

GENERAL STUDIES - 1

Q1. Examine the main aspects of Akbar's religious syncretism. (10 Marks, 2025)

Answer:

Answer Writing Blueprint

Introduction:

- Briefly introduce Akbar's religious syncretism as his deliberate policy of inclusion, not just of tolerance.

Body:

- Mention key initiatives like jizya abolition, Ibadat Khana, Din-i Ilahi, translations and inclusive rituals - support each with examples.
- Then, highlight limitations of this policy such as elite focus, orthodox resistance and lack of lasting impact.

Conclusion:

- Conclude by assessing his legacy which was limited in reach but foundational for India's plural ethos.

Introduction

Akbar's reign (1556–1605) marked a significant departure from religious orthodoxy in medieval India. He envisioned the Mughal Empire as a multi-religious state guided by *Sulh-i Kul*—a doctrine of universal peace. As historian **A. Azfar Moin** notes, Akbar sought not mere tolerance but a “political theology of coexistence.”

Body

Akbar's Religious Syncretism: Key Aspects

- **Shift from Islamic orthodoxy to universalist tolerance:** Akbar moved beyond sectarian rule to embrace a pluralistic ideology.
 - **For example,** He abolished the **jizya tax** on non-Muslims in 1564 and incorporated Hindu nobles like **Raja Man Singh** into his highest advisory councils.
- **Institutionalisation of interfaith dialogue:** **Ibadat Khana** was built in Fatehpur Sikri in 1575 as a space for **theological debates**.
 - **For example,** **Ibadat Khana** hosted scholars from Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and even Jesuit Christians like Father Monserrate.

- **Formulation of Din-i Ilahi (1582):** It was an ethical-spiritual order which synthesized moral elements from diverse faiths. It included elements from Islam, Hindu bhakti and Jainism, with about 19 elite followers like Birbal.
- **Promotion of cultural synthesis through translations:** Akbar established a translation bureau (Maktab Khana) for Sanskrit-Persian cultural exchange.
 - **For example,** The *Mahabharata* was translated into Persian as *Razmnama* and, Ramayana and Vedas were also translated.
- **Adoption of inclusive state rituals and symbolism:** He adopted practices from Hindu traditions to symbolise unity.
 - **For example,** Akbar Introduced *Jharokha Darshan*, celebrated Raksha Bandhan and consulted Jain monks like Hiravijaya Suri.
- **Patronage of diverse religious scholars:** Provided financial support (madad-i-maash) to scholars across religious lines.
 - **For example,** He granted tax-free land to Hindu temples and Jain scholars.
- **Incorporation of Rajputs into imperial administration:** Blended political pragmatism with syncretism through matrimonial and strategic alliances.
 - **For example,** Akbar married Rajput princesses and appointed their kin to key administrative positions.
- **State policy of Sulh-i Kul (peace with all):** It served as the **ideological backbone of his inclusive governance** which helped in ensuring neutrality between Sunni, Shia and non-Muslim communities.

While Akbar's policies promoted cultural inclusivity, some critics argue that these policies were limited in social reach and political continuity.

Akbar's Religious Syncretism: Limitations and Criticisms

- **Elite-centric nature of reforms:** Most initiatives were confined to court elites and urban intellectuals.
 - **For example,** Din-i Ilahi never spread beyond Akbar's close circle of nobles.
- **Resistance from religious orthodoxy:** Conservative ulema rejected Akbar's innovations as heretical.
 - **For example,** Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi led the ideological backlash under Jahangir and Shah Jahan.
- **Reversibility and lack of institutional depth:** Many policies were reversed by later rulers.
 - **For example,** Aurangzeb reinstated jizya and discouraged public Hindu ceremonies.
- **Symbolic rather than structural change:** While inclusive in spirit, policies didn't address caste or gender inequities.
 - **For example,** Lower-caste and women's participation in administration remained minimal.
- **Blurred theological messaging:** Din-i Ilahi's hybrid character led to confusion and scepticism.
 - **For example,** Abul Fazl himself hesitated to openly promote it in imperial chronicles.

- **Political motivations intertwined with syncretism:** Some argue the moves are aimed more at **imperial stability than spiritual integration**.
 - **For example**, Rajput alliances ensured military and administrative control over strategic regions.
- **Limited regional penetration:** The impact of syncretic policies was mostly seen in North India.
 - **For example**, South and Eastern provinces saw minimal engagement with Jesuits or Brahmin scholars.
- **Absence of lasting socio-religious movement:** Unlike Bhakti or Sufi orders, Akbar's initiatives didn't evolve into a mass movement.
 - **For example**, Din-i Ilahi disappeared shortly after his death.

Conclusion

As **Irfan Habib** noted, Akbar's syncretism was a "**deliberate policy of harmonisation in a divided society**," but **not a grassroots revolution**. By privileging **dialogue over dogma** and inclusion over imposition, **Akbar laid the foundation for a secular ethos** centuries ahead of its time—a legacy India continues to engage with in its own **pluralistic journey**.



Q2. Globalization has increased urban migration by skilled, young, unmarried women from various classes. How has this trend impacted upon their personal freedom and relationship with family? (15 Marks, 2024)

Answer:

Answer Writing Blueprint

Introduction:

- You can start with **Ravenstein’s migration hypothesis** by linking globalisation to the rising urban migration of young women.

Body:

- Structure the answer **chronologically** (phases of migration) followed by **theme-wise analysis**.
- Under personal freedom, use a **balanced format (gains vs. constraints)** across economic, social, legal and emotional dimensions—each with specific examples.
- For family, highlight **structural and functional changes** (e.g., role reversals, delayed marriage, caregiving from distance).

Conclusion:

- You can wrap up by emphasising the need for supportive policies to ensure this mobility translates into long-term empowerment.

Introduction

Ravenstein’s migration hypothesis posits that **economic opportunity, rather than compulsion, drives voluntary migration** which is often led by the **young and ambitious**. In post-liberalisation India, this migration is evident in the rise of **urban female labour force participation** which increased from **16% in 1999–2000 to 25% in 2023–24 (PLFS)**.

Trend of Urban Migration Among Young and Skilled Women

Phase	Trigger	Trend Evidence
1990s	Economic reforms + GATS offshoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First wave of call-centre hiring (20 - 29 age group) • Urban female LFPR inches to 16 % (1999-2000) (NSSO)

2000s	Telecom + SEZ Act 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT-BPM workforce touches 30 % women by 2008; Never-married share of female migrants to Bengaluru rises from 13 % (2001) to 22 % (2011 Census)
2010s	E-commerce, gig work and FDI in retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLFS series shows urban female LFPR 21 → 25 % (2017-18 → 2023-24); One-in-three female migrants to Gurugram report “professional job” as the reason.
2020s	Remote work + Post-Covid hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India Employment Report 2024 notes a 38 % jump in single, degree-holding women on internal migration corridors post-Covid. Rise in Urban women registering on National Career Service ~ 52 % (2021-24)

Impact on Personal Freedom: Integrated Gains & Constraints

Dimension	Gains	Constraints
Economic Autonomy	Salaried jobs offer financial control and support for families. For Example , 61% remit earnings – PLFS 2024	Persistent wage gap - Women in IT earn ~78% of men – (NASSCOM 2024)
Mobility & Safety	Women access metros, cabs, and night shifts. For Example , Metro ladies’ coaches improve spatial confidence.	42% avoid late-night travel due to fear (IndiaSpend 2024)
Health & Reproductive Rights	OB-GYN access, counselling, contraception (e.g., Yuva Clinics)	Health insurance often tied to employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PGs often unsafe or unsanitary.
Digital & Social Expression	Freedom in fashion, dating apps, LGBTQ+ spaces and co-living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rise in cyber-stalking - As per NCRB, cybercrime is up by 22% (2023–24)
Legal & Civic Empowerment	POSH awareness, unionisation in BPOs and flexible hour demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental bias, “no single women” rule; Marriage law notice backlash (Special Marriage Act 1954)
Psychological Wellbeing	Freedom from patriarchal control and career-driven identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICMR (2023): High anxiety, stress due to isolation & job uncertainty
Caste & Class Intersectionality	Urban anonymity dilutes visible caste norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dalit and working-class women face layered bias in domestic and gig sectors (Jagori Report 2022)

Impact on Family Structures and Relationships

- **Structural Transformations:** Women live in PGs or solo housing while parents remain rural.
 - **For Example,** “Satellite families” where parents relocate post-retirement to support daughters.
- **Functional Changes**

Function	Transformation	Example
Economic	Daughters become key earners	61% remit income - daughters now co-own urban property – MoRD
Caregiving	Remote coordination of sibling education and parental health	Parents' healthcare funded by daughters
Marriage Norms	Delay in marriage and rise in inter-caste unions	Urban marriage age is now 23 years – NFHS-5
Fertility Choices	Increased control over timing and spacing of childbirth	Rise in voluntary childlessness in metro women – MoHFW 2024

- **Interpersonal Relationships**
 - **Parents:** Closer via video calls but also subject to digital surveillance (e.g. GPS tracking).
 - **Siblings:** Women act as role models—accelerating gender norm change among brothers.
 - **Extended kin:** Initially sceptical, but migration success (e.g. Kerala nurses to Gulf) often wins acceptance.

Conclusion

Urban migration by young and skilled women is not merely an economic phenomenon—it is a social revolution. As per the *India Employment Report 2024*, these women are reshaping urban spaces, family roles and gender norms. However, the transition remains incomplete without systemic support. To truly unlock their potential, migration must become a launchpad not just for mobility—but for **dignity, choice and transformation**.

Q3. What is sea surface temperature rise? How does it affect the formation of tropical cyclones? (2024) – 10M

Answer:

Answer Writing Blueprint

Introduction:

- You can begin by **linking SST rise to tropical cyclones** to explain how cyclones draw energy from warm oceans.

Body:

- Organize the body **as per cyclone lifecycle**—formation, development, maturity and dissipation.
- For each stage, explain how SST rise influences cyclone behavior, using **specific examples**.
- You can add **other meteorological conditions** which **affect the formation of tropical cyclones** to provide holistic coverage.

Conclusion:

- Conclude by **connecting the science to policy**, referencing SDGs and the need for global and local adaptation strategies.

Introduction

The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC AR6)** projects that sea surface temperatures (SSTs) could rise by **0.86–2.89°C by 2100**. This warming directly affects the genesis, intensification and lifecycle of tropical cyclones which draw their energy from **warm ocean surfaces**. As SSTs increase, so does the frequency and destructiveness of cyclonic activity.

Rising Sea Surface Temperatures: Key Factors

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Anthropogenic emissions trap more heat in the atmosphere, which leads to oceanic warming. **For example**, the Mediterranean Sea has warmed by approximately 4°C per decade from 1985 to 2006,
- **Ocean Heat Absorption:** Oceans act as carbon sinks which absorb about 30% of human-emitted CO₂. As CO₂ dissolves in water, it contributes to the warming of surface waters.
- **Increased Solar Radiation:** Enhanced greenhouse gas concentrations trap more heat in the atmosphere, causing oceans to absorb more solar energy and increase surface temperatures.
- **El Niño Events:** Periodic warming events in the Pacific Ocean raise SSTs globally.
- **Melting Polar Ice & Glaciers:** It reduces the Earth's albedo, which enhances ocean heat absorption.

- **Natural Variability:** Volcanic activity, solar cycles and ocean currents can also influence SST patterns.

Impact of SST Rise on Tropical Cyclones: Life Cycle Analysis

Cyclone Stage	Influence of SST Rise
Formation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Disturbances: SSTs >28°C enable formation of low-pressure systems. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Cyclone Roanu (2016) • More Arabian Sea Cyclones: Warming has increased activity here. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Cyclone Tauktae (2021) • Enhanced Atmospheric Instability: Promotes stronger vertical convection. • Greater Moisture Availability: Warmer seas fuel evaporation and cloud formation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Hurricane Katrina (2005)
Development Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid Intensification: Elevated SSTs provide latent heat which hasten intensification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Cyclone Ockhi (2017) • Lower Central Pressure: Warmer oceans accelerate pressure drops which strengthen wind speed. • Increased Storm Size: More energy fuels wider storm systems. • E.g., Cyclone Freddy (Indian Ocean)
Mature Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained High Intensity: Cyclones retain strength over longer durations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Cyclone Fani (2019) • Rising Super Cyclone Incidence: More intense systems now recorded. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Super Cyclone Amphan (2020) • Higher Storm Surges: Greater coastal flooding risks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Hurricane Ida (2021) • Secondary Eyewalls: High SSTs support complex eyewall replacement cycles.
Dissipation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slower Weakening: Cyclones retain strength over longer distances due to extended warm ocean areas. • Inland Penetration: Stronger cyclones now impact areas far from coasts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Cyclone Titli (2018) • Re-intensification & Erratic Paths: Cyclones may re-strengthen or shift tracks unexpectedly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Cyclone Gaja (2018); Hurricane Beryl • Extended Rainfall: Increased SSTs prolong precipitation, causing inland flooding.

Other Meteorological Factors Facilitating Cyclone Formation

Parameter	Role in Cyclogenesis
Low Vertical Wind Shear (<10 m/s)	Maintains vertical alignment of the cyclone system; strong shear disrupts storm organisation.
Adequate Coriolis Force ($\geq 5^\circ$ latitude)	Provides necessary spin; absent near the equator, where cyclones rarely form.
Moist Mid-Troposphere	Prevents intrusion of dry air, which ensures sustained convection and storm intensity.
Upper-Level Divergence & Outflow	Aids mass removal from the storm top which allow pressure to fall at the surface and the storm to intensify.
Conditional Instability	A warm, moist lower atmosphere beneath a cooler upper atmosphere fosters vigorous updrafts and storm growth.

Conclusion

The rise in sea surface temperatures is unequivocally altering the nature of tropical cyclones which have significant implications for **coastal populations, infrastructure and disaster preparedness**. To mitigate these effects and build resilience, countries must align their strategies with **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)** and **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**. This necessitates a multi-pronged approach to effectively address the mounting risks posed by a warming ocean.

GENERAL STUDIES - 2

Q1. “With the waning of globalization, Post-Cold War world is becoming a site of sovereign nationalism.” Elucidate. (10 Marks, 2025)

Answer:

Answer Writing Blueprint

Introduction:

- You can begin with Rodrik’s globalisation trilemma to link the fading liberal order with the reassertion of sovereign nationalism..

Body:

- Write in a cause-and-effect flow—first outline how globalisation is waning then link each decline to nationalist policy responses using current examples.
- You can briefly write about the consequences of this development.

Conclusion:

- You can conclude by acknowledging that globalisation persists but under sovereignty-driven terms.

Introduction

Dani Rodrik’s globalisation trilemma argues that **hyper-globalisation, national sovereignty, and democracy** cannot coexist fully. The optimism of the post-Cold War period which assumed the permanence of a liberal global order, has weakened. In its place, states increasingly emphasise **sovereign nationalism**, privileging autonomy in trade, technology and security while participating in globalisation on selective terms.

From Waning Globalization to Sovereign Nationalism

Erosion of Globalization	Manifestation of Sovereign Nationalism
Trade slowdown – Global merchandise trade grew only 0.8% in 2023 (WTO, 2024)	Protectionism – US Inflation Reduction Act (2022), EU move to raise steel tariffs to 50% (2025)
Declining FDI & tariff shocks – Rising trade frictions under US “Liberation Day Tariffs” (2025)	Economic nationalism – India’s tariff hikes on EVs and electronics (2024) to strengthen Atmanirbhar Bharat

WTO paralysis – Appellate Body non-functional since 2019	Regionalism – BRICS expansion (2024: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE); RCEP consolidation; USMCA replacing NAFTA
Tech bifurcation – US curbs on semiconductors to China (2023–24)	Digital sovereignty – EU Digital Services Act (2024); India’s Data Protection Act (2023); China’s “Great Firewall”
Supply chain fragility – COVID-19 & Ukraine war exposed vulnerabilities	Reshoring/near-shoring – India’s PLI schemes; US “friend-shoring” with Mexico & Vietnam; Japan’s subsidies to exit China
Energy & food insecurity – COP28 fossil fuel impasse; food export bans (India, Russia 2023–24)	Resource nationalism – OPEC+ production cuts; India’s ban on non-basmati rice exports (2023)
Financial risks – Freezing of \$300 bn Russian reserves (2022)	Monetary sovereignty – BRICS exploring de-dollarisation; India–Russia rupee-ruble trade
Security interdependence breakdown – Ukraine war fractured collective security	Strategic autonomy – EU Strategic Compass (2022); India’s defence exports hit ₹23,622 crore (2024–25)
Cultural backlash – Rising anxieties about homo genisation	Cultural nationalism – France’s abaya ban (2024); India’s NEP 2020 promoting regional languages

Consequences

- **Fragmentation of Multilateralism:** Rising bloc competition (e.g. BRICS vs G7, QUAD vs SCO) erodes a singular universal order.
- **Geo-economic Rivalry:** Sanctions, tariffs and state subsidies become tools of strategic leverage.
- **Weak Global Governance:** Critical issues like climate, migration and health suffer gridlock (e.g. COP28 stalemate on fossil fuels).
- **Weaponisation of Interdependence:** Finance, energy and technology increasingly wielded as instruments of coercive diplomacy.
- **Growing Middle-Power Assertiveness:** Nations like India, ASEAN states, Turkey and Gulf countries boost regional influence (e.g. India’s G20 leadership in 2023).
- **“Re-globalisation with Sovereignty”:** Globalization reconfigures into regional, sovereignty-driven frameworks rather than one-size-fits-all integration.

- **Entrenched Multipolarity:** The U.S.-centered order weakens while China, Russia and emerging powers carve out alternative global norms.

Conclusion

The waning of globalisation has not produced isolationism but a **reconfigured global order** where states assert sovereignty while engaging selectively with global flows. This **hybrid system of sovereignty-driven globalisation** increasingly defines the post-Cold War world, demonstrating that **globalisation now proceeds under the shadow of sovereign nationalism.**



Q2. Inequality in the ownership pattern of resources is one of the major causes of poverty. Discuss in the context of 'Paradox of Poverty'. (15 Marks, 2025)

Answer:

Introduction

The paradox of poverty refers to the **coexistence of resource abundance and economic growth** with continuing deprivation. Despite an expected **GDP growth of 7.3% in FY 2024 (IMF)**, India still has about **12.9% of its population living in multidimensional poverty (NITI Aayog 2023)**. This contradiction arises from **resource scarcity and inequality in ownership and control** of productive assets such as land, capital, education and digital infrastructure.

Body

The Paradox of Poverty

- **Growth Without Inclusion:** Economic expansion benefits asset-owners more than labour-dependent groups.
 - For *Example*, Top 1 % of Indians now own **40.1 % of national wealth**, while the bottom 50 % owns only 6 % (*Oxfam 2024*).
- **Persistent Inequalities:** Between 2012–21, nearly **40 % of wealth gains accrued to 1 % of the population** (*World Inequality Lab 2024*).
- **Regional Contradictions:** Mineral-rich states like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh record poverty rates >30 %, showing “resource curse” dynamics.
- **Vicious Cycle:** Limited assets → low productivity → low income → limited savings → continued assetlessness → sustained poverty.

How Unequal Ownership Creates the Paradox

- **Land Inequality:** According to NSSO 2019, the **top 10% of landowners control nearly 50% of agricultural land**. This skewed ownership pattern severely restricts access to irrigation, mechanisation and inputs for smallholders.
 - **For example**, Bihar and Jharkhand exhibit high rural poverty due to fragmented landholding and low ownership.
- **Access to Capital and Credit:** Approximately **80% of total institutional credit flows to the top 10% of borrowers**, while the poor remain dependent on informal lending sources charging 24–36% interest. This lack of affordable credit obstructs enterprise creation and reinforces poverty cycles.

- **Educational and Skill Disparities:** Despite being a hub for global tech talent, India faces endemic under-employment. According to the ASER 2023 report, **5% of rural youth (aged 14–18) cannot read a Grade 2 text**. Poor foundational learning contributes to low employability, with **80% of the workforce remaining informal (PLFS 2023)**.
- **Technological and Digital Divide:** As India's digital economy expands, digital access remains uneven. **UNICEF 2024 reports that 40% of Indian women still lack access to smartphones**. This gap restricts their participation in e-commerce, fintech and online education, further **entrenching inequality**.
- **Gender and Social Inequities:** Disparities in asset ownership reduce productivity and economic agency for marginalised groups.
 - **For example, SCs and STs, who constitute 25% of the population**, account for over 40% of India's multidimensionally poor (MPI 2023), highlighting entrenched structural exclusion.
- **Urban–Rural and Regional Disparities:** Economic growth is concentrated in urban corridors such as Delhi–Mumbai–Bengaluru. Meanwhile, backward regions remain capital-starved.
 - **For example**, Eastern states contribute less than 10% to national GDP but are home to nearly 40% of the country's poor.
- **Policy and Institutional Deficiencies:** Land ceiling and tenancy reforms remain weakly enforced, with 90% of ceiling-surplus land yet to be redistributed (NITI Aayog 2021).
 - Moreover, tax reforms such as the 2019 corporate tax cut disproportionately benefited top firms, **saving ₹1.5 lakh crore**.
- **Climate and Environmental Inequality:** Climate shocks disproportionately impact marginalised populations.
 - **For example**, In 2023, floods in Assam displaced over 2 million small and marginal farmers who received minimal compensation due to weak disaster relief frameworks.
- **Intergenerational Transfer of Inequality:** The absence of inherited assets in land, education or capital means **successive generations start from a position of disadvantage**.
 - As per Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, such inequality limits **substantive freedoms and life opportunities**, beyond mere income poverty.

Addressing the Paradox: Policy & Structural Measures

- **Land and Asset Reforms:**
 - Modernize land records via *Digital India Land Records Programme* and ensure tenancy rights.
 - Redistribute ceiling-surplus land and promote cooperative farming.
 - Mandate *joint spousal titles* to improve women's ownership.
- **Financial Inclusion**
 - Strengthen *JAM trinity* and *MUDRA loans* for micro-entrepreneurs.
 - Expand *Kisan Credit Cards* and *SHG credit*; regulate informal lending.
 - Promote asset insurance under *PM Suraksha Bima* and *PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojanas*.

- **Education and Skill Development**
 - Improve school quality through *Samagra Shiksha 2.0*.
 - Expand *PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana* and *Skill India* to align training with AI, EV, and green-tech sectors.
 - Target female enrolment through *Kanya Shiksha Pravesh Utsav*.
- **Technological & Digital Inclusion**
 - Extend *BharatNet* for rural broadband connectivity.
 - Implement *PMGDISHA* for digital literacy and subsidise smartphones for women's SHGs.
 - Encourage **community data ownership models** for fair digital participation.
- **Gender & Social Empowerment**
 - Strengthen *Stand-Up India* and *NRLM* to provide credit to Dalit and women entrepreneurs.
 - Expand *PM Awas Yojana* and *Ujjwala Yojana* for asset creation at household level.
- **Regional Equity & Infrastructure**
 - Continue *Aspirational Districts Programme* for lagging regions.
 - Prioritise rural infrastructure—roads, irrigation, cold chains—to enhance productivity.

Conclusion

Poverty in India persists not because of a lack of resources but because of **their unequal ownership and control**. As Amartya Sen observed, development means “*expanding people’s capabilities*”—a goal achievable only when economic growth translates into ownership, opportunity and dignity for all. Through inclusive reforms, India can convert its resource abundance into genuine human prosperity.

GENERAL STUDIES - 3

Q1. Examine the pattern and trend of public expenditure on Social Services in the post-reforms period in India. To what extent this has been in consonance with achieving the objective of inclusive growth? (10 Marks, 2024)

Answer:

Introduction

India's economic liberalisation in 1991 unlocked new frontiers of growth but it also exposed deep structural inequities. The reliance of over **80 crore citizens on free food grains** during COVID-19 was not just a crisis response—it was a **revelation of how vulnerable large sections still are**. As the country aspires toward **Viksit Bharat by 2047**, the trajectory of **social sector spending** has become a test of not just economic vision but **moral and constitutional commitment**.

Body

Pattern and Trend of Public Expenditure on Social Services

- **Shift from fiscal prudence to rights-based provisioning:** From **structural adjustment to social entitlements**, India gradually redefined public spending post-2000s.
 - **For example**, Public expenditure on social services rose from **5.49% of GDP (1990–91)** to **8.3% in 2021–22** – *Economic Survey 2022–23*.
- **Emergence of legally enforceable welfare rights:** Social security was institutionalized through laws that guaranteed entitlements, not just promised them.
 - **For example**, **MGNREGA Act (2005)** and **NFSA (2013)** ensure wage employment and food access for over **70 crore citizens**.
- **Expansion of targeted flagship schemes (CSS):** Centrally Sponsored Schemes became instruments to address sectoral inequality across India.
 - **For example**, **Ayushman Bharat** covers **50 crore people** under health insurance (*MoHFW*) and **PMAY** has enabled **3 crore homes** (*MoHUA 2024*).
- **Tech-enabled welfare through JAM and DBT:** Digital infrastructure improved efficiency, targeting and fiscal discipline in social transfers.
 - **For example**, **₹3.48 lakh crore** saved through DBT and **53 crore Jan Dhan accounts** enabled near-universal banking access – *MoF 2024*.
- **Rise in decentralised social innovation:** With enhanced devolution post-14th Finance Commission, states launched tailored welfare programs.
 - **For example**, **Karnataka's Gruha Lakshmi Yojana** gives ₹2,000/month to **1 crore women** to enhance women's economic agency.

- **Pandemic-triggered welfare expansion:** COVID-19 necessitated an unprecedented welfare response from both Centre and states.
 - **For example,** Under PMGKAY, **80 crore people** received free food grains for over 28 months – *MoCAF&PD 2023*.
- **Incremental rise in health and education spending:** Though still below global standards, investment in social infrastructure has improved.
 - **For example,** Health spending rose to **2.1% of GDP**, and education to **3.1%** – *Union Budget 2023–24*.
- **Inclusion of informal and gig workers:** Social protection gradually extended to workers in unorganised and digital economies.
 - **For example,** Over **29 crore workers** registered on e-Shram portal.
- **Gender-focused fiscal architecture:** Policy focus shifted to female empowerment through direct cash, asset ownership and capacity building.
 - **For example,** Ujjwala Yojana provided **9.6 crore LPG connections**.
- **Community-driven models for livelihood generation:** Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and cooperatives gained prominence in bottom-up development.
 - **For example,** Over **8.1 crore women** are part of **83 lakh SHGs** under DAY-NRLM – *MoRD 2024*.
- **Investment in rural infrastructure for equity:** Social expenditure increasingly targeted basic infrastructure to reduce multidimensional poverty.
 - **For example,** Jal Jeevan Mission raised rural tap water access from **17% (2019)** to **74% (2024)** – *Ministry of Jal Shakti*.
- **Persistent regional disparities:** Despite program expansion, inter-state variations in outcomes remain stark.
 - **For example,** Kerala's IMR is **6/1000** vs Bihar's **32/1000** – *SRS 2023*.

Extent of Alignment with Inclusive Growth

- **Sharp decline in multidimensional poverty:** Improved access to assets, food and services reduced deprivation across demographics.
 - **For example,** **25 crore people** moved out of poverty between 2015 and 2021 – *NITI Aayog, 2023*.
- **Gains in human development indicators:** Improvements in health, literacy and income reflect deeper social investments.
 - **For example,** India's HDI stands at **0.644**; literacy at **77.7%**, and life expectancy at **70.8 years** – *UNDP 2024*.
- **Deepening of financial and digital inclusion:** Public expenditure helped build platforms for broader socio-economic participation.
 - **For example,** **53 crore Jan Dhan accounts**, **1.3 billion Aadhaar holders** and **100 crore+ DBT transactions** enabled a new inclusion architecture.
- **Targeted upliftment of disadvantaged communities:** Welfare now explicitly focuses on SC/ST, women, elderly and disabled.

- For example, **PM Vishwakarma Yojana** supports artisans and **Stand-Up India** empowers SC/ST and women entrepreneurs.
- **Building long-term human capital:** From skilling to nutrition, social spending increasingly focuses on capability-building. For example, **NIPUN Bharat**, **PM Poshan**, and **PMKVY** address foundational literacy and employability.

Challenges to Inclusive Growth

- **High and rising economic inequality:** Public spending hasn't offset elite capture and wealth concentration.
 - For example, **Top 1% own 40.1%** of India's wealth and bottom 50% own just **13%** – *Oxfam India, 2023*.
- **Populist politics affecting fiscal priorities:** Competitive welfareism risks crowding out productive investments.
 - For example, Fiscal stress in **Punjab** and **Rajasthan** due to freebies like power subsidies – *CAG Reports*.
- **Fragmented welfare delivery:** Overlapping schemes often dilute efficiency and accountability.
 - For example, Parallel maternity and nutrition programs lack coordination, which reduces impact.
- **Under-coverage and underfunding:** Despite intent, benefits remain small and coverage uneven.
 - For example, NSAP offers only **₹300/month** pension to senior citizens – *MoRD 2024*.
- **Governance and last-mile delivery gaps:** Leakages, corruption and data lags weaken implementation.
 - For example, States like **Bihar** and **Jharkhand** underperform on SDG Index despite high central transfers – *NITI Aayog 2023*.

Conclusion

Public expenditure on social services has evolved from **discretionary welfare to foundational inclusion**. Yet, the path to **Viksit Bharat** demands more—more fiscal creativity, better targeting and deeper accountability. As the **Rangarajan Committee** rightly noted, **inclusion isn't just about how much we spend—but how wisely and justly we do so**. The future of India's growth lies in ensuring that every rupee spent reaches, empowers and transforms.

Q2. What are the causes of persistent high food inflation in India? Comment on the effectiveness of the monetary policy of RBI to control this type of inflation. (10 Marks, 2024)

Answer:

Introduction

India's food inflation continues to be a major policy concern. As of **March 2025**, retail food inflation dropped to **2.69%**, the lowest since 2021, but it had surged to over **11.5% in July 2023**, largely due to pulses and vegetable price shocks (MoSPI). The **Urjit Patel Committee (2014)** rightly noted that **headline inflation—especially food—is the most relevant anchor** for monetary policy in countries like India, where **food dominates household spending**.

Body:

Supply-Side Factors Behind Persistent Food Inflation

- **Low Agricultural Productivity:** Fragmented landholdings and limited mechanisation reduce supply elasticity.
 - **For example**, India's average landholding is **1.08 ha**, well below the global average – *Agricultural Census 2021*.
- **Weather Volatility and Monsoon Dependence:** Erratic rainfall, heatwaves and unseasonal rains disrupt production.
 - **For example**, Tomato prices spiked **400% in mid-2023** due to monsoon disruptions – *MoAFW, 2023*.
- **Storage and Supply Chain Bottlenecks:** Inadequate cold storage and transport inflate final prices.
 - **For example**, **30–40% of fruits and vegetables are lost post-harvest** – *ICAR Report, 2023*.
- **Skewed Procurement and MSP Policies:** Overemphasis on wheat and rice distorts cropping patterns.
 - **For example**, Despite surplus production, procurement of pulses and oilseeds remains low – *CACP Reports, 2023*.
- **Import Dependence and Global Shocks:** Geopolitical tensions inflate prices of imported food items.
 - **For example**, The Ukraine conflict led to a **30% rise in edible oil prices** in 2022 – *MoCI*.

Demand-Side Factors Behind Persistent Food Inflation

- **Income-Driven Dietary Changes:** Higher incomes drive demand for protein-rich and perishable food.
 - **For example,** Urban households increased fruit and milk consumption by **15% over a decade** – *NSSO, 2021*.
- **Urbanisation and Logistics Costs:** Growing urban demand stretches fragile supply chains.
 - **For example,** Urban CPI food inflation stayed elevated in 2023 even as rural prices stabilised – *RBI Bulletin, 2024*.
- **Rising Rural Wages and Input Costs:** Labour shortages and wage inflation raise cultivation costs.
 - **For example,** Agricultural wage inflation was **6.7% in 2023** – *Labour Bureau*.

Effectiveness of RBI's Monetary Policy

- **Limited Impact on Supply Shocks:** Monetary tools **can't correct harvest failures or supply chain gaps**.
 - **For example,** Rate hikes in 2022 failed to control inflation caused by tomato and onion shortages.
- **Lag in Transmission to Food Markets:** Interest rate changes take months to reflect in price behaviour.
 - **For example,** Despite **250 bps hike**, food inflation remained high through most of 2023.
- **Role in Currency Stability and Expectations:** RBI interventions stabilise the rupee and reduce imported inflation volatility.
 - **For example,** A stable rupee in 2023 partially softened edible oil import costs – *RBI Annual Report 2023–24*.
- **Structural Reforms Are Essential:** Monetary tightening needs to be supported by supply-side policies.
 - **For example,** Even with tight monetary policy in 2019, food inflation remained high due to mandi inefficiencies.

Conclusion

Persistent food inflation in India is both a **structural and distributional challenge**. As Dr. Raghuram Rajan observed, **inflation acts like a "destructive disease"**, which disproportionately impacts the poor who spend more on food. While RBI's monetary policy can manage expectations and demand-side pressures, supply-side resilience—**through cold storage, diversified MSP and climate-proof farming**—is the only sustainable antidote.

GENERAL STUDIES – 4

Q1. “Blind political loyalty can be as dangerous as political apathy.” Discuss in the context of responsible citizenship. What are the key factors shaping political attitudes among citizens? (10 Marks)

Answer:

Introduction

“The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.” — *Plato*

In a democracy, **Blind loyalty to a party or leader** erodes critical thinking, while **apathy abandons collective duty**. Both pose threats to accountable governance and justice. Responsible citizenship lies in **engaged and reflective participation**, which balances commitment with conscience.

Body

Ethical Risks of Blind Political Loyalty

- **Loss of moral autonomy:** Citizens may suspend their own judgment in favor of party line.
 - *For example*, Blind defense of corruption within one’s own party, even when evidence is compelling.
- **Erosion of justice and fairness:** Actions by favoured leaders may be excused, while similar actions by others are condemned.
 - *For example*, Rationalising hate speech by party members as “political rhetoric,” while condemning others.
- **Undermining accountability:** Leaders may evade scrutiny because followers shield them.
 - *For example*, Inducting individuals with tainted pasts into important positions citing “political necessity.”
- **Groupthink and ethical relativism:** Morality becomes relative to party identity, rather than universal values.
 - *For example*, Justifying mob violence by members of one’s own camp as “justified protest.”
- **Collapse of civic virtue:** Emotional zeal replaces reasoned debate.
 - *For example*, Online trolling of dissenters without engaging with their arguments.
- **Violation of Constitutional morality:** Prioritising loyalty to a party or identity over the Constitution’s values.
 - *For example*, Supporting legislation or acts based on religious identity rather than equal rights or merit.

Ethical Risks of Political Apathy

- **Abdication of civic duty:** Citizens fail to uphold their role in governance by abstaining from participation.
 - *For example,* Not voting, or ignoring municipal elections and civic issues.
- **Neglect of communitarian ethics:** Community welfare depends on collective responsibility, which apathy weakens.
 - *For example,:* Failing to join or support protests or initiatives against injustices like environmental degradation.
- **Complicity by silence:** Inaction can become complicity in wrongdoing.
 - *For example,* Remaining silent in the face of communal violence or corruption in one's locale.
- **Weakening of democracy:** Low participation diminishes legitimacy and representation.
 - *For example,* Urban voter turnout often lags rural turnout, leading to skewed policy priorities.
- **Erosion of ethical citizenship:** Citizens lose qualities like empathy, critical thinking, civic courage.
 - *For example,* Ignoring issues like waste management or local pollution affecting one's neighborhood.

Key Factors Shaping Political Attitudes

Factor	Promoting Responsible / Critical Attitude	Fostering Blind Loyalty or Apathy
Moral & Civic Education	Teaching constitutional values, debate culture, civic rights & duties. For example, SVEEP campaigns in schools encourage informed voting.	Absence of civic education leads to identity-based or herd-based voting.
Media & Social Media	Investigative journalism, fact-checking and exposure of corruption.	Echo chambers, misinformation and manipulative propaganda (e.g. WhatsApp rumours).
Family & Peer Influence	Ethical political discussion in family/peer circles encourages nuance.	Inherited party loyalty, peer pressure and suppression of dissent at home.
Economic Conditions	Rising aspirations, education and job security encourage demands for accountability.	Economic distress pushes people to support populist freebies or clientelist politics.
Religious / Cultural Identity	Inclusive identity frameworks that transcend sectarian divides.	Communal polarization and identity politics used to mobilize blind loyalty.

Trust in Institutions Historical	Credibility of Election Commission, judiciary and anti-corruption bodies sustains engagement.	Disillusionment with corrupt or unresponsive institutions drives withdrawal or radicalism.
Consciousness	Awareness of freedom struggle, social reform movements fosters civic pride and duty .	Selective use of historical grievances to stoke resentment or identity politics.

Conclusion

Both blind loyalty and political apathy undermine the foundations of democracy. Responsible citizenship demands that we **participate actively, yet critically**, holding leaders to account while refusing to abandon moral agency. Only when citizens refuse to be mere blind followers or silent observers can a **vibrant, just and accountable polity flourish**.



Case Study Question

Q2. A senior High Court judge, with a distinguished tenure delivering key verdicts in constitutional and administrative matters, resigned from judicial office a year before his scheduled retirement. Within a week, he formally joined a prominent national political party. In a public ceremony attended by top political leaders, he announced his intention to contribute to nation-building through political engagement and legislative reform.

This development triggered intense debate in media and legal circles. While the legality of the decision was not questioned—since judges are free to resign—the timing and nature of the transition raised concerns. His resignation came shortly after he had presided over sensitive cases involving electoral disputes, policy decisions, and public interest litigations.

The controversy deepened when, at a political rally weeks after joining the party, the former judge declared that his judicial philosophy and decisions had always been aligned with the ideology of his new political affiliation. This public admission alarmed the legal community, as many saw it as retrospectively undermining the credibility of his past judgments and casting a shadow over the impartiality of decisions delivered in politically sensitive cases. Bar associations issued strong statements warning that such remarks could erode faith in judicial independence and shake the foundations of impartial justice.

Interestingly, a parallel trend has been noted in the civil services, where IAS and IPS officers resign to join political parties. However, in these cases, public and media scrutiny has generally been less intense, focusing more on electoral prospects rather than ethical propriety.

Supporters of the judge argue that he had fulfilled his judicial obligations with integrity and simply chose another form of public service. They emphasize that his resignation was voluntary and that, as a citizen, he holds the right to participate in democratic politics.

Public opinion remains divided. While some view such transitions as a natural extension of democratic freedom, others believe that individuals occupying offices of such elevated public responsibility must observe higher thresholds of restraint, detachment, and non-alignment to preserve institutional sanctity.

Questions:

- a) What are the ethical and institutional implications of public servants resigning to join political parties? (10 Marks)
- b) What measures would you suggest to preserve the sanctity and neutrality of institutions such as the judiciary, while also respecting individual rights? (10 Marks)



Answer:

Introduction

“Public office is a public trust.” – U.S. Supreme Court

In a democracy, transitions from neutral constitutional roles to partisan politics raise serious concerns about institutional integrity and public trust, especially when undertaken without restraint or reflection. In 2024, **Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay of the Calcutta High Court resigned and joined the BJP** shortly after giving high-profile judgments involving education scams and the state government, triggering a nationwide debate about **judicial impartiality and public perception.**

(a) Ethical and Institutional Implications

- **Perception of Bias** – Immediate political entry creates doubt about the neutrality of past judicial decisions.
- **Loss of Public Trust** – Erodes confidence in the judiciary’s independence and credibility.
- **Conflict of Interest** – Raises ethical concerns where recent rulings involved political parties or policy issues.
- **Blurring of Separation of Powers** – Weakens institutional boundaries between the judiciary and politics.
- **Delegitimization of Past Judgments** – Post-resignation statements aligning with party ideology taint earlier verdicts.
- **Threat to Judicial Independence** – May tempt serving judges to seek political favour in anticipation of post-retirement roles.
- **Breach of Constitutional Morality** – Undermines the ideals of restraint, neutrality, and non-partisanship expected of high offices.
- **Rise of Careerism** – Encourages public office to become a stepping-stone for political ambition rather than a service ethic.
- **Lack of Regulatory Safeguards** – Absence of a cooling-off period leaves institutions vulnerable to politicisation.

Positive Implications of Public Servants Joining Politics

- **Exercise of Democratic Rights** – As citizens, public servants enjoy the right to political participation after resignation (Article 19(1)(a)), strengthening democratic inclusion.
- **Leveraging Administrative Experience** – Former IAS, IPS officers and judges bring governance insights and policy expertise to politics.
- **Bridging Policy–Implementation Gap** – Their experience helps craft practical and implementable policies.

- **Ethical Leadership in Politics** – Officers with reputations for integrity can set benchmarks for clean politics.
- **Strengthening Legislative Competence** – Their knowledge of law, budgeting, and institutional frameworks enriches debates and oversight.
- **Internal Reform Agents** – Having witnessed systemic challenges first-hand, they can drive institutional reforms from within politics.
- **Public Trust and Credibility** – Well-respected ex-officials may restore credibility and public trust in political parties.
- **Bridging Institutional Gaps** – Understanding judicial reasoning helps align legislation with constitutional principles, reducing friction between legislature and judiciary.

(b) Measures to Preserve Institutional Neutrality & Public Trust

- **Statutory Cooling-Off Period (2-5 Years)** – Legally binding waiting period before judges and senior civil servants can join political parties or contest elections (recommended by Law Commission & 2nd ARC).
- **Codified Judicial Conduct Framework** – Enact a *Judicial Standards and Accountability Act* to regulate post-retirement conduct and preserve impartiality.
- **Ethical Conduct Charter for Public Servants** – Based on Kantian duty ethics and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's constitutional morality to ensure self-restraint and dignity.
- **Independent Ethics Commission** – Modelled on UK's ACOBA to review and advise on transitions from public service to politics.
- **Media and Civil Society Vigilance** – Encourage informed public discourse through media, think tanks and law schools on ethical post-office transitions.
- **Reform Political Party Conduct** – Parties should adopt voluntary codes refraining from offering posts to recently retired judges/civil servants, respecting institutional neutrality.

Global Best Practices

- **United Kingdom - ACOBA (Advisory Committee on Business Appointments):** Former ministers, civil servants, and judges must seek approval before accepting post-retirement roles.
- **United States:**
 - *Lifetime Ban for Federal Judges* – U.S. federal judges (including Supreme Court justices) serve for life and cannot take political posts after retirement.
 - *Hatch Act (1939)*: Restricts the **political activity of serving civil servants** and prohibits federal employees from running for public office while in service.

Conclusion

“In a democracy, the appearance of justice is as vital as justice itself.” – Lord Hewart
While the right to political participation must be respected, positions of high public trust demand **greater restraint and ethical foresight**. Cooling-off periods, codified ethical charters, and voluntary political party reforms are essential **to maintain the sanctity, neutrality and credibility of institutions** like the judiciary while safeguarding democratic freedoms.



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