

1. What are your observations of the typical characteristics of the Indian society that got manifested during the COVID-19 pandemic? Discuss.

COVID-19 महामारी के दौरान परिलक्षित भारतीय समाज की विशिष्ट विशेषताओं के बारे में आपके क्या विचार हैं? चर्चा करें।

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about the typical characteristics of Indian society that got manifested in the current pandemic of COVID-19.

Introduction:

The pandemic painfully laid bare societal fault lines in Indian society. Health emergency induced sudden lockdown, migrant crisis, recession, unemployment and too many unknowns which shook the sensitivities of the human mind.

Body:

Typical characteristic of Indian society during COVID-19:

- Tradition with Modernism: Indians decided to boost their immunity by resorting to Ayurvedic medicines widely popular in Indian homes during nationwide lockdown. The concept of physical distancing has been already rooted in traditional Indian lifestyle like greeting by Namaste. Homemade face covers and masks are also playing an important role in the fight against corona virus.
- Theme Of Unity Is Diversity: Despite of the the initial attempts to put blame on the minority community, hate mongering Indian media with communal agenda even when staring at a pandemic; Indian society has shown excellent examples of unity in diversity. E.g. stories of Muslim neighbours carrying Hindu cremation, Hindu family was seen arranging iftar for a Muslim boy.
- Patriarchy: Sadly it remains one of the major features of Indian society again reflected in the pandemic of COVID-19. With anxiety-driven domestic violence on the rise, women are suffering more than men. E.g. National Commission for Women (NCW), which receives complaints of domestic violence from across India, has recorded more than a twofold rise in gender-based violence in the national corona virus lockdown period.
- The Society Is Largely Agrarian And Rural: Around 60% population resides in rural India. Reverse migration of the labour class to rural areas created a threat of spread of pandemic. However, small village locality proved efficient in managing migrants from badly affected cities to quarantine and isolate.
- Class and Caste Divide: lockdown anywhere protects the rich and exposes the poor to human and economic challenges. The poor suffer in lost wages, unemployment and lack of access to welfare. Almost 90 per cent of India's workforce is in the informal sector, which is hurting the most. An International Labour Organisation report suggests that COVID-19 may take about 400 million workers in India deeper into poverty. Online access being a luxury available

only to some, children of the poor is lagging behind in learning as well. E.g. online video of a poor fruit seller letting migrants pick bananas from his cart. Men, women and children only picked up what they needed—just one or two bananas each. The poor still have dignity. It is the middle class that has lost it by way of our materialism.

However, it is not only about Indian society but the global phenomenon.

- Collapse of compassion: The death of one person is a tragedy; the death of one million is a statistic, a remark attributed to Joseph Stalin. And also Mother Teresa once said, “If I look at the mass, I will never act.” There is a tendency to turn away from mass suffering known as the ‘collapse of compassion’. When the number of victims increases, the quantum of sympathy actually decreases, so does the willingness to help. People tune down their empathy. This appears to be a survival trait programmed in our brains to protect us from being overwhelmed.
- Pandemics are both biological and social in their nature and consequences. If we ignore one at the expense of the other, we do so at our peril.

Certainly, pandemic will leave a deep scar on the Indian psyche which saw the worst scenes in mainland India after the 1947 Partition. A very sad reflection on our self-serving society of which government is just a part.

Conclusion:

Despite desperate times and uncertain future, Indian society has shown many rays of hope in voluntary initiative of some well off like Sonu Sood or Akshay Kumar and many common individuals like health, sanitation workers, bankers, pharmacists and police force which boosted trust in humanity.

2. Has diversity impeded the growth of societal solidarity and harmony in India? Critically examine.

क्या विविधता ने भारत में सामाजिक एकजुटता और सद्भाव के विकास को बाधित किया है? समालोचनात्मक जांच करें।

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about whether diversity impeded the growth of social solidarity and critical analysis of the impact of diversity on social solidarity and harmony.

Introduction:

The very idea of India is revolving around ‘unity in diversity’ and ‘diversity in unity’. The Constitution of India binds the citizens of India into a secular, liberal and democratic value system. It guarantees equality, liberty and freedom to every citizen of the country. It should always be remembered that India is multi-cultural, multi-

ethnic and multi-lingual country. However, there are certain forces which are taking advantage of such diversity and pose a threat to the unity of the country.

Body:

Diversity and societal solidarity and harmony:

- Western societies and cultures believe that the homogeneity brings eternal peace in the society and common religion, language and race reduces the conflict.
- Differences of religious traditions, conflict upon place of worship, historical tragedies, different type of gastronomic diversity conflicting food choices often turn into disputes which led to violence. Increasing food vigilante on people put adverse impact on social solidarity.
- India being multilingual country where pride and emotional connect to language can be seen in opposition of Hindi in southern states. Regional tendencies and son of soil theories also utilise diversity to create wedge between societal solidarity and harmony.
- Unfortunately, the use of religion, caste and other such factors by the political parties to advance their political interests and capture power can create an atmosphere of hate and division among religious and caste groups.
- Ethnic differences between population of north eastern states and heartland often turn into passing racial slur or misunderstanding of lifestyle traits.
- There are various types of economic and non-economic factors which give rise to fears, anxieties and uncertainties among different communities due to policies or decisions of governance machinery. E.g. clamour for NRC.

There is need to translate the conflict and anger into peace, harmony and happiness. That would require transparency, honesty, probity and truthfulness in public life.

However, unity in diversity, tolerance and mutual respect is India's strength,

- In a multi-religious society, communal harmony is very important for citizens to lead a life free from fear, anxiety and uncertainty. Rabindranath Tagore's famous poem, 'Where the mind is without fear' from Gitanjali in which he wished to have a truly free country where every person is fearless and has a sense of self dignity.
- Teaching of every religion in the world idealises peace: From Gautama Buddha to Nanak, various religious men propagate message of harmony of human kind.
- Values of Indian freedom struggle: Mahatma Gandhi did not want any division among people based on their caste, creed, colour and religion or baseless superstitions. He firmly believed that communal harmony was essential for the freedom and growth of India. Mahatma Gandhi was convinced that masses do not want to fight, if the leaders do not.
- Constitutional framework, secular state and independent institutions help India to be vibrant democracy despite of huge and rare diversity. Impartial, objective and emancipation of all sections of society is rooted in civil services of India.

- Economic prosperity: Indian society, economy and polity have experienced multidimensional tensions and strains since independence. The country has displayed a remarkable capacity to cope with these strains. The country is still grappling with poverty, inequality, unemployment, illiteracy and malnutrition present serious challenges. Public policy interventions for the empowerment of the people for making them effective partners in development with trickle down of benefits of market driven economy has helped in societal solidarity and harmony.
- Empowering the underprivileged and marginalised people with education, skill and good health is an important means to make the people partners in growth and development.
- Increased education levels and urbanisation has brought cosmopolitan culture to Indian cities, spread of internet and technology driven globalisation has brought universal values to remote rural areas. Diversity is no longer impediment but plus point to harness multiple knowledge sources to build global peaceful human society.

Conclusion:

Eventually, it is the responsibility of the political and religious leadership, civil society, intelligentsia and the media to uphold the values of mutual respect and tolerance to stress societal solidarity and tolerance.

3. What are the most potent threats to the safety and sovereignty of Indian cyberspace? What are the recent measures taken to strengthen the security of Indian cyberspace? Examine.

भारतीय साइबर स्पेस की सुरक्षा और संप्रभुता के लिए सबसे प्रबल खतरे क्या हैं? भारतीय साइबर स्पेस की सुरक्षा को मजबूत करने के लिए हाल ही में क्या उपाय किए गए हैं? जांच करें।

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about the most potent threats to the safety and sovereignty of Indian cyberspace along with the recent measures taken to strengthen the security of Indian cyberspace.

Introduction:

Amid border tension with China, the government banned 59 Chinese apps including TikTok, WeChat, Shareit, UC Browser, etc. This was done by invoking Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, which empowers the government to block the apps which are engaged in activities prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of the country, its defence, security of state and public order.

Body:

As the lack of digital literacy, substandard quality of devices used to access internet, import dependence, lack of skilled manpower makes Indian cyberspace vulnerable to cyber threats. The digital economy today comprises 14-15% of India's total economy, and is targeted to reach 20% by 2024. India has more than 120 recognised data centres and clouds. The average data consumption per person a year is in the range of 15-20 gigabits.

Most potent threats to safety and sovereignty of Indian cyberspace:

A cyber security firm Cyfirma has warned against a potential cyber attack from hacking groups in China in retaliation for the violent clashes between armed forces in India and China. Reports of 'incident' happened in Kudankulam Nuclear power plant in last September was related to cyber security, highlights threats posed to cyberspace of India by various elements based in national and international arena.

- Threats to Critical information infrastructure: As it is essential to the functioning of a modern economy, security and other essential social services. Critical information sectors in India include Power, ICT/Communication, Finance/Banking, Transport and e-governance. A minor disruption at one point could have a rippling effect across multiple infrastructures.
- As tool of Proxy warfare: China has built strong 'cyber offense force'. Hacking groups of Pakistan and China, external intelligence agency of Pakistan has started using cyber space as tool to attack security and economic infrastructure, which might hamper India's growth trajectory. These countries are acquiring offensive capabilities by building bits of software called 'cyber weapons' to do enormous damage to the adversary's networks.
- Threat to economic security: Sectors such as healthcare, retail trade, energy and media face advance persistent threats (APTs), as the latest reports of an Israeli spyware allegedly used to spy on Indian journalists and human rights activists attest. These incidents relating to data leakage, ransom ware, ATM/credit cards denial of service, diversion of network traffic intrusion in IT systems and networks using malware are on rise.
- Threat to IT infrastructure: As India is renowned IT service provider to the rest of the world; compromise on the security of IT infrastructure will be huge risk to India's service sector.
- Advance technologies: With more inclusion of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), data analytics, cloud computing and Internet of Things (IoT), cyberspace has become a complex domain, giving rise to threats of complex nature. Attacks on embedded systems and IoT have also registered a sharp increase of late. Such incidents are being launched from cyberspace of different international jurisdictions.

Recent measures taken to strengthen the security of Indian cyberspace:

- Regarding ban of Chinese apps: The ministry of electronics and information technology said in a statement that it has received many complaints from various sources including several reports about misuse of some mobile apps available on Android and iOS platforms for stealing and surreptitiously

transmitting users' data in an unauthorised manner to servers which have locations outside India.

- The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, ministry of home affairs has also sent an exhaustive recommendation for blocking these malicious apps.
- The Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN) has also received many representations from citizens regarding security of data and breach of privacy impacting upon public order issues.
- National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) to battle cyber security threats in strategic areas such as air control, nuclear and space. It will function under the National Technical Research Organisation, a technical intelligence gathering agency controlled directly by the National Security Adviser in PMO.
- National cyber coordination centre (NCCC) to scan internet traffic coming into the country and provide real time situational awareness and alert various security agencies.
- A new Cyber and Information Security (CIS) Division has been created to tackle internet crimes such as cyber threats, child pornography and online stalking.
- Under this, Indian cyber- crime coordination centre (I4C) and Cyber Warrior Police force has also been established.
- Ministry of Defence formed Defence Cyber Agency in the realm of military cyber security. Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-in) to enhance the security of India's Communications and Information Infrastructure through proactive action and effective collaboration.
- CERT-fin has also been launched exclusively for financial sector. CERT-in is also operating Cyber Swachhta Kendra, a Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre.
- Government inaugurated the new body National Information Centre Computer Emergency Response Team (NIC-CERT) to prevent and predict cyber-attacks on government utilities.
- Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative to strengthen Cyber security ecosystem in India. It is first public private partnership of its kind and will leverage the expertise of the IT industry in cyber security.

Conclusion:

Stress on development of cutting edge technology in the field of cyber security along with capacity of skilled human resources can make Indian cyber space robust, irrespective of changing norms of cyber behaviour at global level. Priority to cyber security is no longer optional but one of the pillar of India's internal and external security.