

**OVERVIEW of GENERAL STUDIES (GS) PAPER 1:**

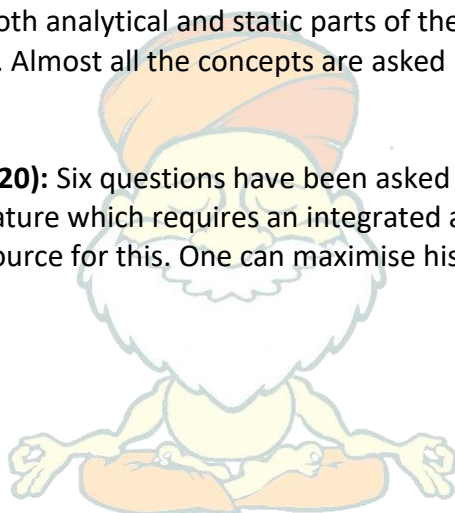
Most of the questions were of easy to moderate level. However, questions were a mix of both static and analytical parts. To fetch good marks, one must have a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and historical events.

**Art and Culture (Q.1, 2, 11, 12, & 19):** There are five questions in this year's paper. It is a mix of performing arts and architecture-based questions. The questions are of moderate level except for the 19th, which is slightly on the difficult side.

**Modern History (3, and 13):** Two questions are asked from this section which are mostly analytical in nature. The questions require a holistic understanding of both events. For example, the question on the 'Lord Curzon and its implications on the national movement' is asking for long term implications which can be extended upto independence. The questions are of moderate level as the themes of these questions are repetitive.

**Geography (4, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16 and 17):** Eight questions have been asked from Geography. The questions are a mix of both analytical and static parts of the syllabus. The questions are from easy to moderate level. Almost all the concepts are asked by UPSC in either Prelims and Mains.

**Society (8, 9, 10, 18, 19 and 20):** Six questions have been asked from this part. Most of the questions are analytical in nature which requires an integrated approach while studying. There won't be a one stop source for this. One can maximise his/her score here, if he/she has a good thought process.



**Q.1) The rock-cut architecture represents one of the most important sources of our knowledge of early Indian art and history. Discuss. (Answer in 150 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

This is one of the application-based questions. You need to write what rock-cut architecture is in 2-3 lines briefly in the introduction.

In the body you have to substantiate with exact examples how it is a source of knowledge of ancient Indian art and history. Dimensions can be - Society, economy, religion etc.

You can locate the famous rock-cut architecture monuments on the map and write two - three points (Eg. Ajanta & Ellora Caves etc)

And conclude an answer with a summary statement.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://tlp.iasbaba.com/2018/07/day-23-q-1-rock-cut-architecture-find-an-important-place-in-ancient-indian-history-comment/>

**Q.2) Pala period is the most significant phase in the history of Buddhism in India. Enumerate. (Answer in 150 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

It's a direct and a straightforward question which requires sufficient / basic knowledge about the Pala period, its achievements in terms of art, architecture, literature and paintings etc. Very importantly, you need to show how the above enriched / flourished Buddhist traditions. Without justification through examples, illustrations the answer would be shallow and not upto the mark. So, you need to give exact examples here too.

You can conclude an answer with 'Buddhism knowledge would be incomplete without taking Pala's contribution into account.'

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

**ILP VAN**

**Q.3) Evaluate the policies of Lord Curzon and their long term implications on the national movement. (Answer in 150 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

It is a direct question wherein your prelims preparation for Modern History comes to the rescue. It requires thorough information on Lord Curzon's policy and its impact on national movement.

The answer can be introduced by mentioning the period of Lord Curzon and names of sections on which Curzon brought policies. In body you need to explain his policies like Partition of Bengal, university education policy among others.

The partition of Bengal and the highhanded behaviour of Curzon fired the national movement and the Congress. Some prejudices he had were shown through his policies, like he was deeply racist, and convinced of Britain's "civilising mission" in India.

When he left, Congress was more active and effective than at any time in its history.

Same time with specific examples you need to mention impacts on or how following are the results of it.

Eg. Swadeshi movement, revolutionary movement in 1910's. Conclusion can be simply a summary statement.

#### IASBABA REFERENCE:

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/10/synopsis-14th-october2020-day-3-iasbabas-tlp-phase-2-upsc-mains-answer-writing-general-studies/>

#### 4. The partition of Bengal is a watershed in India's freedom struggle. Do you agree?

Substantiate your views.

#### Approach:

It expects students to write about how partition impacted and changed course of freedom struggle onwards and in second part also mention about how partition of Bengal not a watershed movement.



**Q.4) Discuss the geophysical characteristics of the Circum-Pacific zone. (Answer in 150 words)**

#### LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:

It is a direct question based on a concept which can be found in the basic texts for the subject like NCERTs and GC Leong.

In the introduction you have to write briefly about what and where the Circum Pacific region - also known as Pacific ring of fire is.

In the body Geophysical phenomenon, Active volcanoes, O-C, O-O plates convergence. You can draw a diagram of 'Ring of Fire' and locate the current earthquakes and volcano eruptions like Indonesia and New Zealand.

#### IASBABA REFERENCE:

**Think Learn Perform (TLP) Plus Test-16 Synopsis****2020**

6. Examine the unique geography of the Pacific Ring of Fire and the associated different physiographic phenomena.

**Approach** – A straightforward question where in you need to examine the unique geography of the Pacific Ring of Fire in the first part while the associated different physiographic phenomena in the second part.

Related concepts -	Keyword in the answer -
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sea-expansion</li> <li>• Interior of the Earth</li> <li>• Seismic events</li> <li>• Transform Boundaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circum-Pacific Belt</li> <li>• Plate Tectonics</li> <li>• Boundaries of plates</li> <li>• Earthquake induced Landslides</li> </ul>

**Introduction**

The Ring of Fire, also referred to as the Circum-Pacific Belt, is a path along the Pacific Ocean characterized by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes. Seventy-five percent of Earth's volcanoes—more than 450 volcanoes—are located along the Ring of Fire. Ninety percent of Earth's earthquakes occur along its path, including the planet's most violent and dramatic seismic events

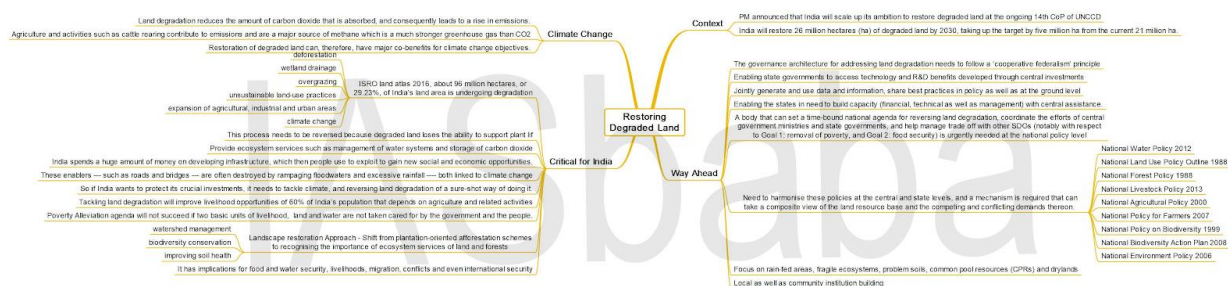
**Q.5) The process of desertification does not have climatic boundaries. Justify with examples. (Answer in 150 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

It is quite a tricky question. Needs interlinking of concepts, applications of knowledge etc. The answer can be introduced with briefly describing what desertification is. You need to show unlike earlier time desertification is a global phenomenon across geography and climatic boundaries. Try to emphasize on its climate change / anthropogenic driven phenomenon now. You can use two approaches here - One India and One Rest of the world. Do show how desertification is taking place due to different factors in different regions. Here Examples and Diagrams/Maps showing exact locations will be a value addition. Geography answers are always incomplete without diagrams /maps.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://iasbaba.com/2015/11/4-explain-the-causes-and-consequences-of-desertification-in-the-sahel-region-how-this-problem-can-be-addressed/>



## Q.6) How will the melting of Himalayan glaciers have a far-reaching impact on the water resources of India? (Answer in 150 words)

### LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:

This is a direct question. It asks about the effects of Himalayan ice melting on the water resources of India.

In the introduction, mention the recent glaciers melting due to anthropogenic factors along with natural factors in 2-3 lines. Then in the body, mention how the melting is impacting the water resources of India. You need to give both sides of the impacts.

You can talk about Glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) too.

Then conclude by saying how with the use of technology we can reduce the negative impacts and increase the positive ones.

### IASBABA REFERENCE:

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/07/day-38-q-2-examine-the-distribution-of-freshwater-resources-in-asia-how-is-water-distribution-shaping-the-fate-of-this-continent-analyse/>

## Q.7) Account for the present location of Iron and steel industries away from the source of raw material, by giving examples. (Answer in 150 words)

### LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:

This is a direct question from world geography, locational factors for industries part.

In this question, you need to first mention the role of the Iron & steel industry in the world for the introduction. Then in the body, start with addressing the why part i.e. why they are present away from raw material sources, then for each point you mention, you need to give examples like if you mention the example of SAIL in Salem, mention why the smelting plant is located there. Since they have not asked for any particular region you need to mention at least one point for each region. Also, do mention about Purvodaya Initiative.

### IASBABA REFERENCE:

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/01/integrated-steel-hub/>

**Q.8) Has caste lost its relevance in understanding the multi-cultural Indian society? Elaborate your answer with illustrations. (Answer in 150 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

This is a tricky question, at first, it looks like the question is asking about the impact of culture on Indian society, but if you spend 10-20 seconds on it you will understand the actual demand of questions.

In the introduction, mention what do you mean by caste according to Indian contexts. Then in the body mention about a new form of an assertion called neo-casteism has evolved. You can talk about how the caste system and multiculturalism in India are both equally old and are interdependent.

Then mention how over time the actual system of caste which was a classification of society based on the job became a status and purity symbol and it failed to assimilate all sections of society and caused irreparable damage to the fabric of diversity of the country.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://tlp.iasbaba.com/2019/06/day-10-q-3-how-far-caste-based-pressure-groups-have-altered-the-polity-in-india-illustrate-with-the-help-of-suitable-examples/>

**Think Learn Perform (TLP) Plus Test-6 Synopsis | 2020**

2. India's caste system has a debilitating impact on the potential of socio-economic growth. Do you agree? Substantiate your views.

**Approach** - A straightforward question where India's caste system's impact on potential of socio-economic growth needs to be discussed along with your views which should be properly substantiated.

**Q.9) COVID-19 pandemic accelerated class inequalities and poverty in India. Comment (Answer in 150 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

This is a direct question that asks about the impacts of COVID-19 on the poor in India.

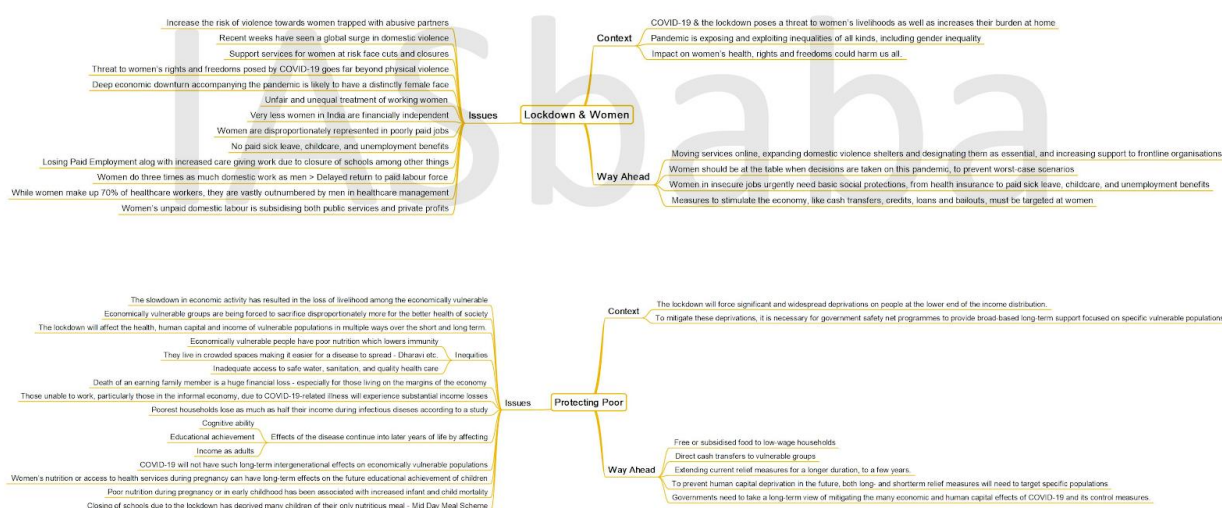
You are expected to mention the issues faced by many population groups (women, old, orphans, homeless etc.) that got exposed due to COVID-19 pandemic. You need to mention proper data' and facts and not just give generalized and assumed figures. Mention how the rich got richer and poor got poorer, give examples of how people trained in digital skills

made most and unskilled people had to worry for one-time food. You can talk about Urban Poor and Migration.

Also in conclusion, mention, the programs by the government to mitigate the effects.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/07/day-41-q-2-the-ongoing-covid-19-pandemic-has-exposed-the-vulnerabilities-of-many-population-groups-what-in-your-opinion-are-the-most-adversely-impacted-populations-what-measures-would-you-suggest/>



**Q.10) Do you agree that regionalism in India appears to be a consequence of rising cultural assertiveness? Argue. (Answer in 150 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

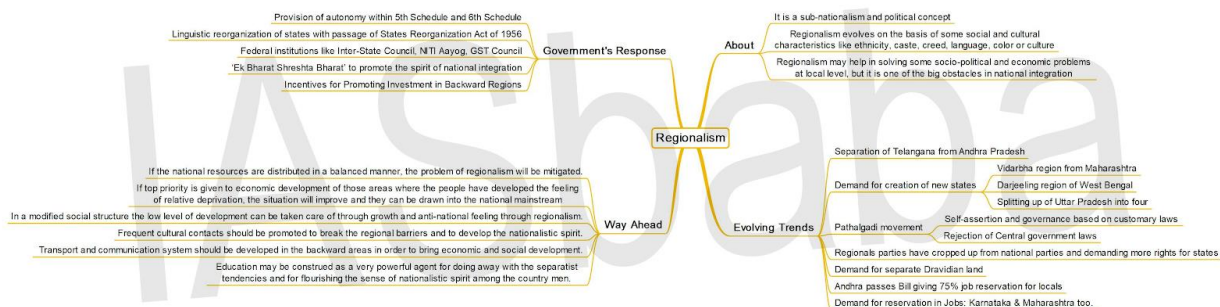
This is a direct question on regionalism and the factors that are promoting it in recent times.

In the introduction, define regionalism and the origin behind it. Then in the body start with giving points to prove how due to cultural assertiveness regionalism is rising. Give 4-5 points at least. Then in the second part, mention a few more points other than those mentioned in the first part, to show how it might just be a factor but not be the sole factor, like economic disparity, etc. You can also talk about politicians trying to fuel culture assertiveness.

Conclusion can be futuristic and optimistic, wherein you can provide some measures to tackle the issue that is regionalism.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://t1p.iasbaba.com/2019/07/day-25-q-3-comment-upon-the-evolving-trends-of-regionalism-in-india-and-the-governments-response-to-it/>



### Q.11) Indian philosophy and tradition played a significant role in conceiving and shaping the monuments and art in India. Discuss (Answer in 250 words)

#### LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:

The question has two key terms to focus upon, first is to address 'Indian philosophy and tradition', after addressing it a candidate needs to address the second key term 'monuments and art', and how Indian philosophy and tradition have influenced monuments and art.

Here you can start by writing what are different Indian philosophies and traditions which includes Jainism, Buddhism, Ajivikas, Shaivism, Vaishnavism, etc and how it had an influence on different art forms such as architecture, painting, music etc. Then write about monuments such as pillars, rock cut caves, temples and then try to diversify in different art forms of music, paintings which will include Bhakti music, while in paintings like Madhubani, Pattachitra art, Tanjore paintings, while in rock cut caves write about Lomas Rishi, Udaygiri, etc.

While writing answer try to follow a structure based on key words from the question itself.

#### IASBABA REFERENCE:

TLP Plus Test 11 (2020), Question no. 1.

<https://tlp.iasbaba.com/2019/10/day-1-q-1-while-elaborating-on-the-recurrent-themes-of-the-bhakti-literary-tradition-examine-the-contribution-of-women-poets-towards-indias-bhakti-literature/>

### Q.12) Persian literary sources of medieval India reflect the spirit of the age. Comment? (Answer in 250 words)

#### LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:



This is a direct question wherein it asks to write about the various Persian literary sources of medieval India and how this literature reflects the spirit of age. This will include thought, social structure, culture, political institutions etc.

In Persian literary sources write about the chronicles called as Tawarikh, then there were travellers such Ibn Battuta and Al Beruni who wrote Rihlah and Kitab ul Hind respectively. Then further there were biographies written in the era of Mughals such as Ain i Akbari, Tuzuk e babari. Then mention poets such as Amir Khusrau and Mohammad Jayasi and also religious literature which will include Sufi literature as well.

In the spirit of age, focus upon how these sources have commented upon the social structure, political institutions, religion, comparative analysis between India and Persian territories, the economy of the period. For example, Ain e Akbari delves on the topic of religion, status of women, powers of Monarch, policies by administration and specific views of Akbar on harmony such as Sulh e Kul.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://iasbaba.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TLP-Day-2-Synopsis.pdf> (Question No.2)

**Q.13) Since the decade of 1920's, the national movement acquired various ideological strands and thereby expanded its social base. Discuss. (Answer in 250 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

This question has three keywords that is 1. Decade of 1920, 2. Ideological strand in national movement and 3. expanded the social base. Therefore, each keyword needs to be emphasised on in your answers.

Here you need to write about the different strands in 1920s such as ideologies like Gandhian ideology which gained momentum in 1920 with start of non-cooperation movement, Socialism and Communism which started with formations of Communist party of India in 1925, Revolutionary ideology which included groups like Hindustan Socialist Republican Association 1928, Communalism here Muslim league and Hindu Mahasabha were the prominent associations, Subaltern ideology which will include Dalit movement, tribal and feminist participation.

Then you need to focus upon how it expanded the social base, while writing this you need to compare how the earlier social base was too narrow that is when moderates were at the helm of freedom struggle from 1905 onwards and it was focused on middle class and the elite section. whereas after 1920 the base expanded to peasants, labourers, women, depressed classes, tribals, in general the struggle focused on masses which were hitherto ignored.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://iasbaba.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/TLP-2019-DAY-2-Synopsis.pdf>

Question No. 3 and 4  
TLP plus Test 2020, Q.3  
TLP Plus Test 2020, Q.8

**Q.14) The interlinking of rivers can provide viable solutions to the multidimensional interrelated problems of droughts, floods and interrupted navigation. Critically examine (Answer in 250 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

In this question you need to show how interlinking of rivers can provide solutions to problems of India that is drought, floods and navigation while in the second part of the question a candidate needs to address criticism related to interlinking of rivers such as impact on ecology and human displacement.

Interlinking involves the process of diverting surplus river water through a network of canals to relatively drier areas either within a state or among two or more states. In India, there is an ambitious plan to link, Himalayan rivers, rivers flowing through northeast and peninsular rivers, to balance the deficit and excess water areas.

After defining address each keyword mentioned, that is solutions related to drought especially in regions such as Rajasthan, Bundelkhand, Marathwada. In the part on flood address how there are regions in Himalayan river system where the floods is recurring phenomenon such as states like Bihar and Assam are constantly under flood when the rest of India is starving for water. While in navigation write about the huge potential of linking the rivers for interstate navigation and boost to business and transportation.

In criticism focus on three aspects that are 1) Ecology 2) Displacement of people and 3) Cost of project.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://tlp.iasbaba.com/2019/02/day-74-q-2-india-has-started-its-ambitious-river-interlinking-project-what-can-be-the-ecological-impacts-of-river-interlinking/>

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/11/day-38-q-1-do-you-think-river-interlinking-is-the-the-most-suitable-way-forward-for-water-management-in-india-critically-examine/>

**Q.15) Account for the huge flooding of million cities in India including the smart ones like Hyderabad and Pune. Suggest lasting remedial measures. (Answer in 250 words)**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

The question asks to write about urban flooding as a recurring phenomenon in India. While this was initially seen only in cities like Mumbai and Delhi now the scourge has been extended to smart cities like Hyderabad and Pune which have a high ease of living index performance. Further, after analysing the reasons for urban flood a candidate needs to write what can be the long-lasting remedial measures.

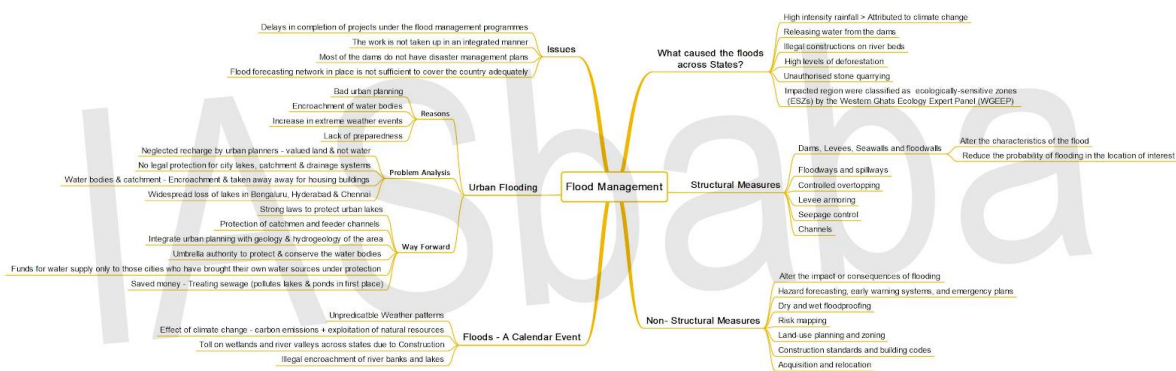
In measures focus upon measures such as.

- Utilising International best practices: Implementing 'Mobile Walls' like in Germany, and 'sponge' cities in line with cities in China which involves replacing concrete pavements with porous pavements to ensure better filtration.
- Policy making and city planning: Each city should have their Flood mitigation plans strongly embedded within the master plan of the city. There should be prompt, well-coordinated and effective response in case of urban floods to minimize casualties and loss of property and also facilitate early recovery.
- Wetlands protection: Urban flooding may increase if wetlands not protected. Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has recommended strong laws to protect urban lakes, their catchment and feeder channels

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://tlp.iasbaba.com/2019/08/day-51-q-3-why-are-urban-floods-so-frequent-and-devastating-in-india-what-measures-can-be-taken-to-address-urban-flooding-in-india-discuss/>

<https://tlp.iasbaba.com/2019/09/day-2-q-6-urban-flooding-has-become-a-major-challenge-in-many-indian-cities-what-are-the-factors-leading-to-urban-inundations-what-is-the-way-out-suggest-short-term-and-long-term-measures-to-addr/>



**Q.16) India has immense potential for solar energy though there are regional variations in its development. Elaborate**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

The question is framed in a single sentence, however there are 2 keywords in here. One, the potential of India's solar energy; two, regional variations. Hence, it is necessary to answer both the key words.

Solar Potential can be explained with various reports of the Ministry of Renewable Energy About 5,000 trillion kWh per year energy is incident over India's land area with most parts receiving 4-7 kWh per sq. m per day.

The National Institute of Solar Energy has assessed the Country's solar potential of about 748 GW assuming 3% of the waste land area to be covered by Solar PV modules.

Regional Variations can be explained with help of a map showing the incidence of solar energy in India. And, explanation of climatology, durations of summers and dry winter seasons in India. We can also use Koppen climate classification.

Lastly, we can conclude the answer with India's target on solar energy and schemes like the Renewable Purchase obligations, National solar Mission, International Solar Alliance, etc.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/07/day-37-q-1-discuss-the-solar-potential-of-south-asia-what-have-been-some-of-the-major-achievements-on-the-solar-front-in-india-discuss/>

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/08/indias-solar-energy-push-the-big-picture-rstv-ias-upsc/>

**Q.17) Examine the status of forest resources of India and its resultant impact on climate change.**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

Here there are two demands put forth by the question. One to bring out the state of forest resources in India. Second demand the impact of current status of Indian forests on Indian climate change.

For the status of forests, we can use the State of Forest report of Government of India -2019

- The **Total Forest cover** is 7,12,249 sq km which is **21.67%** of the geographical area of the country.
- The **Tree cover** is **2.89%** of the geographical area of the country.

Also, we need to provide some of the status of decreasing forest resources in India so that it links with the second demand of the question.

National Forest Policy of India, 1988 envisages a goal of achieving 33% of the geographical area of the country under forest and tree cover. India is yet to reach the target.

In the impact part we can provide examples of unseasonal rains, increased forest fires, recent floods in Hyderabad, summer temperatures hitting record high in many places of India, etc.

Thus, good rendering of facts can fetch maximum marks.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/01/india-state-of-forest-report-2019-vishesh-rstv-ias-upsc/>  
<https://iasbaba.com/2020/01/what-is-the-state-of-forests-in-india/>

**Q.18) Is diversity and pluralism in India under threat due to globalisation? Justify your answer.**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

In this question there are 3 key words Viz, diversity, pluralism, globalization. If we consider diversity and pluralism as synonymous, the number of keywords reduces to two. And the demand of the question is to explain how this diversity is jeopardised by globalization. As this is a sociology question avoid hard core economic and political terms related to globalization here.

We can explain by giving examples like:

Our food, clothing, language, means of recreation, etc.

Use statistics on the dying number of tribal & indigenous languages in India.

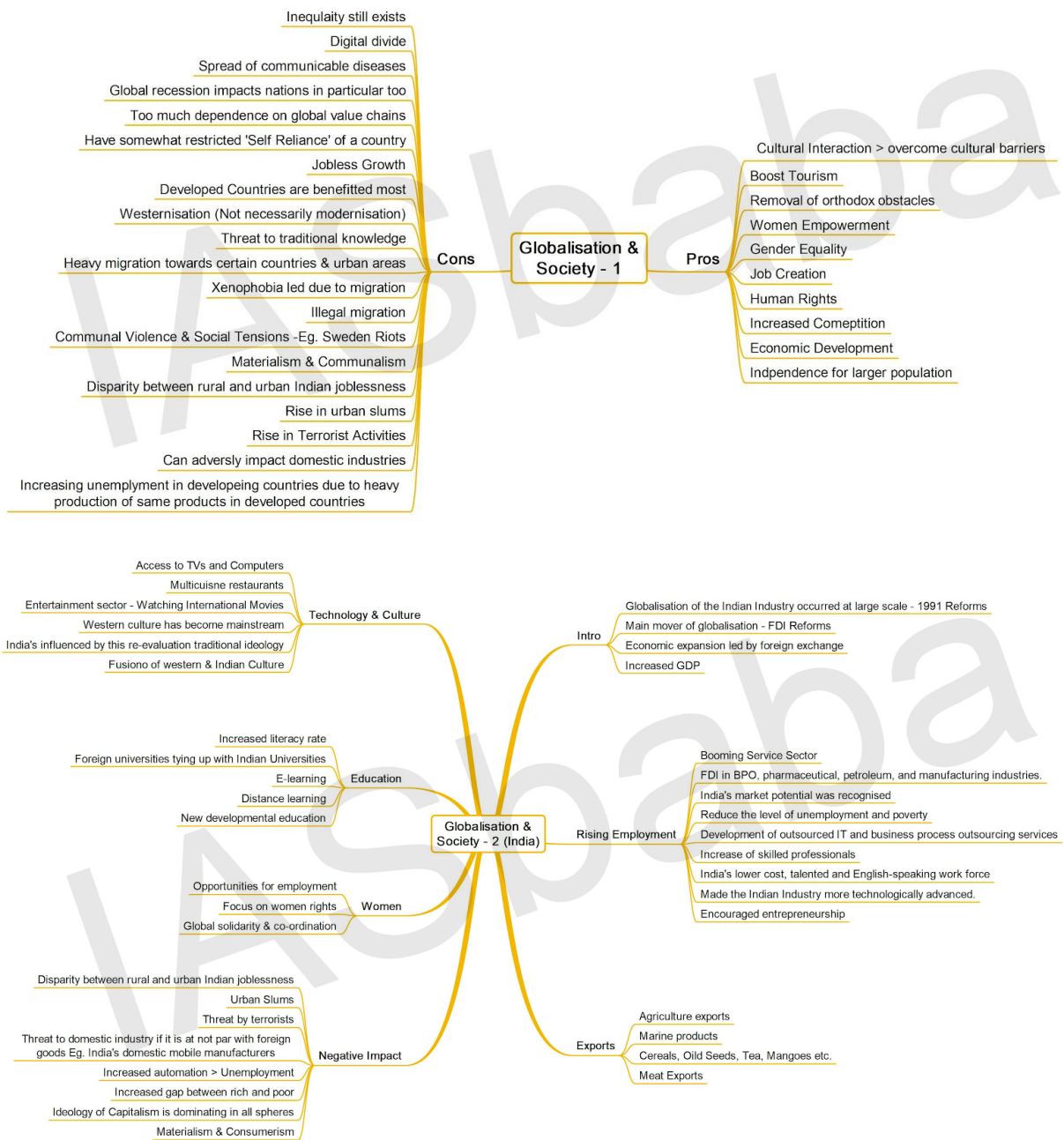
We can also balance the answer by providing examples of Yoga, Google's fashion week - wherein Indian traditional fashion was exposed to the world.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://iasbaba.com/2017/02/3-discuss-impacts-globalization-popular-art-forms-india-take-suitable-examples/>

<https://iasbaba.com/2015/11/1-globalization-has-affected-indian-art-to-a-larger-extent-as-it-has-affected-india-economy-discuss-the-pros-and-cons-of-globalization-on-indian-arts/>

<https://tlp.iasbaba.com/2019/07/day-24-q-4-has-globalisation-led-to-enhanced-secularisation-in-india-critically-comment/>



**Q.19) Customs and traditions suppress reason leading to obscurantism. Do you agree?**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

The question simply means that customs and traditions curb society's rationalism and reasonability, thus leading to obscurantism or the state where science and facts take a back seat.

Here some of the latest examples of Indian Science Congress - papers presented on invention of flights by Indian, thesis on medicinal power of GO-MOOTHRA, Seminar in IIT on Astrology can be quoted.

However, some of the customs and traditions which come with scientific reason can be quoted here, like - applying Kumkuma on the forehead which is a converging point of several nerves etc.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://tlp.iasbaba.com/2019/02/day-73-q-1-science-and-technology-has-always-been-an-integral-part-of-our-culture-comment/>

<https://iasbaba.com/2015/09/2-science-and-religion-are-they-compatible-1000-words/>

**Q.20) How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate your answer.**

**LINE OF THOUGHT/APPROACH:**

This is an analytical question, here we need to connect two domains, the digital initiatives in India and the education system in India.

Initially we can provide some of the examples and reports of how many rural children failed to access online classes during the pandemic times in India this year.

However, in the major part we need to bring in various initiatives of the government of India regarding digitalization of the education sector.

Ex: SMART Board initiative, E-Pathshala, National Digital Library, SWAYAM, SWAYAM Prabha Free personal computers and laptops distributed by many state governments, classes aired in the government media channels, furnishing government schools with computers and compulsory computer education for all.

However, some thoughts on limitations can be provided after this.

Later, we can conclude by giving way ahead - that includes PMGDISHA, Common service centres, PM WANI etc.

**IASBABA REFERENCE:**

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/04/online-education/>

<https://iasbaba.com/2020/09/digital-education/>