



APPROACH – ANSWER: G. S. MAINS MOCK TEST - 2069 (2023)

Answer all the questions in NOT MORE THAN 200 WORDS each. Content of the answers is more important than its length. All questions carry equal marks. *12.5X20=250*

1. *Discuss the various forms of regionalism that have emerged in India since independence.*

Approach:

- Introduce by giving definition of regionalism and mentioning the factors responsible for it.
- Discuss its various forms that have emerged in India.
- In conclusion, highlight its implications on India.

Answer:

Regionalism is a political ideology that encourages people's loyalties around their region or place of origin. It implies people's love for a particular region in preference to the country and in certain cases in preference to the state of which the region is part. In India, regionalism is rooted in diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, and religions. Furthermore, it is encouraged by the geographical concentration of these identity markers in particular regions, and fuelled by a sense of relative deprivation.

Various forms of regionalism in India

- **Demand for autonomy:** Soon after independence there was demand in certain states or regions to **secede from the Indian Union** and become independent sovereign states. The most prominent were that of the Plebiscite Front in Kashmir, Mizo National Front (Lushai Hills of Assam), Nagaland Socialist Conference (Naga Hills District of Assam) etc.
- **Supra-state regionalism:** It implies **more than one state expresses their group identity**, which is usually in relation to certain specific issues. However, it does not in any way imply the total and permanent merger of identity of the states into the identity of the group. These groups also witnessed rivalries, tensions and conflicts. For instance, there were agitations in some states, which were against the discontinuation of English as an official language in the 1960s.
- **Inter-state regionalism:** It emerged because of **dispute of state boundaries or overlapping of one or more identities**, which threaten their regional interests. Issues such as inter-state river water disputes, in general, and others like the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute has led to tensions between states.
- **Intra-state regional politics or sub-regionalism:** It embodies the **desire of a part of a state for identity and self-development** and may also reflect a notion of deprivation or exploitation of a part of the state at the expense of another. The important examples of this kind of sub-regionalism are Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Saurashtra in Gujarat, Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, East U.P. in Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Sons of the soil theory:** It ties people to their **place of birth and confers some benefits**, rights, roles and responsibilities on them, which may not apply to others. It is accentuated by factors such as competition for resources, jobs, economic disparities, etc. Examples include campaigns for safeguarding of interests of Maharashtrians, clashes among Bodos and Bengali speaking Muslims in Assam, among others.

Since independence, regionalism has led to many agitations and state specific demands. However, it does not always disrupt national solidarity. Instead, it has led to the development of regions and contributed to national integration. Moreover, the Indian Constitution through federalism has created means to accommodate these regional sentiments.

2. *Although globalisation has created new opportunities for women in India, it has created some issues as well. Discuss.*

Approach:

- Give a brief introduction to globalisation.
- Discuss how globalisation has created new opportunities for women in India.
- Explain how it has also contributed to some issues.
- Give a brief conclusion.

Answer:

Globalisation is the process of integration of a country with the rest of the world socially, economically as well as culturally. It has affected different social groups including women around the world in different ways.

New opportunities created for women in India by Globalisation

- **Economic opportunities**
 - **Increase in job opportunities** in the formal sector owing to investment by MNCs in India as well as due to increase in ICT sector and export sector opportunities. For FY 2017–2018, the figures showed that the IT and ITES sector employs 34 per cent women – a rise from 21% in 2001.
 - **Increase in average wages** of women especially due to the IT sector where women are hired for technical work and companies generally follow gender-neutral policy based on knowledge-centric skills' possession.
 - **Opportunity of equal rights and safe working environment** as women are becoming more vocal regarding their issues through support of global organisations such as ILO and WTO.
 - **Increase in possibilities of skilling** as various global organisations including NGOs have provided women with the skills they need to advance, such as literacy and vocational skills.
- **Social opportunities**
 - To be able to **contribute to the family expenses** which supports the creation of new resources and raise the level of income of the family.
 - **More choices and independence in terms of their social decisions.** It can be seen through an increase in inter-caste marriages, single mothers, live-in relationships etc.
 - **Increase in education** of women as well as improvement in **health care facilities**, leading to reduction of MMR and IMR.
 - **Increase in awareness regarding their rights** even in rural women as they have been influenced by globalization through media and numerous intervention programs of NGOs increasing their self-confidence and willpower to fight for their rights.

Issues created by globalization

- There have been arguments that globalization has further accentuated instead of reducing the gender **pay gap**. For example, an export strategy in garment manufacturing based on low-wage female labour may increase the proportion of women labour but increase the wage gap.
- Also, that it may lead to **further marginalization of women** in the informal labour sector or impoverishment through **loss of traditional sources of income**.
- The **increased competition and work pressure** on women workers often leads to them being employed in poorly paid, part time and exploitative jobs. This further impacts physical and mental health of the women workers.
- Women are victims of **career stagnation**. For instance, while men and women start their careers at similar ages, men at senior positions are often younger than women at a similar level.
- The ability to benefit from new opportunities is related to **access to productive assets** – including education, skills, property, credit – in which women still have less access than men.
- Working women often suffer from **dual responsibility** as their domestic responsibilities are not alleviated.
- Transfusion of western norms through mass media and introduction of social media as a consequence of globalization has led to problems for women like **commodification**, vilification and harassment on social media etc.

Thus, there is a need to mitigate the negative impacts of globalization on women by ensuring skill development, innovation and creating an enduring and safe environment for women's holistic development.

3. Explain the concept of Social Impact Assessment and state its significance.

Approach:

- Start with the concept of Social Impact Assessment (SIA).
- Explain its features and highlight its significance.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

According to the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), Social Impact Assessment (SIA) includes the processes of **analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions** such as policies, programs, plans, projects and **any social change processes invoked by those interventions**. Its primary purpose is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment.

Important features of SIA and their significance:

- **Holistic Concept:** The goal of impact assessment is to bring about a more ecologically, socio-culturally and economically sustainable and equitable environment. Therefore, it promotes **community development and empowerment, builds capacity, and develops social capital** (social networks and trust).
- **Developmental Approach:** The focus of SIA is towards a **proactive stance to development and better development outcomes**, not just the identification or amelioration of negative or unintended outcomes. Assisting communities and other stakeholders to identify development goals, and ensuring that positive outcomes are maximised, can be more important than minimising harm from negative impacts.
- **Diverse applications:** The methodology of SIA can be applied to a **wide range of planned interventions, and can be undertaken on behalf of a wide range of actors**, and not just within a regulatory framework.
- **Dynamism:** SIA contributes to the process of **adaptive management** of policies, programs, plans and projects, and therefore underlines the design and operation of the planned intervention.
- **Bottoms-Up Approach:** SIA builds on local knowledge and utilises participatory processes to analyse the concerns of interested and affected parties. It involves stakeholders in the assessment of social impacts, the analysis of alternatives, and monitoring of the planned intervention.
- **Broader Interventions:** While SIA is typically applied to planned interventions, the techniques of SIA can also be used to consider the social impacts that derive from other types of events, such as disasters, demographic change and epidemics.

SIA, thus, has strong links with a wide range of specialist sub-fields involved in the assessment of areas such as: aesthetics; archaeology and cultural heritage; community; culture; demography; development; gender; health etc.

4. Bring out the changes that have been witnessed in the caste system over the past few decades.

Approach:

- Introduce by explaining the traditional caste system and briefly highlight the factors due to which the caste system has witnessed changes.
- Discuss changes witnessed over the last few decades.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

The traditional caste system was based on the notion of purity and pollution. It included aspects such as hierarchy, caste endogamy and occupational division of labour. However, this traditional structure of the caste system has witnessed changes over the last few decades due to socio-economic and political developments. Factors like westernization, modernization, globalization, political mobilization, legislative protections, democratic decentralization, industrialization and urbanization played a role in changing features of the caste system in India.

Changes witnessed in the caste system in India over the past few decades

- **Inter-caste marriages:** Inter-caste marriages were socially forbidden as caste endogamy was one of the features of the traditional caste system. However, due to economic and social changes, inter-caste marriages are increasingly taking place.
- **Changes in occupation:** Occupational mobility has become the new feature with breakdown of the traditional Jajmani system. Castes are increasingly leaving behind their traditional roles prescribed by hierarchical occupations, for instance, Dalit entrepreneurs, Brahmin traders, Vaishya professors etc.
- **Decline in commensal aspect of caste:** Due to frequent inter-mixing of the people at meetings, conferences, seminars etc., food habits have changed, especially in the urban areas. People have adapted to new social norms such as eating at the same table, accepting food prepared by any caste without any reservations etc.
- **Politicisation of caste:** In recent decades, politics of caste has been evident especially with respect to the nature of vote bank politics. Further, there is an upsurge in the caste-based regional parties in India.
- **Caste-based affirmative actions:** Provision of caste-based reservation in education and jobs has strengthened caste identities. For example, recent demand of OBC status by some caste groups like Patels and Marathas.
- **Caste based violence:** Inter-caste violence, honour killings etc. have been on a rise in some areas due to change in the traditional power structure and dominance of castes at the local level.

Despite the varied forces of change, caste has continued to adapt itself to the new circumstances and remained a significant part of Indian society. Though, the concept of purity and pollution, the Jajmani system, and the commensal aspect of caste have declined, caste as an endogamous social group and its link with the kinship system still persists.

5. Stating the problems arising due to haphazard urbanization in India, mention the steps taken by the government to address them.

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by substantiating with facts/reports highlighting the status of urbanization in India.
- Highlight the problems due to haphazard urbanization in India.
- State the steps taken by the government to address these problems.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

In India, **nearly 35% of the population** is already living in **urban areas** and it is expected to rise up to **41% by 2030** according to the **UN State of World Population Report**. However, this rapid urbanization without proper urban planning, eventually makes urban areas and cities unsuitable for living. For instance, more **than 75% of the urban population** of the country is concentrated in **only 10 Indian states** and 65% of the 7933 urban settlements do not have any master plan.

Problems arising due to haphazard urbanization in India

- **Slums and squatter settlements:** Unplanned urbanization leads to the growth of slums, which are characterized by substandard housing, overcrowding, lack of electrification, ventilation, sanitation, roads and drinking water facilities. According to the World Bank, the population living in slums in India was reported at 35.2% of the total urban population in 2018.

- **Urban crimes:** Unplanned urbanisation creates an imbalance in resource availability that manifests itself in dearth of space, shelter, food and basic amenities for the rising population leading to competition, rivalry, insecurity and crimes.
- **Waste generation & waste management issues:** Increase in urbanization, changing lifestyles and consumerism is going to further complicate solid waste management processes causing health hazards and urban environment degradation.
- **Pollution and deteriorating environmental quality:** Rapid urbanization is one of the major causes of environmental degradation. The congestion of people in limited spaces reduces the quality of air and contaminates water. According to the **World Air Quality Report by IQAir**, 10 of the top 15 most polluted cities are in India.
- **Water-related problems:** By 2050, at least 30 Indian cities will face a grave water risk, according to the WWF. The problems range from poor management of water sources, contaminated supplies, leaky distribution networks and vast volumes of untreated wastewater being poured into India's rivers.
- **Transportation-related problems:** Inadequate road infrastructure and inefficient and over-congested public transportation system leads to capacity overloading and causes problems such as road accidents, traffic jams, etc.

Steps taken by the government to address above problems

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban):** It envisions provision of “Housing for All” by 2022 through slum rehabilitation and promotion of Affordable Housing.
- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT):** To build amenities in cities, which will improve the quality of life of all, especially that of the poor and the disadvantaged.
- **Smart Cities Mission:** It aims at driving economic growth and improving the quality of life through area-based development and city-level smart solutions.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban):** It aims to eliminate open defecation, manual scavenging, introduce modern and scientific solid waste management and augment the capacity of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) among others.
- **Deen Dayal Antodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihood Mission (DAY – NULM):** It aims at creating opportunities for skill development leading to market based employment and helping the poor to set up self-employment ventures.
- Other Initiatives, such as **National Urban Transport Policy, National Electric Mobility Mission Plan 2020, National Infrastructure Pipeline for sustainable infrastructure** in urban areas, etc.

Urbanization is not a problem in itself, but its unsustainable and unplanned nature creates socio-economic problems. India must manage these problems and ensure planned urbanization by working on several aspects related to funding, planning, capacity building and low-income housing.

6. *Enumerate the salient features of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan. Also, highlight the challenges that need to be overcome to make the initiative a success.*

Approach:

- Give a brief introduction of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.
- Briefly explain its salient features.
- Enlist the challenges faced by it.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan aims to make India and its citizens independent and self-reliant in all senses. It consists of **five pillars** - Economy, Infrastructure, System, Vibrant Demography and Demand. The objective is to **cut down import dependence** by focussing on substitution while **improving safety compliance and quality of goods** to gain global market share. However, it does not mean **any exclusionary or isolationist strategies**.

Salient features of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan

- It is an endeavour towards building an economy that **brings quantum jump rather than incremental change**.
- It focuses **on strengthening every stake-holder** in the supply chain in order to increase demand in the country and also meet this demand.
- It focuses **on building world-class infrastructure** which will become the identity of modern India.
- It will be carried out in **two phases**:
 - **Phase 1**: It will consider sectors like medical textiles, electronics, plastics and toys where local manufacturing and exports can be promoted.
 - **Phase 2**: It will consider products like gems and jewellery, pharma and steel, etc.
- The Abhiyaan has **two approaches**:
 - **First**: Achieving self-reliance by replacing imported products with domestically manufactured products.
 - **Second**: Permitting the PSUs to have a joint venture with foreign companies to acquire technical knowhow and global managerial skills.

The government has undertaken several bold reforms such as an economic stimulus package of INR 20 lakh crores, supply chain reforms for agriculture, enabling migrants to access PDS, direct tax measures, new definition of MSMEs, building capable human resource and launch of 12 new Swayam Prabha DTH channels etc. **However, following challenges need to be overcome to realize the aim of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan:**

- **Issues related to liquidity**: Majority of the monetary packages are supposed to be transmitted by RBI to Banks and Banks to Citizens. However, this mode of transmission suffers from the issue of **inefficient transmission of monetary policy**.
- **Lack of demand**: The pandemic-induced lockdown has lowered aggregate demand, and a fiscal stimulus is needed. However, the package, by overwhelmingly relying on credit infusion, fails to recognise that people across income segments need to have money to spend to improve demand and investment.
- **Lack of backward and forward linkages**: Unless the rest of the domestic economy is revived, the MSME sector may face a shortage of demand.
- **Burgeoning fiscal deficit**: Financing the stimulus package and simultaneously containing fiscal deficit would be difficult.
- **Difficulty in mobilising finances**: The government seeks disinvestment to mobilise the finances for the scheme. However, challenges related to disinvestment or privatisation and a higher, cost of borrowing in the foreign markets may create some impediments.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan is a visionary mission, which requires comprehensive and inclusive measures to achieve its stated objectives, such as increasing demand through expenditure on greenfield infrastructure, strategic use of high forex reserves, privatization, rationalization of taxes, inclusive development through reduction of economic inequality etc.

7. *What are the challenges faced by the transgender community in India? Enumerate the various steps taken to address these challenges.*

Approach:

- Introduce by highlighting the status of the transgender community in India.
- Enlist the challenges faced by the transgender community in India.
- Mention the steps taken in this regard.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

According to World Health Organization, 'transgender' is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and expression does not conform to the norms and expectations traditionally associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. As per the **Census of 2011, the total population of transgender people in India is 4.9 lakh.**

While the **Indian Constitution** provides for the fundamental right to equality, and tolerates no discrimination on the grounds of sex, caste, creed or religion, the transgender community continues to face challenges like:

- **Discrimination:** Sexuality or gender identity often makes transgender a victim of **stigmatization and exclusion** by the society. They are often subjected to **sexual abuse, rape and other forms of physical violence** and exploitation.
- **Ostracization:** Transgender individuals are often **ostracized by society**. Even their own families view them as a burden and often force them to leave their parental homes.
- **Unemployment:** They are economically marginalised with **very limited employment opportunities** and are forced into professions like **prostitution and begging** for livelihood or resorting to exploitative entertainment industry.
- **Access to public spaces:** Due to a lack of provision of gender neutral/separate transgender toilets, they face **discrimination and denial** while accessing public places like public toilets etc.
- **Social Problems:** The transgender community feels neglected due to **lack of inheritance of property or rights of adoption of a child**.
- **Health issues:** Not only do they face **discrimination while accessing** health care, they remain **highly vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases** like HIV AIDS. According to the UNAIDS report 2019, the risk of acquiring HIV is 12 times higher for transgender people than adults aged 15–49 years. They also face **mental health issues** include depression and suicidal tendencies, and violence-related stress.

In this regard, following measures have been taken so far:

- **Supreme Court Judgements:**
 - **NALSA Judgement, 2014:** The Supreme Court in National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India & Ors recognized transgender as '**third gender**'.
 - **Section 377 Judgement, 2018:** SC decriminalized same-sex relations between consenting adults by partially striking down the colonial era provisions of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020:** Under the powers conferred by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, these rules seek to recognise the identity of transgenders and prohibit discrimination.
- **National Portal for Transgender Persons:** Launched in consonance with the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020, it would help transgender community in digitally applying for a certificate and identity card from anywhere in the country.
- **State Level Initiatives:** Various states have taken initiatives for betterment of the lives of transgender population like:
 - Odisha brought **Draft Odisha Transgender Policy 2017**, which seeks to protect rights of the gender non-conforming child.
 - Further, states like **Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu** have set up a **transgender justice board** to deal with their complaints and providing welfare schemes for socio-economic upliftment of the community.

Further, there is a need to take efforts towards **skill development** among transgender communities, **sensitization of the law enforcement agencies**, separate policies related to **healthcare for transgender communities, large scale sensitization of people** to eliminate the social stigma etc. These steps will ensure that the transgender community are brought into the mainstream.

8. Right to information and transparency in administration are prerequisites for good governance. Elucidate.

Approach:

- Introduce by giving a brief account of good governance and its characteristics.
- Explain how Right to Information and transparency are linked with good governance.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

According to the World Bank, Good Governance can be defined as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”. Good Governance should be participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follow the rule of law.

The **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005** empowered the citizens to obtain information from state or central government departments and offices as a **legal right in a time bound manner**. Right to information and transparency in administration have a direct relation with the good governance and have been considered as prerequisites for good governance owing to the following reasons:

- **Transparency:** Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and can be directly accessed to the public. RTI opens up government’s records to public scrutiny, thereby arming citizens with a vital tool to inform them about what the government does and how effectively, thus bringing more **transparency** in the administration.
- **Predictability:** Transparency in government organisations makes them function more objectively thereby enhancing predictability.
- **Accountability:** The RTI act provides people with a mechanism to access information, which they can use to hold the government accountable or to seek explanation as to why decisions have been taken, by whom and with what consequences or outcomes.
- **Participation:** The RTI act gives an opportunity to the common people to participate in governance and reduce the imbalance in power relationship, provides a tool to oppose injustice and allows collective spirit to make democracy work for everyone.
- **Decentralization of power:** The RTI Act has democratized the information and decentralized the power. Power is no more confined to a select few, rather it has been made available to the citizens. The RTI Act thus strengthens grassroots democracy and ensures people's participation in local governance and development activities.

Thus, the RTI Act has strengthened pillars of good governance. It has been a tool of participatory democracy which augmented good governance and service delivery which is a sign of mature and vibrant democracy. In this way, the RTI not only promotes good governance but also increases the trust between government and the people it governs.

9. Analyse the significance and challenges associated with the adoption of e-governance in India.

Approach:

- Introduce with the definition of e-governance and its evolution in India.
- Discuss the significance of adoption of e-governance in India.
- State the various challenges that come in the way of implementation of e-governance models in the country.
- Conclude briefly with a way forward.

Answer:

According to the World Bank, e-governance refers to the **use of information technologies by government agencies** that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government and to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public.

In India, e-governance has steadily evolved from computerization of government departments to initiatives that encapsulate the finer points of governance through **the National e-Governance Plan and Digital India** to bring in **SMART governance** implying: Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent governance.

Significance of e-governance in India:

- **Administrative development:**
 - **Automation of administrative processes:** Various interventions like E-Seva portals and Common Service Centres (passport, insurance, Aadhar services, etc.) have enabled online carrying of operations and file movements. Budgeting, accounting, data flow, etc. have become easier and seamless. This has increased the efficiency of office operations and processes and has reduced unnecessary delays.
 - **Paperwork reduction:** For instance, the newly launched e-Bill system will make the entire process of submission and backend processing completely paperless and transparent in a phased manner and eliminate the need to submit crores of paper bills annually.
- **Quality of services:** Dissemination of information through ICT increases transparency, ensures accountability and prevents corruption e.g., **UID, e-Kranti, Mobile Seva, e-Mitra etc.**
- **Social development:** Increased accessibility to information has empowered the citizens and has enhanced their participation. With easy access to government services, the faith of the citizens in the government increases and they come forward to share their views and give feedback. Online participation also eliminates discriminatory factors affecting societal behaviour. For example, **mygov.in, Bhoomi Project (Karnataka) for online delivery of land records etc.**
- **Economic development:** Reduced transaction costs, improved ease of doing business, real-time availability of information regarding markets, products, agriculture, health, education, weather, etc. lead to better and more opportunities. For instance, e-NAM, MCA-21.

While e-governance provides multiple benefits, there are various challenges in its adoption as well, including:

- **Social challenges:**
 - A large number of people are **unable to afford** a computer and internet connection.
 - Lack of **FinTech literacy**, especially among women and elderly.
 - Some people are **resistant to change** from paper-based systems to web-based systems.
- **Economic challenges:** Huge amount of **money** is required in creating initial infrastructure, making the process operational, as well as in its maintenance and upgradation.
- **Technical challenges:**
 - Non-availability of e-platforms supporting **local languages**.
 - **Inadequate privacy and security** of an individual's personal data.
 - Lack of **skilled human** resources.
 - Lack of reliable network in **geographically inhospitable areas**.
 - Lack of **multi-modal interaction**, which makes it difficult to access the e-platform on different devices.

In order to harness the benefits of e-governance, it is essential to develop adequate infrastructure, provide sufficient capital and investment, enable easy and wider accessibility and generate ample and skilful human resources as suggested by the 2nd ARC Report.

10. *Discuss how Citizen's Charter has emerged as an innovative tool for reinforcing citizen-centric governance. Also, list the various constraints faced in its effective implementation in India.*

Approach:

- Define Citizen's Charter.
- Highlight its contribution in terms of reinforcing citizen-centric governance.
- List the constraints being faced in its implementation in India.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

A Citizen's Charter is a document that an organization publishes for public reference, which provides details about the **nature, working, and functions** of the organization. It also incorporates the **service quality, and the time period for provision** of various services, that the citizens can expect from the organization.

Citizens and their rights were brought at the centre stage by the growing emphasis on transparency, accountability and upgrading service delivery. In this scenario, Citizen's Charters emerged as a tool to enhance citizen-centric governance in the following ways:

- They are the clearest articulation of the need to focus on the **experience of public service users**, and for services to be **responsive** to the people using them.
- They bring in the **element of choice and competition** in public service delivery, thereby facilitating a paradigm shift in service delivery by **recognizing the entitlement** of the citizens to the highest standards of service and empowering them.
- The **citizen-centric approach** raises expectations, sets a **pattern** and encourages the government to **extend similar reforms** across services and regions.
- They set **clear standards of service i.e. a system for performance monitoring and appraisal** by providing **full information about services, their cost and performance** in a simple **language**.
- They overwhelmingly focus on **mandating fair treatment, respect for privacy and dignity, and attention to the special needs** of the service users.
- Besides mandating **efficient use of resources** to provide the best value for taxpayers and users, they encourage **involvement and consultation of the present and potential service users** in decision-making.
- They put in place **an effective grievance redressal mechanism** for quick and effective resolution of any complaint that the consumers may have.

However, the efficacy of Citizen's Charter suffer due to various shortcomings during their implementation, including:

- **Poor design and content:** Most organizations do not have adequate capability to draft meaningful and succinct Citizen's Charters. Service providers are also not always familiar with the concept, philosophy, goals and the main features of the Charter.
- **Unrealistic commitments:** Expected standards or mandated time norms have been either too lax or too tight.
- **Lack of effective communication:** Information brochures, publicity materials, pamphlets produced earlier by the organisations are often mistaken for Citizen's Charter.
- **Lack of consultation:** Despite encouraging it in principle, Citizen's Charters are usually formulated without a consultative process.
- **Lack of teeth:** A Citizen's Charter does not provide any legal right to citizens and there are no penalties/punishment for non-compliance.
- **Lack of awareness amongst citizens:** People are not enlightened with regard to the responsibilities of various government departments. As a result, there is no pressure on the departments to perform as per the Charter.

Citizen's Charter is a significant milestone in public service reform. Eventually, this reform is expected to translate into **public service guarantee** and **universalization of minimum service standard**. It must be followed in both letter and spirit, to effectively strengthen engagement of people in public service delivery and genuinely put citizens first.

11. *Although bureaucracy may seem to be at odds with democracy, it is much needed for the effective functioning of a democracy. Discuss in the context of India.*

Approach:

- Briefly mention the foundational principles of bureaucracy.
- Discuss whether it is at odds with the principles of democracy.
- Explain why bureaucracy is needed for effective democracy.
- Conclude appropriately.

Answer:

Bureaucracy forms the foundation of governance in most systems of government including democracies and implements the policies of the government. It is based on the foundational principles of impartiality, objectivity, integrity, transparency, accountability, and reliability.

However, due to these principles themselves, the operation and functioning of bureaucracy may seem at odds with the principles of democracy. This can be discerned from the following:

- **Non-responsiveness: Legalistic and rule-based administration**, which is expected to be performed by bureaucracy is deemed to be **indifferent to the wishes and demands of individual citizens**, whereas, the democratic institutions are expected to be responsive to the wishes of the people and translate these into positive outcome for citizens.
- **Resistant to change**: Democracy, in theory, **demands change**, whereas the civil services operate on **principles of consistency and regularity**, which automatically limits the civil servant's capacity to adapt to changing circumstances.
- **Lacks participative approach**: Decision-making in bureaucracy is based on **set rules and regulations** wherein **stakeholdership** is not needed, which goes against the principle of equal participation of democracy where inputs from people are taken before making policies.
- **Hierarchical and top-down approach**: Bureaucratic structures are usually top-down and hierarchical, which is against the democratic principles of **equality, freedom of expression and republicanism**.

However, bureaucracy is needed for effective functioning of a democracy in India because of the following reasons:

- **Policy making and implementation**: Bureaucracy has specialized domain knowledge, which the elected representatives might lack. Here, a critical role is played by the bureaucracy in identifying major policy areas, analyzing different policy alternatives, and providing proposals to solve societal problems.
- **Strengthens public trust in state and democratic processes**: Effective implementation of policies intended to solve public issues and ensure public service delivery enhance people's trust in the state machinery and thus strengthen the democratic institutions and the democratic process in the country.
- **Maintaining continuity in administration**: Political executive is temporary in nature whereas bureaucracy is permanent and forms the backbone of the administration. Bureaucrats continually provide services to people even if the political executive is not able to do so due to any reason what so ever.
- **Efficiency and effectiveness of governance**: These are improved by civil servants by bringing in new technologies and practices in public service delivery, which in turn, increases the welfare outcomes for the society as a whole.
- **Promoting long-term societal and national goals**: The permanent nature of bureaucracy allows it to evaluate the need as well as the pros and cons of a policy from a long-term perspective, which might not be the case with elected representatives who tend to focus on immediate electoral gains.

To further increase the effectiveness of bureaucracy, long needed reforms in terms of security of tenure for civil servants, lateral entry programme to bring in domain experts, effective implementation of accountability measures, greater citizen participation in governance and administration etc. are the need of the hour.

12. The potential of digital education cannot be fully realised unless the challenges of digital divide are overcome. Discuss.

Approach:

- Briefly mention the meaning of digital education and list its advantages.
- Highlighting the digital divide, explain the challenges in addressing them.
- Suggest measures to address these.
- Conclude appropriately.

Answer:

Digital education refers to the **innovative incorporation of modern technology and digital tools** to assist the process of teaching and learning. It is also known as Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), digital learning, or e-learning. Digital education has multiple benefits, for example, it allows

educational institutes to offer a **greater variety of courses** to more students with greater support, **addresses the problem of low availability of human and physical infrastructure**, and more **industry relevant courses** can be delivered making students skilful and employable.

Although the penetration of digital technologies has significantly increased in India in last few years, the challenge of digital divide hinders the realisation of potential of digital education in India, as discussed below:

- **Technological and socio-economic accessibility concerns:** The rural areas have intermittent electricity supply, unreliable and lower speed internet, and low economic resources to afford digital technologies. Also, women are at a disproportionately disadvantageous position due to the existing social norms.
- **Language barriers:** Today, a large percentage of information content on the Internet is in English, which is a barrier for the people whose primary language is not English.
- **Operational burden:** E-learning does not properly accommodate one-to-one discussions or problem solving with tutors. Also, teachers and institutions are not always trained and equipped to transition to online teaching.
- **Lack of evidence on the usability of digital content:** Although a lot of digital content has been generated and transmitted to help children continue to learn, the actual consumption of this content, its quality and effectiveness in improving learning outcomes are not fully known.
- **Digital literacy and awareness** on the part of teachers, students, administrators and parents are other important factors hampering the realization of digital education potential in improving learning outcomes.

The potential efforts towards digital education are already being taken through various umbrella programs like Digital India Mission and specific initiatives such as ePathshala, PMGDISHA, among others. In this context, the **following steps** would go a long way in bridging the digital divide in the country:

- **Universal access to quality and affordable connectivity:** Options such as broadband and mobile internet should be prioritized. In this regard the targets under the **National Broadband Mission** should be met as soon as possible. Also, in difficult and remote areas, the **satellite internet option and digital learning centers** should be established.
- **Grassroot collaboration:** Especially in regions with low penetration of digital technologies can be a game changer. For example, at the village level the public places such as libraries for accessing and providing resources to needy people should be encouraged.
- **Indigenization of digital equipment industry:** India has started to reap the benefit of its electronics manufacturing policy as reflected in higher production and exports. This ecosystem should be harnessed to provide affordable digital devices to the Indian people as well.
- **Addressing the 'Gender Digital Divide':** Conscious efforts need to be made to address this challenge as it not only hampers women education but also impedes their ability to reap other associated socio-economic benefits of digitization.
- **Improving opportunities for learners with disabilities:** Specially designed assistive and adaptive technologies, such as screen readers, magnifying devices, augmentative, and alternative communication devices can boost independence, participation, technology equity, and access to quality education for learners with disabilities.
- **Inclusion of local languages in education content creation:** This would increase the reach of the digital content and would positively affect the learning experience and outcome for a large number of children, specially from rural areas.

Apart from these measures, digital skills acquisition, awareness and empowerment for schools, teachers, students and parents must be ensured to create an enabling ecosystem of learning and teaching. Technology has the potential to achieve universal quality education and improve learning outcomes. However, to unleash its potential, the digital divide and embedded gender divide must be addressed.

13. Provide an account of the role played by NGOs in rural development in India, with examples.

Approach:

- Introduce with the meaning of NGOs.
- Elaborate on its role in rural development of India, citing some examples.
- Conclude appropriately.

Answer:

NGOs or Non-Governmental Organizations is defined by the World Bank as a not-for-profit organization that **pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development.**

Role of NGO in rural development in India:

- **Targeted approach in rural development:** NGOs can provide several advantages while working in rural areas as they are perceived to be more flexible and innovative, smaller and less constrained by bureaucracy and regulation.
 - **Example:** Universal Versatile Society (UVS), a NGO is into several critical areas such as agriculture, environment, rural development, education, and women empowerment.
- **Implementation of welfare schemes in rural areas:** NGOs, due to their proximity to general public, can work as an interface between the government and the citizens. Thus, NGOs play the three key roles of being an implementer, a catalyst and a partner in the implementation of government welfare schemes.
 - **Example:** Association of Voluntary agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) serves as coordinating agency at the national level and there are institutions like CHETNA, which undertake coordinating work at the regional level.
- **Fighting social evils in rural areas:** It is due to the efforts of NGOs that the government has banned sex determination of foetus as it leads to evils like abortion of female foetus.
 - **Example:** Divya Jyoti Jagrati Sansthan has taken up the task of spreading knowledge on the issue of female foeticide.
- **Education and healthcare:** There are not an adequate number of government run schools or hospitals, especially in some rural areas. Even if they are present, they do not have resources. The NGOs try to complement and complete these initiatives.
 - **Example:** NGO called **Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad** is largely credited for the hundred percent literacy rate in Kerala.
- **Economic empowerment:** By providing relevant skill sets to the farmers, NGOs not only help tackle the issue of disguised employment but also help the rural youth an alternative career.
- **Agricultural development:** NGO like MYRADA, National Agro Foundation, etc., help in assisting the farmers in availing credit, support services, etc.
- **Fight for tribal rights:** As witnessed in the Vedanta vs. Posco case, NGOs have raised voice against the discrimination of tribals by the multinationals.
 - For instance, many NGOs have partnered with Gram Panchayat in proper implementation of acts like Forest Rights Act, CAMPA Act etc.

While NGOs have played a key role in rural development in India, addressing issues such as dependency of NGOs on government funds or external donations, lack of awareness amongst the rural masses, lack of qualified individuals wanting to work in rural areas, social and cultural differences, conflicts between different groups, administrative problems like political interference etc. will help in achieving the true potential of NGOs and hence helping in rural development in India.

14. India has a unique opportunity to develop before population ageing sets in. In this context, analyse how India can reap its demographic dividend going forward.

Approach:

- Give a brief introduction about India's demographic window and ageing population.
- Highlight the opportunity it provides and state the associated challenges.
- Discuss how India can reap its demographic dividend going forward.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

As per the Economic Survey 2018-19, the demographic dividend of India will peak around 2041, when the share of the working-age population will hit approximately 59%, after which it will start declining. Between the NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-21), the under-15 population has declined from 29% to 27%, while the over-60 population has increased from 10% to 12%. This window of demographic dividend which emerged in 2018, is expected to last for 37 years until 2055.

This window provides a unique opportunity, as if reaped properly, India's demographic dividend can contribute to the growth of the economy as well as of the nation. It provides opportunities in the form of growing savings, increased labour force and human capital and, in turn, GDP growth. Many Asian economies, including Japan, South Korea, and China, were able to benefit from the rise in their working population.

However, in India, the benefits of this dividend can be reaped only after overcoming constraints such as poverty, malnourishment, policy lacunae, disparities across regions, gender and class, lack of skilled personnel, inadequate access to healthcare, informal economy, high cost of living in urban areas, etc. In this context, the following measures can be undertaken to harness the benefits of demographic dividend going forward:

- **Upgrading human capital:**
 - Developing human resources through **appropriate education and skill development** to increase employability of the workforce in the modern economy.
 - Increasing accessibility to quality education through **upgradation of school and college infrastructure**, building **academic-industry** linkages, utilising technology to increase the reach of public education and modernising school and college curriculum.
 - **Occupational health and environmental health programmes** with emphasis on **nutritional security and insurance services** to the labour force, to ensure that the working population remains healthy and productive.
 - **Addressing widespread poverty** to ensure that the focus of the population remains on education and skills rather than survival.
- **Striving towards gender parity:**
 - Improving access to higher education for women.
 - Ensuring equal pay and safe workplace.
 - Overcoming the existing social barriers such as son meta-preference.
- **Handling inter-state, rural to urban and global migration:**
 - **Developing employment opportunities** in rural areas through skill development, promotion of micro and small industries etc. There is also a need to **promote entrepreneurship** to absorb the new population entering the workforce.
 - Making adequate **arrangements for migrant population** including affordable housing, employment opportunities, education, health care etc.
 - Tackling rapid **urbanization and industrialization** and their negative environmental impacts through stringent pollution norms, investment in renewable energy as well as urban policy planning.
 - Diplomatic efforts for negotiating **favourable policies on migration** in the global arena.

India requires forward looking policy changes in several dimensions to reflect upon the demographic transitions and continuously upgrade them to prepare for future challenges. Further, other than devising a way to reap its demographic dividend, India must also strengthen its social infrastructure for the elderly population, and invest in various forms of pensions and geriatric healthcare.

15. *Despite various measures, why does manual scavenging continue to persist in India?*

Approach:

- Briefly explain manual scavenging and highlight the measures taken to eradicate it.
- State the reasons for persistence of manual scavenging in India despite these measures.
- Conclude with a way forward.

Answer:

As per the UN, **manual scavenging** refers to the practice of manual cleaning, disposing or handling of human excreta, from sewers and dry latrines. It is an unlawful practice, which is violative of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution and several measures have been taken to eradicate it in India, including:

- **The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955**, which called for the abolition of scavenging or seeping on grounds of untouchability. It was revised in 1977 for stricter implementation.
- **The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**, became an integrated guard for sanitation workers, as more than 90 percent of people employed as manual scavengers belong to the Scheduled Caste community.
- Through **the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993**, a stricter stance was taken against employing manual scavengers.
- **In 1994, the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)**, a statutory body was created to evaluate the existing welfare programmes for Safai Karamcharis, investigate cases of specific grievances, etc.
- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**, was enacted not only to abolish the practice of employing anyone as a manual scavenger, but also for the rehabilitation of such workers.

Even the Supreme Court in 2014 ruled that India's Constitution requires the government to intervene to prohibit manual scavenging and rehabilitate all those involved. However, the practice of manual scavenging is widely prevalent in India with around 58,000 persons engaged in it as per the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

The reasons why manual scavenging continues to persist in India include:

- **Continued presence of insanitary latrines:** According to the 2011 Census, there are about 2.6 million insanitary latrines (dry toilets), that require cleaning by hand.
- **Technological backwardness:** Due to engineering defects in septic tanks, machines cannot clean it after a point and require manual cleaning.
- **Social perception:** It is still considered as a caste-based and hereditary profession and is deemed a "**cultural occupation**" attached to lower castes. Also, lack of opportunity, education and skills compel those belonging to lower castes to continue with manual scavenging.
- **Loopholes in legal protection:** The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, bans '**hazardous cleaning**' of septic tanks and sewer pits, without 'protective gear' and 'other cleaning devices'. But, the Act does not define what 'protective gear' is. Also, it does not provide for rehabilitation of those who were liberated from manual scavenging before passing the law in 2013.
- **Shortcomings in regulatory framework:** The numerous operational activities along the sanitation chain like emptying and conveyance of faecal sludge, sewer maintenance, etc. have remained invisible or disregarded in regulatory frameworks.
- **Indifferent attitude:** A number of independent surveys have talked about the continued reluctance on the part of state governments to admit that the practice of manual scavenging prevails under their watch.

Ending manual scavenging should be one of the core priorities to ensure a dignified life to all. In this context, the government should adopt standard operating procedures, bring institutional reforms to enable gradual formalization and mechanization of sewerage work, bridge key knowledge gaps in the sector and promote empowerment of sanitation workers through unions and associations.

16. *Highlight the significance of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and discuss the issues associated with it.*

Approach:

- Write a brief introduction about Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).
- Mention the significance of PMJAY.
- Write the issues associated with PMJAY.
- Conclude with a way forward.

Answer:

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) launched in 2018 and recommended by **the National Health Policy 2017** is the world's largest health insurance scheme. It provides a health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empanelled hospitals in India.

Significance of PMJAY:

- **Universal Health Coverage:** Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) will help India in progressively achieving **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** and **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- **Accessibility and affordability:** It provides cashless access to **quality secondary and tertiary** healthcare services for the beneficiary at the point of service.
- **Reduction in out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE):** As a share of the total health expenditure, OOPE is around 49%, according to National Health Accounts estimates for India for 2017-18. PMJAY significantly reduces out of pocket expenditure for hospitalization by providing a health cover. It will help to mitigate catastrophic expenditure on medical treatment which increases poverty.
- **Widening of insurance network:** It strengthens public healthcare systems through infusion of insurance revenues.
- **Health infrastructure:** The scheme enables creation of new health infrastructure in rural, remote and under-served areas.
- **Enhanced productivity:** Overall, it leads to improvement in population-level productivity and efficiency thus leading to improvement in quality of life.

Issues with PMJAY:

- **Absence of private healthcare infrastructure:** Registry of Hospitals in Network of Insurance (ROHINI) data suggests that only 3% of private hospitals are eligible for the Ayushman Bharat scheme.
- **Limited choice:** Under this scheme, the beneficiaries can go to only a list of empanelled private hospitals which remains a major problem, particularly in smaller towns and villages, where hospitals are few and far.
- **A push towards limiting the role of the government in welfare activities:** The private sector is expected to provide all types of care and treatments while the government's role would be minimal.
- **Biased against poor states:** Poor states cannot provide for their share of funds (40% of the total expenditure), which keeps them deprived of the money allocated by the Union government.
- **Exclusion:** It has left out certain communities and does not cover all the target groups. Also, many of those enrolled were compelled to pay for COVID-19 treatment on their own.
- **Coverage of medicines post discharge up to 15 days only:** A large number of patients (such as cancer patients) may require long-term medication on an outpatient basis.
- **Corruption:** Profit motive and corruption at private hospitals have emerged as an implementation challenge for the scheme. Ensuring accountability of private players in provisioning of services is a difficult task.

The PM-JAY aims at making healthcare available for innumerable families in the country which is in consonance with the **National Digital Health Mission**. However, there is a need for a proper mechanism to identify beneficiaries and remove complexities and ambiguity in the terms and conditions of the insurance cover. Also, there is a requirement of a robust IT platform to streamline and automate claim adjudication protocols for faster settlement.

17. National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGPA) is a positive move towards digitizing agriculture in India. Discuss.

Approach:

- Write a brief introduction about the National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGPA).
- Mention its role in digitizing agriculture in India and highlight some initiative taken under it.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

The **National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture (NeGPA)**, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, was launched in 2010-11 with an aim to achieve rapid development in India through use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for timely access to agriculture related information to the farmers.

NeGPA and agricultural digitization:

The Plan envisages providing relevant information and services to the farming community, private sectors and other stakeholders through the use of ICT to supplement and strengthen the existing delivery channels provided for by the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare (DACFW) and its agencies. **The Plan aims to:**

- Improve access of farmers to **timely and relevant information** and services throughout the crop-cycle:
 - By providing multiple delivery channels to access information.
 - By reducing the time between generation and dissemination of information.
 - By providing information to the farmers through a uniform platform.
- Bring **farmer centricity and service orientation** to the programmes by providing **location specific and up-to-date crop management** related information.
- Increasing **effectiveness of government service delivery** in:
 - Certification and licenses related to manufacturing and marketing through the use of ICT.
 - Providing easier and approachable channels for grievance registration and tracking.
- More effective management of schemes of the **Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare (DACFW)** through process redesign aimed at:
 - Effective monitoring of the schemes (timeliness of implementation etc.)
 - Reducing the time required for data consolidation and reporting of schemes at all levels.
- Enable **private sector participation to benefit farmers** by providing an integrated platform to promote value added services in:
 - Extension,
 - Marketing (both input and output); and
 - Post-harvest and storage.

As a part of the NeGP-A initiative, the Department has already developed and made functional the following platforms:

- **One Stop Window-Farmers Portal** for dissemination of information on various agricultural related matters including, seeds variety, storage godowns, pests and plant diseases, best agricultural practices, watershed, mandi details etc.
- **SMS/mKisan Portal** for sending advisories on various crop related matters to the registered farmers through SMS. In **mKisan, more than 5 crores farmers** are registered for receiving crop advisories through SMS.
- **Various mobile applications** including **Kisan Suvidha** to facilitate dissemination of information to farmers on the critical parameters viz., weather, market prices, plant protection,

agro-advisory, extreme weather alerts, input dealers (of seed, pesticide, fertilizer, farm machinery), Soil Health Card, cold storage and godowns, soil testing laboratories and veterinary centre and diagnostic labs, crop insurance premium calculator and the government schemes.

Moreover, funds were released to the States/UTs for the projects involving use of modern information technologies such as such as artificial intelligence & machine learning, blockchain technology, Internet of Things, robotics etc. and for customization/shifting of web & mobile applications already developed by the States, to the platform to be developed using digital technologies mentioned before.

In addition to the NeGPA, new initiatives like **creating nationwide farmers' database** for better planning and smooth implementation of farmer schemes and **Unified Farmers Service Platform (UFSP)** to enable seamless interoperability of various public and private IT systems in the agriculture ecosystem across the country have also been launched.

18. What do you understand by minimum government and maximum governance? State the initiatives taken by the government in this regard in recent times.

Approach:

- Briefly explain the concept of minimum governance and maximum governance.
- Mention the initiatives taken by government in this regard.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's resources for development. In this process, the government is an important but not the only participant i.e., private parties, civil societies etc., will also play a major role in this regard. **Minimum government** means reduction of the government's role in many areas making it an enabler rather than a provider. **Maximum governance** means to maximize service delivery for the betterment of the people.

Initiatives taken by the government to realise minimum government in India include:

- **Towards being a facilitator:** The government replaced the Planning Commission, which was seen as institution having a lot of authority without being answerable to the public, with the Niti Aayog, which serves as the apex policy think tank of the government.
- **Moving away from Licence Raj:** This is being done by allowing self-certification in many compliances in manufacturing industry and in environmental regulations.
- **Scrapping of old and inefficient bodies:** For instance, the recent scrapping of All India Handicrafts Board, Handloom Board and the Power Loom Board.
- **Reduce in-person interaction in recruitments:** This includes measures such as abolition of interview for selection to government jobs in certain categories.
- **Business is no more the business of the government:** This is being realised through the withdrawal of the government from non-essential sectors through disinvestment, promoting private players through the promotion of FDI and opening up of hitherto government monopolies like oil and gas exploration and production.
- **Repeal of archaic laws:** As per the Law Ministry, since 2014, **1486 obsolete and redundant laws were repealed** by the government of India.
- **Simplification and easing procedures:** This includes measures such as the introduction of GST to simplify the indirect tax regime and single window clearances to ease the process of doing business.

Initiatives taken by government of India to realise maximum governance are:

- **JAM-DBT trinity:** Use of **Direct Benefit Transfer** has resulted in saving a huge amount of subsidy in LPG, which used to get siphoned off. Also, **linking the ration cards with Aadhaar** has resulted in identification of bogus cards.

- **Transparency in utilisation of funds:** Measures such as launch of apps to check the construction status of houses under PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana) and social audit under the MGNREGA have been adopted.
- **Leveraging the power of information technology:** This has been done to ensure transparency and timely delivery of services. For example, e-Office in Central Ministries/Departments, e-Way bills under the GST, online auctioning of coal blocks and spectrum, digital life certificate for pensioners etc.
- **Strict measure towards corruption:** Amendment in the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 to make 'bribe givers' also culpable for an offense is a step taken in this direction.
- **Capacity building among service providers:** The government initiated 'Mission Karmayogi', which envisages continuous capacity building of every officer through the digital mode.
- **Umbrella platforms:** For instance, the National Recruiting Agency (NRA) for conducting the Common Eligibility Test (CET) in order to provide a level playing field to every job aspirant across the country.
- **Better service delivery:** Measures taken in this regard include inclusion of Citizen's Charter, grievance redressal and Sevottam model in government functioning for improved services.

With various reports like the 2nd ARC recommending the need of SMART governance, it is imperative to use technology to not only increase the efficiency of the governance but also to ensure that policies are effectively implemented and monitored.

19. Give an account of the role played by women's organisations to improve the status of women in post-independent India.

Approach:

- Give a brief introduction.
- Provide an account of the role played by women's organisations in improving the status of women in post independent India.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

India has a mixed track record when it comes to women's rights and empowerment. On the one hand, the country is home to several feminist icons like Kamla Bhasin, who have been advocating for female education and gender equality since the seventies, but on the other hand, women continue to face several issues such as rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment etc.

Women's organisations in India have been working tirelessly to improve the status of women since independence, which is evident from the following:

- **Against rape:** One of the first national-level issues that brought women's groups together was the **Mathura rape case (1972)**. The protests forced the government to amend the Evidence Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and create a new offence i.e. custodial rape. Later on, the movement was carried on with full vigour by **Mahila Dakshita Samiti (MDS), Stree Sangarsha Samiti (SSS), Socialist Women's Group, Feminist Network Collective (FNC)** etc.
- **Securing the workplace:** Several women NGOs campaigned to bring in a legislation related to prevention of sexual harassment at workplace through the Supreme Court guidelines in the Vishakha case (1997).
- **Against alcoholism:** The **Anti-Drunk Movement** of Andhra Pradesh is one the most sustained and successful movements against alcoholism, which is one of the major reasons behind domestic violence faced by women.
- **Conservation of nature:** Women's organisations played a significant role in environmental movements like the **Chipko movement and Narmada Bachao Andolan**, as conservation of nature is directly linked to the livelihood of women.
- **Against dowry:** The **Progressive Organisation of Women**, Hyderabad, was the first to organise a powerful movement against dowry in 1975.

- **Employment and social security: Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** united the women workers in the unorganised and home-based sectors. Also, it worked to provide social security to women workers.
- **Against inflation:** In 1973, the **United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front** was formed in Maharashtra to mobilize women against inflation. This movement spread to Gujarat, where it was called the **Nav Nirman movement**.
- **Dalit women's rights:** It was led in Uttar Pradesh by NGOs like **Vanangana, Manorama** etc. which were formed to fight against untouchability, casteism and economic exploitation of Dalit women.
- **Against other social issues:**
 - Several women's groups like **Saheli, Vimochana, Forum against Oppression of Women**, etc. have been working against murderous attacks in cases of inter-caste, property disputes, adultery, bigamy, polygamy etc.
 - **Snehalaya** is an NGO working towards raising awareness and providing safe shelter to the women and children in need.
 - **North East Network (NEN)** is a women's rights organization that was established in 1995 and operates mostly in North-East India, focusing on women's rights and gender justice.

After independence, an energetic although uneven women's movement has taken shape in India. Women from diverse castes, classes and communities have participated in the movement along with activists drawn from a variety of political trends, parties and groups belonging to various philosophies making the movement highly heterogeneous. Thus, women's organisations in India, especially after independence, are challenging the social problems and working to ensure 'social justice' by improving the status of women.

20. Highlight the measures taken by the government to promote Self Help Groups (SHGs) in India. Also, discuss the issues that SHGs continue to face.

Approach:

- Give a brief definition of Self Help Groups (SHGs).
- Mention the measures taken by the government to promote SHGs.
- State the issues that SHGs continue to face in India.
- Conclude accordingly.

Answer:

Self Help Groups (SHGs) are a self-governed, peer-controlled informal group of people, with similar socio-economic backgrounds and having a desire to collectively perform a common purpose. It is a method of organizing the poor and marginalized to come together to solve their problems.

Measures taken by the government to promote SHGs in India:

- **SHG-Bank Linkage programme:** Under this, banks have been advised to consider lending to the SHGs as part of their mainstream credit operations, to identify branches having potential for linkage with SHGs and provide necessary support services.
- **Priority Sector Lending:** The government has included SHG as a priority sector to mandate and enhance banks' focus on them.
- **Priyadarshini scheme:** With NABARD as the nodal agency, it aims at women's empowerment and livelihood enhancement through SHGs.
- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM):** It seeks to alleviate rural poverty by providing credit through building sustainable community institutions.
 - **Mahila Kisan Shashaktikaran Pariyojana:** In order to promote agro-ecological practices that increase women farmers' income and reduce their input costs and risks, the DAY-NRLM Mission has been implementing the Mahila Kisan Shashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP).
- **Other successful initiatives:** State governments have initiated various schemes to promote SHGs like Kudumbshree in Kerala, Jeevika in Bihar, Mahila Arthik Vikas Maha Mandal (MAVIM) in Maharashtra etc.

Despite the above-mentioned government support to the SHGs, they face the **following issues**:

- **Credit mobilization:** Financial assistance from formal channels are still inadequate forcing members of SHGs to borrow from local money lenders, which acts as a barrier in their growth.
- **Poor access to the market:** The goods produced by SHGs do not have access to larger marketplaces due to lack of marketing skills.
- **Infrastructural issues:** Most of the SHGs are situated in rural and far-off areas that lack connectivity via road or railways. Access to electricity supply also remains an issue.
- **Lack of training and capacity building:** Most of the SHGs work on their own without outreach from the state for skill development and capacity building.
- **Technological barriers:** Most of the SHGs work with rudimentary or no technology.
- **Politicization:** Political affiliation and interference has become a serious problem with SHGs. Political affiliation is also a major reason for group conflicts.

Considering the significance of SHGs in a developing country like India, there is a need to ensure an integrated approach which provides adequate credit, ensures capacity building and training of members, provides gender sensitisation, etc.