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DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS

BEST FOR UPSC | UP PCS EXAM

DATE : SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

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DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM STATIC PART

Q1. With reference to the **Bhakti traditions in medieval India**, consider the following statements:

1. The emergence of several Bhakti traditions enabled devotional practices to develop through regional languages and diverse social settings, thereby reducing the exclusive dependence of religious expression on Sanskritic learning.
2. The Bhakti movement represented a single, centrally organised religious movement whose doctrines, institutional structures and social objectives were essentially uniform across different regions of the subcontinent.

Which one of the following is correct?

(a) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, and Statement 2 is the correct explanation for Statement 1.

(b) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, but Statement 2 is not the correct explanation for Statement 1.

(c) Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is incorrect.

(d) Statement 1 is incorrect, but Statement 2 is correct.

Answer: (c)

Detailed Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct. The Bhakti traditions significantly expanded the possibilities of religious expression through **vernacular languages, devotional poetry, music and personal forms of worship**. Saints and poets composed works in languages accessible to wider sections of society rather than relying exclusively upon elite Sanskritic traditions.

However, this should not be interpreted as meaning that Bhakti simply rejected Sanskrit or Brahmanical traditions. The interaction between vernacular devotional traditions and established religious institutions was considerably more complex.

Statement 2 is incorrect. There was **no single, centrally organised Bhakti movement** possessing a uniform theology or institutional structure throughout India. The term "Bhakti movement" encompasses diverse traditions emerging at different times and places.

The **Alvars and Nayanars** of South India, the Virashaiva/Lingayat tradition, the Vaishnava traditions of North India, the Sant traditions and the devotional traditions associated with figures such as Kabir, Mirabai, Surdas, Tulsidas and Chaitanya differed significantly in their theological orientations, social contexts and forms of institutional organisation.

Some traditions challenged aspects of caste hierarchy and ritual authority, while others operated within broader devotional frameworks that did not necessarily reject existing social structures.

The deeper analytical point is that **vernacularisation and religious transformation were interconnected but regionally differentiated processes**. Bhakti provided new forms of devotional participation, but its social consequences varied across time and place.

Hence, the correct answer is **(c)**.

Q2. Which one of the following best explains the ecological significance of **ecotones**?

(a) They are completely isolated ecosystems in which species from adjoining ecosystems cannot survive.

(b) They are transition zones between two ecosystems that may contain species from both adjoining ecosystems as well as organisms particularly adapted to the transitional conditions.

(c) They are ecosystems that necessarily possess lower biodiversity than either of the ecosystems they separate.

(d) They are artificial ecological boundaries created exclusively through human land-use practices.

Answer: (b)

Detailed Explanation:

An **ecotone** is a transition zone between two distinct ecosystems or ecological communities. It may contain species characteristic of both adjoining ecosystems as well as species specially adapted to the environmental conditions of the transition zone.

For example, the transition between a forest and grassland can display ecological characteristics of both systems while supporting organisms specifically adapted to intermediate conditions.

Ecotones can sometimes exhibit the **edge effect**, whereby species diversity or abundance may be greater than in the adjoining communities because organisms from both ecosystems can occur there and additional edge-specialist species may also be present.

Option (a) is incorrect because ecotones are characterised precisely by interaction between adjoining ecological systems.

Option (c) is incorrect because an ecotone does not necessarily possess lower biodiversity. Under appropriate conditions, biodiversity may actually increase because of species overlap and edge effects.

Option (d) is incorrect because ecotones are primarily **natural ecological transition zones**, although human activities can create or modify ecological boundaries.

The UPSC-level conceptual trap is to treat ecosystems as sharply bounded entities. In reality, ecological boundaries are often **gradual and dynamic**, with substantial interaction between neighbouring communities.

Hence, **(b)** is correct.

Q3. With reference to **national income accounting**, consider the following statements:

1. An increase in nominal GDP does not necessarily imply a corresponding increase in the physical volume of goods and services produced.
2. Real GDP attempts to isolate changes in the volume of production by removing the effect of changes in prices.
3. If nominal GDP increases while real GDP remains unchanged, the entire increase in nominal GDP must represent an increase in employment.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Answer: (b)

Detailed Explanation:

Statements 1 and 2 are correct, while Statement 3 is incorrect.

Statement 1 is correct. Nominal GDP measures the value of final goods and services at **current prices**. Therefore, its increase can result from either an increase in actual production, an increase in prices, or a combination of both.

For example, if an economy produces exactly the same quantity of goods but their prices rise by 10%, nominal GDP may increase even though the physical volume of production remains unchanged.

Statement 2 is correct. Real GDP measures production using prices from a chosen **base year** or through an equivalent constant-price methodology. It therefore attempts to distinguish changes in output volume from changes caused merely by price movements.

This distinction is essential for interpreting economic growth. If nominal GDP rises by 12% while real GDP rises by only 5%, the difference is substantially associated with changes in the price level rather than purely with additional real production.

Statement 3 is incorrect. If nominal GDP rises while real GDP remains unchanged, the increase could be explained by higher prices. It does not follow that employment increased. In fact, depending upon productivity, labour demand and other economic conditions, employment may remain unchanged or even decline.

The question tests three distinct macroeconomic concepts:

Nominal GDP → current-price value

Real GDP → inflation-adjusted measure of production

Employment → labour-market outcome

These variables are related but are **not interchangeable indicators**.

Thus, **two statements are correct — (b).**

Q4. With reference to the **Indian Parliament**, consider the following statements:

1. A Bill does not become an Act merely because it has been passed by both Houses of Parliament; constitutional requirements relating to presidential assent must also be fulfilled.
2. In the case of an ordinary Bill, the President may return the Bill to Parliament for reconsideration, but if Parliament passes it again, the President is constitutionally bound to give assent.
3. The President's power to return a Bill for reconsideration applies equally to a Money Bill.
4. A Constitutional Amendment Bill, once duly passed in accordance with Article 368, is presented to the President, who is constitutionally required to give assent.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) Only three

(d) All four

Answer: (c)

Detailed Explanation:

Statements 1, 2 and 4 are correct, while Statement 3 is incorrect.

Statement 1 is correct. Parliamentary passage alone does not complete the legislative process. Under **Article 111**, a Bill passed by Parliament is presented to the President for assent. Upon assent, the Bill becomes law, subject to the constitutional scheme applicable to that category of legislation.

Statement 2 is correct. In the case of a Bill other than a Money Bill, the President may return the Bill for reconsideration. If Parliament passes the Bill again, with or without amendments, the President **cannot withhold assent** to the reconsidered Bill under Article 111.

The important distinction is between the President's power of reconsideration and an absolute veto.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Article 111 specifically excludes a **Money Bill** from the President's power to return the Bill for reconsideration. A Money Bill can be either assented to or withheld from assent, but it cannot be returned under this particular constitutional mechanism.

Statement 4 is correct. Article 368(2) provides that after a Constitutional Amendment Bill has been duly passed by Parliament, and where required ratified by the requisite number of State Legislatures, it is presented to the President, who **shall give assent** to the Bill.

The question therefore tests the distinction between:

- Ordinary Bills;
- Money Bills; and
- Constitutional Amendment Bills.

The President's legislative powers are **not identical across these categories**. Treating Article 111 as a single uniform procedure is therefore misleading.

Hence, **three statements are correct — (c).**

Q5. Consider the following Assertion and the two Reasons given below:

Assertion:
A region located on the windward side of a major mountain range can receive substantially greater precipitation than a region situated on the leeward side of the same range.

Reason I:
As moist air is forced to rise along the windward slope, it expands and cools adiabatically, favouring condensation and precipitation.

Reason II:
After descending on the leeward side, the air generally becomes warmer and relatively drier, which can contribute to the development of a rain-shadow region.

Which one of the following is correct?

(a) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, and both of them explain the Assertion.

(b) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, but only Reason I explains the Assertion.

(c) Both Reason I and Reason II are correct, but only Reason II explains the Assertion.

(d) Reason I is correct, but Reason II is incorrect.

Answer: (a)

Detailed Explanation:

The Assertion is correct and describes the geographical phenomenon of **orographic precipitation and the rain-shadow effect**.

Reason I is correct. When moisture-laden air encounters a mountain barrier, it is forced to rise along the windward slope. As the air rises, atmospheric pressure decreases and the air expands. This expansion causes **adiabatic cooling**. When the air reaches its dew point, condensation occurs, producing clouds and precipitation.

Consequently, windward slopes can receive very high rainfall, particularly where moist maritime air is consistently forced against a mountain barrier.

Reason II is also correct. After crossing the mountain crest, the descending air on the leeward side undergoes compression and warming. Its relative humidity generally decreases, and therefore the leeward region receives substantially less precipitation. This produces the characteristic **rain-shadow effect**.

Both reasons are therefore causally connected to the Assertion.

A classic example is provided by the **Western Ghats**, where the western slopes receive substantial rainfall from the southwest monsoon, while areas east of the range are comparatively drier because they lie partly in the rain-shadow zone.

The phenomenon illustrates an important geographical principle: **mountain barriers redistribute precipitation spatially rather than simply increasing or decreasing rainfall uniformly across an entire region**.

However, the magnitude of the rain-shadow effect depends upon factors such as wind direction, mountain height, moisture content, atmospheric stability and seasonal circulation.

Therefore, both Reason I and Reason II correctly explain the Assertion.

Hence, (a) is the correct answer.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q1. With reference to the recent appointment of Air Marshal Jitendra Mishra as the first full-time Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, consider the following statements:

1. The appointment represents an institutional move towards professionalising the administrative and operational management of the Trust.
2. The CEO is a constitutional office created under the Constitution of India for administering religious endowments of national importance.

Which one of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (a)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust appointed retired Air Marshal Jitendra Mishra as its first full-time CEO in September 2026. The appointment is linked with strengthening the Trust's administrative, operational and compliance mechanisms. Mishra had earlier served as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Air Command and retired from the Indian Air Force in April 2026.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The CEO of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust is not a constitutional office. The Trust is a separate legal/religious trust constituted pursuant to the Supreme Court's directions in the Ayodhya matter; its CEO is an internal administrative position of the Trust.

The conceptual trap is to confuse an institution of national religious significance with a constitutional or statutory office. Administrative prominence does not by itself confer constitutional status.

Q2. The recently released 'RAKSHA' document is primarily associated with which of the following?

(a) A national framework for regulating private military companies operating in India

(b) India's long-term defence diplomacy roadmap for global partnerships

(c) A tri-service doctrine exclusively dealing with space warfare

(d) A financial framework for restructuring India's defence pension expenditure

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

'RAKSHA' is a defence diplomacy document released by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on 3 September 2026. It provides a strategic roadmap and vision for India's global defence partnerships over the next ten years. Its broad pillars include strategic partnerships, capacity building, indigenous defence exports and maritime security.

A particularly important conceptual distinction is that RAKSHA is a **defence diplomacy framework**, rather than a purely military operational doctrine. It seeks to integrate security cooperation, defence partnerships, capacity building, indigenous defence manufacturing and India's maritime-security role.

The framework also envisages India strengthening its role as a Net Security Provider and First Responder in the Indian Ocean Region.

Q3. With reference to the global bond sell-off witnessed in 2026, consider the following statements:

1. A rise in bond yields generally implies a fall in the market price of existing fixed-coupon bonds, other things remaining equal.
2. Persistent inflation expectations can contribute to higher long-term bond yields because investors may demand greater compensation for the erosion of real returns.
3. A global rise in sovereign bond yields can affect governments, corporations and households by raising broader borrowing costs.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Answer: (c)

Explanation:

All three statements are correct.

Statement 1 is correct. Bond prices and yields generally move inversely. When newly issued bonds offer higher yields, existing lower-coupon bonds become relatively less attractive, causing their market prices to fall.

Statement 2 is correct. If investors expect inflation to remain elevated, they may demand higher nominal yields to compensate for the expected reduction in the real purchasing power of future interest and principal payments.

Statement 3 is correct. Higher sovereign yields can transmit through the financial system. Government borrowing becomes more expensive, corporate borrowing costs can rise, and household credit conditions may tighten.

The 2026 global bond sell-off has been associated with a combination of inflation concerns, higher energy prices, expectations of tighter monetary policy and concerns over elevated public debt and borrowing requirements. Reuters reported that government borrowing costs across major economies had risen to multi-year or multi-decade highs amid these pressures.

The deeper UPSC-level point is that a bond-market sell-off is not merely a movement in government securities. Through benchmark yields, it can influence the pricing of mortgages, corporate debt, government borrowing and asset valuations across economies.

Q4. With reference to the Bar Council of India (BCI), consider the following statements:

1. The BCI derives its statutory functions primarily from the Advocates Act, 1961.
2. It is empowered to lay down standards of professional conduct and etiquette for advocates.
3. It exercises general supervision and control over State Bar Councils.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Answer: (c)

Explanation:

All three statements are correct.

Statement 1 is correct. The Advocates Act, 1961 provides the statutory framework for the Bar Council of India and State Bar Councils. Section 4 specifically deals with the Bar Council of India, while Section 7 enumerates its functions.

Statement 2 is correct. Under Section 7, the BCI lays down standards of professional conduct and etiquette for advocates.

Statement 3 is correct. Section 7 also empowers the BCI to exercise general supervision and control over State Bar Councils.

Other functions of the BCI include promoting legal education, laying down standards of legal education, recognising universities whose law degrees qualify for enrolment, promoting and supporting law reform, and dealing with certain matters referred by State Bar Councils.

The important trap is to treat the BCI merely as a professional association. It is a **statutory regulatory body** established within the framework of the Advocates Act, 1961.

Q5. With reference to Aero India 2027, consider the following statements:

1. Aero India is a biennial aerospace and defence exhibition organised by the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence.
2. Aero India 2027 is scheduled to be held at Air Force Station Yelahanka in Bengaluru.
3. The 2027 edition is described officially as the 16th edition of Aero India.
4. The event is restricted exclusively to military personnel and government officials because its principal purpose is operational military training.

How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) Only three

(d) All four

Answer: (c)

Explanation:

Statements 1, 2 and 3 are correct, while Statement 4 is incorrect.

Statement 1 is correct. Aero India is India's flagship biennial aerospace exhibition, organised by the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, at Air Force Station Yelahanka, Bengaluru.

Statement 2 is correct. Aero India 2027 is scheduled for **8–12 February 2027** at Air Force Station Yelahanka, Bengaluru.

Statement 3 is correct. The official Aero India website describes Aero India 2027 as the **16th edition**.

Statement 4 is incorrect. Aero India is not an exclusively military event. It provides a platform involving defence industries, aerospace companies, technology experts, international delegations, investors and other stakeholders. The 2027 event also has business and public-facing components, including an Experience Zone for aviation enthusiasts, students and the general public.

The UPSC trap here is the distinction between a **defence exhibition** and a **military exercise**. Aero India facilitates technology showcasing, business development, international cooperation and defence-industrial engagement; it is not a military training exercise.

Q6. Consider the following geographical description:

It is a predominantly cold and dry region of southern South America, lying mainly east of the Andes and extending towards the Atlantic coast. Its aridity is strongly influenced by the rain-shadow effect of the Andes on the prevailing westerlies.

The region described above is:

(a) Atacama Desert

(b) Monte Desert

(c) Patagonian Desert

(d) Sechura Desert

Answer: (c)

Explanation:

The correct answer is **Patagonian Desert**.

The Patagonian Desert, also called the Patagonian Steppe, lies principally in Argentina, east of the Andes, with its landscape extending towards the Atlantic Ocean. Its distinctive aridity is strongly associated with the rain-shadow effect produced by the Andes. Moisture-bearing westerly air encounters the Andes, producing precipitation on the western side, while comparatively dry air descends on the eastern, leeward side.

The major conceptual distinction is:

- **Atacama Desert** → primarily along the Pacific coast of northern Chile and southern Peru; influenced strongly by subtropical subsidence, the cold Humboldt Current and coastal atmospheric conditions.
- **Patagonian Desert** → east of the Andes in southern South America; strongly associated with the Andes rain-shadow effect.
- **Monte Desert** → mainly in arid and semi-arid parts of Argentina north of/adjacent to Patagonia.
- **Sechura Desert** → principally along the northern Peruvian coast.

Thus, the combination of **southern South America + east of Andes + rain shadow + cold arid environment** points specifically to the Patagonian Desert.

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

GS Paper I – Geography

NCERT Reference: Class XI, *Fundamentals of Physical Geography*, Chapter 4 – *Distribution of Oceans and Continents* / Plate Tectonics

Q1. *"Plate tectonics transformed the understanding of landforms from a predominantly static description of the Earth's surface into a dynamic explanation of their origin and evolution."* Discuss how different types of plate boundaries generate contrasting geomorphic features. Also explain why the same plate boundary may produce both constructive and destructive geological processes.

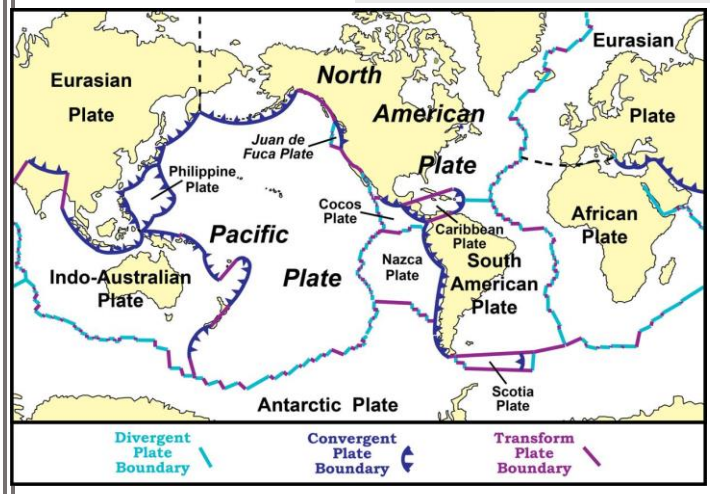
Sample Answer

Plate tectonics provides a unifying framework for explaining the large-scale architecture and continuing evolution of the Earth's lithosphere. According to the theory, the rigid lithosphere is divided into several major and minor plates that move over the relatively ductile asthenosphere. Their interaction produces earthquakes, volcanism, mountain building, ocean basins and several other geomorphic features.

The nature of landforms and geological activity depends substantially upon the type of plate boundary.

1. Divergent or constructive boundaries

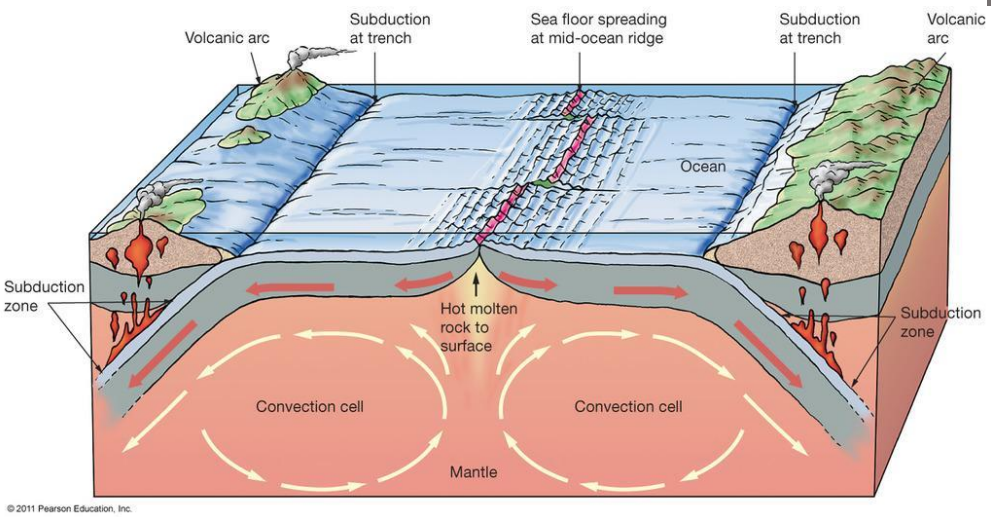
At divergent boundaries, two plates move away from each other. The underlying mantle undergoes partial melting and magma rises to occupy the space created by the separating plates.



This produces:

- Mid-oceanic ridges, such as the Mid-Atlantic Ridge;
- New oceanic crust;
- Rift valleys in continental regions;
- Shallow-focus earthquakes;
- Basaltic volcanism.

The East African Rift system illustrates continental rifting, while the Mid-Atlantic Ridge demonstrates oceanic divergence.



The term "constructive" is therefore appropriate because new lithosphere is generated. However, the process can simultaneously be destructive for existing continental landscapes through faulting, subsidence and volcanism.

2. Convergent boundaries

Convergent boundaries are particularly important because their geomorphic expression depends upon the nature of the interacting plates.

At an **oceanic-continental boundary**, the denser oceanic plate generally subducts beneath the continental plate. This produces trenches, volcanic mountain chains and intense seismicity. The Andes provide a classic example.

At an **oceanic-oceanic boundary**, one oceanic plate may subduct beneath another, producing deep-sea trenches and volcanic island arcs, as seen in parts of the western Pacific.

At a **continental-continental boundary**, neither plate readily undergoes deep subduction because of their relatively low densities. Instead, crustal shortening, folding and uplift generate major mountain systems. The Himalayas are the classic example.

Thus, convergence is simultaneously **destructive and constructive**: oceanic lithosphere may be destroyed through subduction, while mountains and new relief are constructed through crustal compression and uplift.

3. Transform boundaries

At transform boundaries, plates move horizontally past one another. Lithosphere is neither significantly created nor destroyed. Nevertheless, mechanical stress can accumulate along faults and be released through earthquakes.

The San Andreas Fault represents a well-known transform boundary.

Transform margins therefore demonstrate that major geomorphic and geological consequences do not necessarily require vertical movement or crustal creation/destruction.

Conclusion

Plate boundaries should not be viewed as rigid categories producing only one type of geological process. Divergence creates crust but also fractures and destabilises existing surfaces; convergence destroys oceanic lithosphere while constructing mountains; and transform motion preserves lithospheric area while generating substantial seismic hazards. The importance of plate tectonics lies precisely in its ability to explain these apparently contrasting processes within a single dynamic framework.

GS Paper II – Indian Politics and Nation-Building

NCERT Reference: Class XII, *Politics in India Since Independence*, Chapter 4 – *Challenges of Nation-Building*

Q2. *"The process of nation-building in post-Independence India involved not merely territorial integration, but the accommodation of diversity within a democratic constitutional framework."* Examine the significance of linguistic reorganisation of states in this context.

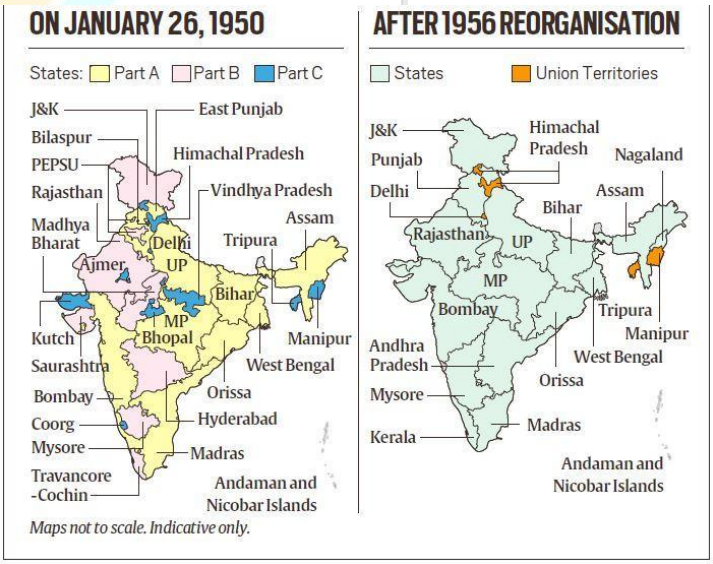
Sample Answer

The consolidation of India after Independence was a complex exercise in nation-building. Political integration was accompanied by the challenge of accommodating immense linguistic, cultural, regional and ethnic diversity. One of the most significant developments in this process was the reorganisation of states, particularly along linguistic lines.

At Independence, India's administrative boundaries were not necessarily aligned with linguistic or cultural identities. The leadership initially feared that linguistic states could strengthen regional identities at the expense of national unity. However, subsequent experience demonstrated that democratic accommodation of regional identities could actually strengthen national integration.

Background to linguistic reorganisation

The demand for linguistic states emerged strongly in the early years after Independence. The demand for a separate Andhra state became particularly significant following Potti Sriramulu's fast and death in 1952. Andhra State was subsequently created in 1953.



The government then appointed the **States Reorganisation Commission (SRC)** under Fazl Ali in 1953. The Commission submitted its report in 1955, and the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** substantially reorganised India's internal boundaries.

Why linguistic reorganisation mattered

First, it provided constitutional accommodation to regional identities.

Rather than treating linguistic consciousness as inherently anti-national, the Indian political system gradually recognised that people could possess strong regional identities while simultaneously identifying with the Indian nation.

Second, it reduced the political alienation associated with arbitrary administrative boundaries.

When administration and political representation corresponded more closely with linguistic communities, citizens could participate more effectively in democratic institutions.

Third, it demonstrated the flexibility of Indian federalism.

Indian federalism was not treated as a permanently frozen territorial arrangement. States could be reorganised through constitutional and legislative processes in response to changing political and social circumstances.

Fourth, linguistic states did not result in the disintegration of India.

Instead, the accommodation of linguistic aspirations helped prevent the conversion of regional demands into more radical anti-system movements in several instances.

However, linguistic reorganisation did not completely eliminate regional conflicts. Subsequent movements led to further state formation, including Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960, Haryana in 1966, and several northeastern states at later stages.

Critical dimension

Linguistic reorganisation also illustrates the tension between **unity and diversity**. Excessive centralisation could have produced alienation, while unlimited fragmentation could create administrative and political difficulties. India's experience demonstrates that democratic institutions can mediate this tension.

The deeper lesson is that national integration does not necessarily require cultural homogenisation. A plural society can preserve national unity by creating constitutional mechanisms through which regional aspirations receive legitimate political expression.

Conclusion

The linguistic reorganisation of states was therefore not merely an administrative exercise. It represented an important experiment in democratic nation-building. By recognising diversity within a constitutional framework, India demonstrated that **integration can be achieved through accommodation rather than uniformity**. The continuing reorganisation of India's federal map reflects the adaptive character of this approach.

GS Paper III – Governance

NCERT Reference: Class XII, *Indian Society* and Class XI, *Indian Economic Development* — supplemented with governance concepts

Q3. *"The Sevottam model shifts the focus of public administration from the delivery of government schemes to the quality of services experienced by citizens."* Discuss the major components of the Sevottam framework and examine its relevance for improving citizen-centric governance in India.

Sample Answer

The effectiveness of governance cannot be judged merely by the amount of money spent or the number of schemes launched. Ultimately, citizens experience the state through public services such as education, healthcare, sanitation, pensions, certificates, welfare benefits and grievance redressal. The **Sevottam model** was developed as a framework for improving the quality and citizen-centricity of public service delivery.

The term *Sevottam* combines the ideas of *seva* and *uttam*, implying excellence in service.

Major components

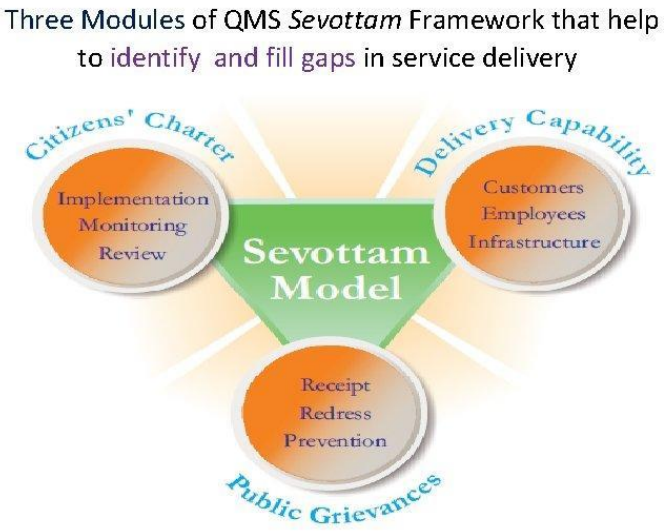
The framework broadly rests on three interconnected elements.

1. Citizen's Charter

The first component is the formulation and effective implementation of a Citizen's Charter.

A meaningful charter should specify:

- services to be provided;
- standards and timelines;
- responsibilities of the service provider;
- mechanisms for obtaining information; and
- avenues for complaint and redressal.



However, a charter has limited value if it merely lists departmental promises without measurable service standards.

2. Public Grievance Redressal

The second component involves establishing mechanisms through which citizens can report service failures and obtain remedies.

An effective grievance system should provide:

- easy accessibility;
- time-bound disposal;
- clear responsibility;
- tracking of complaints;
- escalation mechanisms; and
- institutional learning from recurring grievances.

Thus, grievance redressal should not merely close individual complaints but also identify systemic deficiencies.

3. Service Delivery Capability

The third component concerns the organisational capacity required to deliver services consistently.

This involves:

- process improvement;
- employee training;
- performance monitoring;
- technological support;
- institutional accountability; and
- continuous assessment of service quality.

Relevance to Indian governance

The Sevottam approach is particularly relevant because India's governance challenge increasingly involves the **last mile of implementation**.

A welfare scheme may have adequate budgetary allocation but still produce poor outcomes because of:

- delays;
- information asymmetry;
- exclusion errors;
- procedural complexity;
- inadequate staffing;
- weak monitoring; or
- poor grievance mechanisms.

Sevottam attempts to shift the administrative question from **"Was the scheme implemented?"** to **"Was the citizen actually served effectively?"**

Digital governance can strengthen this framework through online applications, tracking systems, electronic service delivery and data-based monitoring. However, excessive digitisation can itself create exclusion if citizens lack connectivity, digital literacy or accessible assistance.

Therefore, citizen-centric governance requires a combination of technology and human institutional capacity.

Challenges

Implementation remains difficult because of bureaucratic silos, weak accountability, unrealistic service standards, inadequate grievance capacity and limited feedback mechanisms. Citizen Charters can become symbolic documents if departments do not connect them with performance evaluation.

Moreover, service quality should be assessed not merely by departmental output but by **citizen outcomes**.

Way forward

A stronger Sevottam-oriented system should include:

- measurable service standards;
- independent citizen feedback;
- time-bound grievance resolution;
- social audits where appropriate;
- outcome-based performance indicators;
- simplified procedures;
- assisted digital services; and
- regular review of Citizen's Charters.

Conclusion

The significance of Sevottam lies in its philosophical shift from **government-centric administration to citizen-centric public service delivery**. Its successful implementation can strengthen trust between citizens and institutions by making public administration more responsive, transparent and accountable.

GS Paper IV – Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

Q4. *"Integrity is tested not when ethical choices are obvious, but when competing legitimate interests make every available option morally costly."* Discuss with suitable examples from public administration. How should a civil servant deal with such ethical dilemmas?

Sample Answer

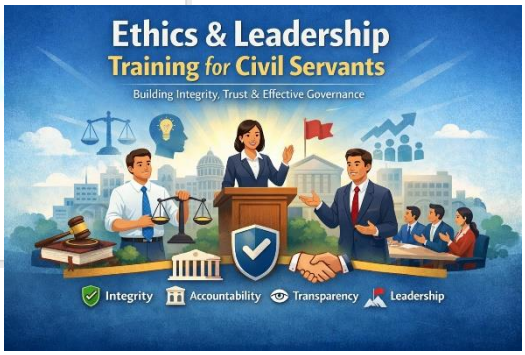
Ethical decision-making in public administration is rarely limited to choosing between an obviously right and an obviously wrong option. Civil servants frequently encounter situations in which two or more legitimate values conflict with each other. For example, transparency may conflict with privacy, administrative efficiency with procedural fairness, immediate relief with long-term sustainability, or political responsiveness with institutional neutrality.

Therefore, **integrity is not merely adherence to rules; it involves consistency between ethical principles, professional duties and public interest even under competing pressures.**

Nature of ethical dilemmas

An ethical dilemma arises when an individual faces competing moral obligations and cannot satisfy all of them simultaneously.

Consider a district administrator during a natural disaster. Strict adherence to procurement procedures may ensure accountability, but immediate emergency procurement may be necessary to save lives. Conversely, excessive relaxation of procedures may create opportunities for corruption.



The dilemma is therefore not simply "rules versus no rules"; it is about determining how rules should be applied while protecting the underlying public purpose.

Ethical principles relevant to civil servants

1. Public interest

The ultimate purpose of public administration is the welfare of citizens. Decisions should therefore be evaluated against their consequences for the larger public.

2. Integrity

A civil servant should avoid using public authority for personal gain or favouritism.

3. Impartiality

Benefits and burdens should not be allocated based on caste, religion, political affiliation, personal relationships or other irrelevant considerations.

4. Transparency and accountability

Decisions involving public resources should ordinarily be capable of being explained and scrutinised.

5. Compassion

Rule-based administration without sensitivity to human circumstances can become insensitive and unjust.

How should ethical dilemmas be handled?

A civil servant can follow a structured process.

First, identify all stakeholders and competing interests.

Second, distinguish legal obligations from merely convenient administrative practices.

Third, identify the core values involved—justice, fairness, transparency, compassion, efficiency, accountability and public welfare.

Fourth, consider alternative courses of action and their short- and long-term consequences.

Fifth, choose the option that maximises legitimate public interest while remaining within the constitutional and legal framework.

Sixth, document the reasoning wherever appropriate. Documentation protects institutional accountability and discourages arbitrary decision-making.

Example

Suppose a government hospital has one vacant emergency bed and two patients require it. One patient has arrived earlier, while another has a significantly greater immediate risk of death.

A mechanical first-come-first-served approach may protect procedural equality, whereas prioritising the more critical patient may better reflect the ethical principle of saving life. A transparent, pre-established triage protocol can reconcile these competing considerations better than personal discretion.

Constitutional morality

For Indian civil servants, ethical conduct should ultimately be anchored in constitutional values such as justice, equality, liberty, dignity and fraternity. Constitutional morality is particularly important when administrative decisions affect vulnerable groups.

Conclusion

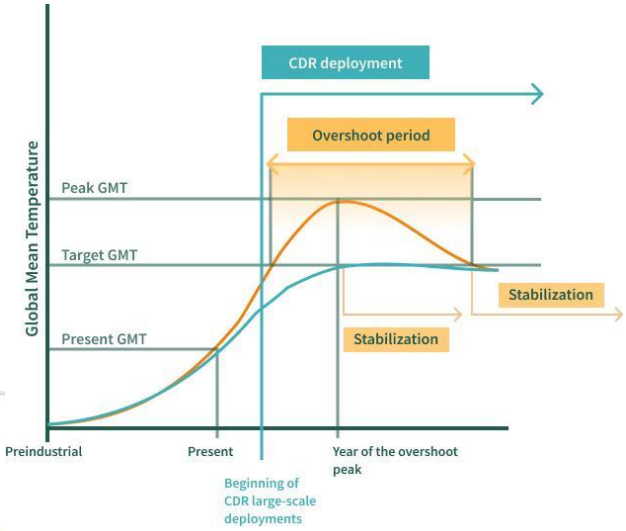
Ethical administration does not mean eliminating discretion; it means **making discretion principled, transparent and accountable**. Integrity is demonstrated when an officer can explain not merely what decision was taken, but why it was consistent with law, constitutional values and legitimate public interest.

GS Paper III – Current Affairs: Climate Change

Q5. *"The policy challenge after crossing the 1.5°C threshold is not to treat the threshold as a point of no return, but to minimise the magnitude and duration of the overshoot."* In the light of UNEP's **Limiting Overshoot** report, discuss the implications of an "overshoot, peak and decline" pathway for global climate governance, mitigation and adaptation.

Sample Answer

The **UNEP Limiting Overshoot** report, released in September 2026, addresses an increasingly important climate-policy problem: the possibility that global warming will temporarily exceed the 1.5°C temperature goal before potentially declining later. The report argues that exceeding 1.5°C should not be interpreted as abandonment of the Paris Agreement objective. Instead, the magnitude and duration of the overshoot must be minimised, followed by a decline in global temperature.



The concept can be understood as an **"overshoot, peak and decline" pathway**. Global temperature first exceeds 1.5°C, reaches a peak, and subsequently declines through sustained reductions in greenhouse-gas concentrations and carefully governed carbon dioxide removal.

Why the magnitude of overshoot matters

The central insight is that **every additional fraction of a degree matters**.

Higher peak warming increases risks to:

- food security;
- water availability;
- human health;
- ecosystems;
- coastal settlements;
- infrastructure; and
- economic systems.

Similarly, a longer duration above 1.5°C increases the likelihood of crossing climatic tipping points and adaptation limits. UNEP identifies risks involving major ice sheets, the Amazon rainforest and the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation among the concerns associated with higher warming.

Therefore, the objective cannot simply be to achieve a later temperature decline. The **peak itself must be minimised**.

Implications for mitigation

The first priority remains rapid reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions.

This requires:

1. accelerated transition away from fossil fuels;
2. rapid reductions in carbon dioxide emissions;
3. substantial methane reductions;
4. improvements in energy efficiency;

5. transformation of energy supply and demand;
6. decarbonisation of hard-to-abate sectors; and
7. strengthening of climate finance.

The report is particularly important because it prevents carbon dioxide removal from becoming an excuse for delayed mitigation. UNEP stresses that carbon dioxide removal can contribute to temperature decline but cannot substitute for rapid emissions reduction.

Role of Carbon Dioxide Removal

Carbon dioxide removal may include approaches such as afforestation and other methods of removing atmospheric carbon dioxide followed by storage.

However, CDR presents challenges involving:

- land requirements;
- permanence of carbon storage;
- biodiversity impacts;
- governance;
- measurement and verification;
- technological feasibility; and
- potential competition with food production.

Consequently, CDR should complement rather than replace deep emissions reductions.

Adaptation dimension

Overshoot also changes the adaptation agenda.

Even if temperatures subsequently decline, societies may experience irreversible or long-lasting impacts. Adaptation must therefore become anticipatory rather than merely reactive.

For developing countries, especially vulnerable communities, this requires:

- climate-resilient infrastructure;
- early-warning systems;
- climate-resilient agriculture;
- heat-action plans;
- water security;
- disaster-risk reduction; and
- climate-resilient urban planning.

UNEP also highlights that adaptation has limits, particularly as warming increases.

Climate justice and governance

The overshoot question is inseparable from climate justice. Countries and communities that have contributed relatively little to historical emissions may face disproportionate consequences. Consequently, climate governance requires adequate finance, technology cooperation and capacity-building.

The report also reinforces the importance of multilateralism. Climate change cannot be managed through unilateral national action alone because atmospheric greenhouse gases and climate impacts transcend political boundaries.

Conclusion

The significance of the UNEP report lies in changing the policy conversation from a binary question—**"Will the world remain below 1.5°C?"**—to a dynamic one: **how high will warming peak, how long will the overshoot last, and how rapidly can temperatures decline?**

The answer still depends fundamentally on immediate emissions reductions. Carbon removal, adaptation, climate finance and international cooperation can support the transition, but they cannot justify postponing mitigation. The report therefore turns the possibility of overshoot into an argument for **greater urgency rather than climate-policy resignation**.

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