

SHIVOM ERA IAS ACADEMY

Excellence in Civil Services Preparation · Agra, Uttar Pradesh

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES MAINS EXAMINATION

GENERAL STUDIES — PAPER II

Time Allowed: 3 Hours

Maximum Marks: 250

Total Questions: 20

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. There are 20 questions printed in English.
2. All questions are compulsory.
3. Marks carried by each question are indicated against it.
4. Section A: 10 questions × 10 marks = 100 marks (Answer in ~150 words).
5. Section B: 10 questions × 15 marks = 150 marks (Answer in ~250 words).
6. Word limits should be strictly adhered to.
7. Do not write anything outside the answer box.

SECTION A — SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS (10 Marks each | ~150 words)

Q1.

The Basic Structure Doctrine, established in Kesavananda Bharati (1973), has been described as the 'conscience of the Constitution.' Examine its evolution and its significance in protecting constitutional democracy in India.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q2.

Cooperative federalism is an ideal; competitive federalism is the reality of Centre-State relations in India. Critically examine this statement with reference to fiscal transfers, legislation, and Governor's role.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q3.

The anti-defection law has been more effective in preventing floor-crossing than in ensuring legislative accountability. Critically analyze its impact on parliamentary democracy and inner-party democracy.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q4.

Judicial overreach and judicial activism are two sides of the same coin — one seen as threat, the other as remedy. Examine with reference to recent Supreme Court judgments on executive accountability.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q5.

E-governance in India has transformed service delivery but has simultaneously created a new digital divide. Evaluate the achievements and limitations of India's e-governance initiatives.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q6.

The Right to Information Act (2005) has been called a 'sunshine law,' yet its effectiveness has been progressively diluted. Examine the structural challenges to RTI implementation in India.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q7.

BRICS has evolved from a Goldman Sachs economic concept to a geopolitical platform challenging Western dominance. Assess its relevance and limitations as a multilateral grouping for India.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q8.

India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy has yielded mixed results — strong partnerships with some neighbours but persistent tensions with others. Critically evaluate India's success in the South Asian neighbourhood.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q9.

The ASEAN-India relationship has transitioned from a 'Look East' to an 'Act East' orientation. Examine the strategic, economic, and cultural dimensions of this partnership.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

Q10.

India's voting behaviour at the United Nations has increasingly reflected strategic autonomy over bloc alignment. Examine this trend with reference to recent UNSC and UNGA votes.

(10 Marks | 150 words)

SECTION B — LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS (15 Marks each | ~250 words)

Q11.

The Governor's office has been repeatedly criticized as an instrument of the Centre rather than a constitutional functionary. Critically examine the constitutional provisions, judicial interpretations, and recent controversies surrounding Gubernatorial discretion.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q12.

India's parliamentary committee system has the potential to make legislation more deliberative and executive accountability more rigorous, yet it remains underutilized. Analyze the structural and political reasons for this underperformance and suggest reforms.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q13.

The Supreme Court's collegium system for judicial appointments has been defended as a bulwark against executive interference but criticized for opacity and accountability deficits. Critically examine the debate over judicial appointments reform in India.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q14.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) remains an aspirational goal for India despite schemes like Ayushman Bharat. Critically examine the structural barriers — financial, infrastructural, and human resource — that impede progress toward UHC.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q15.

India's National Education Policy 2020 promises transformative reform but faces formidable implementation challenges at the State level. Critically evaluate the key provisions of NEP 2020 and assess the feasibility of its targets.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q16.

Social justice in India has progressively expanded from caste-based affirmative action to encompass gender, disability, and economic criteria. Critically examine this evolution and assess whether the current reservation framework adequately addresses intersectional disadvantage.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q17.

India-China relations are characterized by the paradox of deep economic interdependence and unresolved border disputes. Critically analyze the state of bilateral relations post-Galwan (2020) and assess the prospects for normalization.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q18.

India-Pakistan relations remain hostage to the terrorism-dialogue paradox — India insisting on 'talks and terror cannot go together' while Pakistan presents dialogue as the solution to all disputes. Critically examine the structural impediments to normalized relations.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q19.

The United Nations faces a crisis of legitimacy and effectiveness — its Security Council architecture reflects a 1945 world order increasingly at odds with 21st-century realities. Examine India's case for UNSC permanent membership and the prospects for UN reform.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

Q20.

India's foreign policy under the doctrine of 'strategic autonomy' has allowed it to simultaneously engage the US, Russia, and China. Critically evaluate whether this multi-alignment is a sustainable long-term strategy or a temporary balancing act.

(15 Marks | 250 words)

— END OF QUESTION PAPER —

MODEL ANSWER OUTLINES (Selected Questions)

Q11 — Governor's Office & Gubernatorial Discretion (15 marks)

- Constitutional basis: Arts. 153–167 — Governor as constitutional head vs. agent of Centre
- Key discretionary powers: appointment of CM, withholding assent, reserve bills for President
- Judicial pronouncements: Shamsher Singh (1974), Nabam Rebia (2016), recent SC observations
- Recent controversies: Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Punjab Governors vs. elected governments (2022–24)
- Sarkaria Commission & Punchhi Commission recommendations on Governor's role
- Conclusion: Need for codified guidelines and accountability mechanisms for Gubernatorial discretion

Q17 — India-China Relations post-Galwan (15 marks)

- Historical context: 1962 war, Panchsheel, boundary dispute — LAC not delimited
- Galwan Valley clash (June 2020): first casualties in 45 years; rupture in relations
- Economic paradox: bilateral trade ~\$136 billion despite military standoff
- Diplomatic steps: Corps Commander talks, partial disengagement at friction points
- Strategic implications: India's tilt toward Quad, supply chain diversification
- Structural barriers: asymmetric power, Taiwan factor, BRI vs. India's connectivity vision
- Conclusion: Competitive coexistence likely; full normalization contingent on LAC stability

Q14 — Universal Health Coverage Barriers (15 marks)

- UHC defined: financial protection + access to quality services for all
- Ayushman Bharat — PM-JAY: 55 crore beneficiaries but only hospitalization covered
- Structural barriers: India spends ~2.1% GDP on health vs. WHO recommended 5%
- Human resource crisis: doctor-population ratio below WHO norm; rural-urban skew
- Infrastructure: primary health centres non-functional; referral chain broken
- Out-of-pocket expenditure still ~47% — catastrophic health spending persists
- Conclusion: UHC requires fiscal expansion, primary care strengthening, not just insurance schemes

EXAMINER'S NOTE — What Earns 7+ / 10

- ◆ A clear INTRODUCTION that frames the constitutional/policy tension in the question.
- ◆ MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS — legal, political, administrative, and comparative angles.
- ◆ CITE specific Articles, cases, committees, or schemes — vague answers score 5 or below.
- ◆ FORWARD-LOOKING CONCLUSION — suggest reforms or way forward, not just summarize.
- ◆ For IR questions: use data (trade figures, agreements) and recent events (post-2022).
- ◆ Use DIRECTIVE WORDS correctly: 'Critically examine' = analyze strengths AND weaknesses.