

Test - 1

Section - A

1. Not knowing is a good place to start.

Start writing from the below line:

A young man in USA in 1905 was sitting on his porch, enjoying the sunset and mistakenly, leaves a mix of soda powder and water with a stick in it, outside in the cold. Unknowingly, was born what we call an 'ice candy' today.

The man, 18 years later, remembered his lucky creation and started selling it at his lemonade stand under the name 'Eppsicle'. A year later, he founded the 'Popsicle Corporation' while patenting the product and selling his patents with royalty arrangements.

In the year of his death in 1983, Unilever paid the man \$155 million for the Popsicle brand. The man was none other than Frank Epperson, the inventor of the beloved popsicle world over.

The above story highlights the importance of curiosity and exploration of new things.

Child-like inquisitiveness and spirit of inquiry can help an individual unearth their hidden talents, however one must be mindfully directed to ensure that the 'wanderer does not end up being lost.'

In a society, an individual often finds his path charted out either by family, community, caste or gender, even before their birth. Their future is decided without their consent. Like in '3 idiots', where the professor had already decided his children's professions, that an engineer if it was a boy and a doctor, if it was a girl.

However, what if the society let you choose? What if you had no 'definite' starting point handed out to you? What if it was left for you to discover the path of your life?

Well, that would be a good place to start. It can help one explore the endless opportunities in the world. It is often said that 'You Only Live Once' and so it is important to explore, to be curious about the infinite possibilities that exist around us and to be able to take the 'Road less Taken'.

The growing startup ecosystem and the spirit of innovation is one such example. People like Elon Musk who did not know their starting point and ended up for creating PayPal, Tesla, SpaceX and contributing to many other sectors indirectly.

"Ignorance is Bliss"

- Thomas Gray

Ignorance can help one reduce overthinking about future, focusing on the present and giving that 100% to the single task. It can shield oneself from those objective weaknesses that may limit one's thinking or goal-setting itself, let alone walking that path.

In the movie 'Forrest Gump', a man in Alabama with an IQ of 75, deemed almost worthless by the society goes on to become a college football star, fighting the Vietnam war and what not. His slow-mindedness was defeated against his childlike-optimism and no knowledge of his physical and mental restrictions.

"In knowing nothing, life is the most beautiful."

- Publius Syrus

Does it mean that lack of direction always leads to success? Is exploration always a good place to start? Is knowledge overrated? If the answer to all the above questions is yes, well then every curious mind shall be a success and inspiration to look up to.

But that is not the case. The role of knowledge and direction cannot be emphasized enough. Knowledge provides an individual with the fodder for self-assessment. It guides an individual to optimize their efforts and realize their potential.

The decisive wars that shaped the history like the Battle of Buxar for India, Battle of Wandiwash for the British and the World War I and II, were won due to the knowledge of opponent's strengths & weaknesses & wisdom to understand its utility.

However, rather than looking outside, one must 'look within' to start a journey. The process of self-exploration and self-discovery shall help analyze one's hidden interests, their inherent aptitudes and their core nature.

The process of self-assessment can provide a realization of one's true potential and help one find the purpose of their life rather than wandering in the unknown. It can help ~~them~~ one ^{understand} ~~realize~~ that, 'when you realize nothing is lacking, the whole world belongs to you.'

A case in consideration could be that of Srikanth Bolla, the founder of Bollant Industries, who was blind since his childhood. He did not neglect his impairment, but rather accepted it. ~~and~~ Rather than treating it as a restriction, he used it to empathize with other blind individuals & provided ^{them} employment in his company.

Having said that, one cannot emphasize enough on the fact that it is important to start. An individual sometimes plans and strategises too much but fails to execute it. Keeping all in the mind without manifesting it into reality is futile. The starting point may or may not be complemented by knowledge but it must start.

The story of Colonel Sanders perfectly fits here who started his career again with his social security check at the age of 60. Not very well-versed with his profession, he spent 13 years mastering his technique and today his creation, KFC is globally famous.

It is necessary to get out of one's comfort zone and channelise one's energy towards a goal or aspiration. However, it is equally important to analyze a decision before mindlessly working towards it, so as to take calculated risks and reduce chances of failure.

BYJU'S, a revolutionary ed-tech company with a unicorn status, today faces financial crisis and is alleged to have a toxic work culture depleting its employees' mental health. Failure to analyze and course-correct could be some of the causes for its contemporary downfall.

The above examples leave us with multiple questions. What is right path to start? Knowledge or ignorance - what will bear results? Is it possible to ensure success? Is there a chance in life to start again?

The answer to all the above question is values and morale. If sound and positive values drive an individual's journey of exploration or towards success, it will ultimately bear fruits.

The best example could be the growth story of India vis-a-vis that of Pakistan. While India wandered through multiple policies of socialism, capitalism or mixed economy, it boasts as the world's 5th largest economy due to the foundational values of equality, liberty, democracy and socio-economic justice.

On the other hand, Pakistan with its values of extreme communalism, unequal power dynamics, apparent hatred towards India struggles today with a deep economic crisis and lack of basic facilities like quality education, healthcare, etc.

The above examples ~~prove~~ highlight the importance of starting ethically, as if not great success, it will at least ensure stability and prospects for further growth.

In a nutshell, it can be said that exploration and curiosity can fuel wonderful discoveries and inventions, but not always. What must matter is that the path should follow ethical means to reach desired ends.

It is important to start, crossing the boundaries of comfort and security to unlock one's highest potential, however the knowledge to desire and the wisdom to choose cannot be neglected.

A key Takeaway from the topic is also the attitude of acceptance. Accepting that not all knowledge can be gained, not all techniques be learnt, not all events be experienced can help an individual attain satisfaction while also pushing him to make the best of what he has.

"Life is about not knowing,
having to change,
taking the moment and
making the best out of it,
without knowing,
what's going to happen next."

- Gilda Radner

The above quote beautifully summarises.



Test - 1

Section - B

Smart governance is India's future, yet it lingers on effective execution.

Start writing from the below line:

A bright, young, 15-year old Seema scored 90% in her Class 10th Board examination. While one may assume that her family would be overjoyed and delighted over their daughter's success, they were rather perplexed. The reason was their lack of financial resources to admit Seema in the Science stream while her dream was to become an aeronautical engineer.

Her teachers informed her about a scholarship for SC students opting for Science stream, whose access she had at her fingertips as it was digital. However, when

she opened the website, she realized that the website was non-functional due to lack of computer professionals available and hence, she had to travel over 30 km to benefit from the scholarship.

The above story highlights the importance of well-planned, effective means to achieve the desired ends. While smart governance shall ensure last-mile service delivery, a committed bureaucracy and its complementary infrastructure is necessary to achieve those goals.

For that, let us first understand what is SMART governance. SMART governance refers to Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent governance. It must be citizen-centric and dynamic to effectively respond to the changing and ever-evolving needs of modern day.

SMART governance includes E-governance i.e. providing services to citizens digitally via internet, reducing the need for physical presence of the beneficiaries. Also, it encapsulates M-governance i.e. mobile services, further increasing its accessibility to citizens.

One such portal and application is My Gov which provides information about the initiatives of Government in healthcare, education, housing, digitalisation with its ~~low~~ number of beneficiaries, thus signifying accountability towards the citizens.

The significance and need for SMART governance is multi-fold. It enables faster, cheaper service delivery, reach of benefits to the most marginalized sections, simplifies the governance process and enables greater participatory democracy.

It also has multiple benefits like cost reduction due to reduced need for physical infrastructure, reduced red-tapism due to digitalisation and active monitoring of the process, greater transparency via information sharing and full disclosure.

E-filing of RTIs, facile assessment and appeals in Income Tax are some of the reforms that uphold the accountability of state towards its citizens.

While today India boasts as the 5th largest economy in the world, to achieve the goal of \$5 ^{tn} economy, it needs to reform the governance landscape and SMART governance is the future.

Solid waste management, planned urbanization, smart traffic management, smart street lights are all examples of SMART governance.

While we have set the goal of a Smart and Digital India, its success depends on the immaculate execution of those initiatives, which lays on the shoulder of our bureaucracy.

The effective execution of initiatives depends on multiple factors. Firstly, the creation of necessary physical and social infrastructure. Secondly, the presence of a bureaucracy that is responsive, honest, committed and human-centric. A bureaucracy guided by values of equality, integrity and tolerance is necessary for successful implementation.

Thirdly, a pro-active citizenry aware about the schemes and their rights. Fourthly, a legislature to keep ~~the~~ oversight over the actions of the Executive. Fifthly, an efficient, educated and informed civil society to aid and smoothen the process.

The social audit law by Meghalaya is one such example. Drone monitoring for effective policing, Project FRIENDS of Kerala for i.e a single window system for tax payments are examples of smart governance that proved successful due to its awareness and timely implementation.

It ~~may~~ leads us to think ^{about} the repercussions of ineffective execution. It may widen the existing socio-economic inequalities as highlighted by World Inequality Report. May further ~~to~~ deepen the social fault lines due to discrimination based on ascribed criteria.

It also has multifarious repercussions on an individual. Firstly, individual may experience relative deprivation. Secondly, he may lack access to basic services like housing, education, healthcare, etc. Thirdly, he may develop a negative attitude towards the state.

machinery and, isolating himself from the democratic process.

A Parliamentary Standing Committee's report pointed out the issues hampering the effectiveness of MGNREGA like fake job cards, widespread corruption, late uploading of muster rolls and huge pending payments for wages and materials. All these issues existing despite Direct Benefit Transfer and Aadhaar-enabled Payment system point to neglect and dishonesty in implementation.

One might then ponder about the steps needed to improve the implementation side. The first and foremost step should be harnessing the potential of technology for service delivery. PRAKATI portal for grievance redressal, DigiLocker for a digital cloud to every citizen highlights the significant role of technology.

Apart from that, it is important to develop critical infrastructure like Internet connectivity in rural and remote areas, logistical connectivity through roads, railways, etc.

Thirdly, training of civil servants and public servants to develop greater empathy, and compassion can be undertaken. Sensitivity training, team building exercises, ^{technology training} shall be good techniques to achieve that. Mission Karmayogi and NITI Aayog's recommendations like Mid-career training and 360° evaluation feedback will further improve responsiveness towards citizens.

Fourthly, the information about the initiatives should be readily available and accessible to the citizens. Instructions in regional languages, a simple user interface and initiatives like 'Bank Mitras' to reach every citizen and realise the ideas of 'Antyodaya' and 'Sarvodaya'.

Having said that, one critical question that demands to be answered is if SMART governance really is India's future? Does India's growth trajectory only lack SMART governance and is that the only path on which India wants to proceed?

The answer is a clear NO. While smart governance is the need of the hour to achieve inclusive growth and distributive justice, India's future lies in sustainable development.

India's focus should be on balancing the ecology - economy dichotomy, conservation of natural resources, protection of the traditional knowledge from exploitation and also the tribes like the Garasias in Rajasthan and Adi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh who are the source and repository of this invaluable knowledge.

The wave of globalisation is apparent and India needs to protect itself from homogenisation like McDonaldisation of food in India. India's identity lays in its diversity and its ideals of 'Vaisudhaiva Kutumbakam' and thus, it must conserve its practices of worshipping and conserving nature.

Initiatives like Mission LIFE, FAME scheme, National Solar Mission, Green Hydrogen mission for clean energy and global initiatives like International Solar Alliance and Mangrove Alliance for Climate signify India's priority for sustainable and eco-friendly growth.

In a nutshell, the essay thus explored the concept of SMART governance, its indispensibility and its multifaceted impacts. However, the realisation of the goal is subject to an effective process

and mindful implementation. The essay also explored the prerequisites for the efficacious execution and its essentiality.

Thus, the realisation of the goal of inclusive growth 'leaving no one behind' rests on the means taken for its fulfillment.

To achieve the goal of SMART governance, citizens should become active participants in democracy conveying their innovative thoughts and ideas to the state. The state must also be responsive and programmes like 'Mann Ki Baat' complement the idea.

India's future lays on the future of its young population, the 'workforce of tomorrow'. And thus, the governance should target the development of youth with quality education, sound healthcare and training.

in critical emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, etc. to ~~so~~ make them the 'global workforce' by harnessing our demographic dividend.

Thus, it ~~has~~ ^{has} been rightly said that,

"In a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization and accumulation of power with co-ordination of wills."

— Swami Vivekananda