia.com* (6), *t.me* (5), *drishtiias.com* (5), *businesstoday.in* (3), *ianslive.in* (3). Questions are paraphrased from candidate-shared transcripts; facts on current developments were checked in October 2026.

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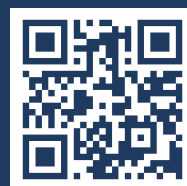
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These candidates from Lukmaan IAS achieved remarkable ranks in UPSC CSE 2025, highlighting the institute's strong support in Ethics, Essay, test series, and optional subjects like Public Administration.

Yashaswi Raj Vardhan (AIR 11): Secured highest rank for **Public Administration optional (291 marks, top score)**. Enrolled in Public Admin Foundation 2023, Crash Course 2025, and Ethics Crash Course 2025. Achieved in second attempt through discipline and consistency.

Akansh Dhull (AIR 3): Scored 1057 total marks in fourth attempt. Courses: Ethics Test Series 2023, Case Studies 2023, Essay Mock Test 2023, IGP. Standout scores: **Ethics 134, Essay 119, Interview 193**. B.Com from SRCC (DU); from Chandigarh/Haryana; optional Commerce & Accountancy.

Rajeshwari Suve M (AIR 2): Enrolled in Ethics Test Series 2023 & 2025. From Vadipatti, Madurai (TN); B.E. Electrical & Electronics from Anna University; optional Sociology. Serving as Deputy Collector (Training) in TN govt post-TNPSC Group 1.

Ishan Bhatnagar (AIR 5): From Lucknow (UP), resides in Bhopal (MP); born 2001. Courses: GS Mains Test Series 2023, Essay & Ethics Test Series 2025. Son of Amitabh Bhatnagar (Good Governance Institute) and Prof. Vinita Bhatnagar.

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