

Question 1: Constitutional Morality’ is rooted in the Constitution itself and is founded on its essential facets. Explain the doctrine of ‘Constitutional Morality’ with the help of relevant judicial decisions.

Answer: Constitutional morality means the adherence to the norms of the Constitution in a democracy. It is not just limited to following the constitutional provisions in their literal sense, but includes a commitment to an inclusive and democratic political process in which both individual and collective interests of the society are satisfied. It requires a practical percolation of values like sovereignty, social justice and equality in the realm of constitutional adjudication.

While the term ‘Constitutional Morality’ is not found in Indian Constitution, nevertheless it is rooted in various facets of the constitution.

1. Preamble – Spells out values like justice, liberty, equality and fraternity to be the foundation stones of our democracy.
2. Fundamental Rights – Protects the rights of individuals against arbitrary use of power by the State. Especially, Article 32 provides for enforcement of these rights in SC.
3. Directive Principles – Guidelines to the State to implement the vision of the makers of the constitution. These include Gandhian, Socialist and Liberal-Intellectual directions.
4. Fundamental Duties – Citizens not only enjoy rights but have to fulfill certain duties towards the nation.
5. Check and Balances – like Legislative check on executive; judicial review of legislative and executive actions etc.

Constitutional Morality as per various Supreme Court Judgements

1. Government of NCT of Delhi Vs. Union of India – All high functionaries need to follow constitutional morality and protect the constitutional values spelt out by the Constitution. Constitutional Morality acts as check on arbitrary use of power by high functionaries.
2. Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. Vs. Union of India – Supreme Court opined that Section 377 violates the right of members of the LGBTQI community on the bedrock of the principles enunciated in Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution [dignity of individuals]
3. Naz Foundation case, the Supreme Court opined that only Constitutional Morality and not Public Morality should prevail
4. Justice K.S. Puttaswamy & Anr. Vs. Union of India & Ors. – SC upheld the constitutional validity of Aadhaar subject to certain limitations. Constitutional Morality ensures courts must neutralize the excesses of power by the executive and strike down any legislation or even executive action if it is unconstitutional.
5. Indian Young Lawyer’s Association v. State of Kerala [Sabrimala Case]– SC opined that constitutional morality which includes values like justice, liberty, equality and fraternity ought to be preferred over customary values, traditions and beliefs. It allowed the entry of women into sabrimala temple irrespective of their ages. [fighting perception, stereotype and prejudices]

Constitutional morality is crucial for constitutional laws to be effective. Without constitutional morality, the operation of the constitution tends to become arbitrary, erratic and capricious.

Question 2: Discuss the desirability of greater representation to women in the higher judiciary to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.

Answer: Recently, CJI has called for 50% representation of women in the judiciary. He has also supported the demand to increase gender diversity in legal education

Status of representation of Women in Higher Judiciary

1. There has never been a women Chief Justice of India.
2. SC was established in 1950. First female SC judge was appointed in 1989.
3. Of the 256 Supreme Court judges appointed in the past 71 years, only 11 (or 4.2%) have been women. The representation of women is more in lower judiciary due to recruitment through an open entrance examination. However, the higher judiciary has opaque collegium system, which more likely reflect bias against women
4. Only out of 25 High Courts in the country has a woman Chief Justice (CJ Hima Kohli at Telangana High Court). Only 73 out of 661 High Court judges, which is roughly 11.04% are women. In five High Courts, namely, Manipur, Meghalaya, Patna, Tripura and Uttarakhand, there is not even a single woman judge.

Desirability of greater representation to women in the higher judiciary

1. It will ensure diversity of perspectives is fairly considered. For example – more balanced and empathetic approach in cases involving sexual violence. It will instill greater public trust in the judiciary.
2. Improvements in women's representation in the judiciary remain intrinsic to constitutional ideals of gender equality and social justice.
3. Women's greater participation in higher judiciary will provide impetus to fighting gender stereotypes and can pave the way for women's greater representation, in others decisions, making positions, such as in legislative and executive branches of the government.
4. The entry of women judges into spaces from which they had historically been excluded is seen as a positive step in the direction of judiciaries being perceived as being more transparent, inclusive, and representative of the people whose lives they affect. By their mere presence, women judges enhance the legitimacy of courts, sending a powerful signal that they are open and accessible to those who seek recourse to justice.

Suggestions to increase women's participation in the higher judiciary

1. lack of infrastructure in courts, gender stereotypes and societal attitudes that have created hurdles for women to enter the legal profession. For example – a survey noted that out of nearly 6,000 trial courts, 22% have no toilets for women. This needs to change.
2. Making the process of Judicial appointment more transparent, inclusive and involve representation from government and opposition rather than the current scenario of 'judges appointing judges' (Collegium system).

3. Adopt better practices from countries like Britain where the government created an Advisory Panel on Judicial Diversity to investigate the barriers to women and in the judiciary and propose suitable remedies and recommendations.

Question3: How have the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission of India enabled the States to improve their fiscal position?

Answer: Finance Commission is constituted by the President under Article 280 of the Constitution, mainly to give its recommendations on the distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the States and amongst the States themselves.

Recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, enabling fiscal position of states

1. Increased devolution to states from the divisible pool of taxes from 32% to 42% [drastic change]

States would receive a larger volume of untied funds relative to tied funds. This will enhance the states' autonomy in deciding their expenditure priorities.

2. Asked Centre to reduce conditional grant-in –aids to states;
3. Recommend eight centrally sponsored schemes (CSS) to be delinked from support from the Centre, thus, states sharing a higher fiscal responsibility and autonomy to implement development initiatives.
4. States got much autonomy in deciding their expenditure priority; this is in the spirit of “balancing wheel of fiscal federalism”
5. Given due consideration to the fiscal federalism framework in India by devolving a larger amount to local governments.

Question 4: To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India?

Answer: Constitution of India provides for a parliamentary form of government, where the Executive is responsible to the Parliament for its policies and acts.

Mechanisms of Parliamentary control over the Executive:

1. Question-hour, zero-hour, half-an-hour discussion, short duration discussion, calling attention motion, adjournment motion, no-confidence motion, censure motion, and other discussions.
2. General Discussion, Voting on policy/law; censure motion; no-confidence motion.
3. Budgetary control – appropriation of grants and post-budgetary control through financial committees like Public Accounts Committee, etc.
4. Walkouts, abstain from voting, use of live-streaming to put pressure on the executive.

Parliament unable to ensure accountability of the executive:

1. Tendencies to evade route of debates/discussions/checks through instruments –

- a. Money bill route [Aadhar bill];
 - b. Use of voice vote mechanism [Farm bills];
 - c. frequent ordinances.
2. Sidelineing parliamentary institutions –
- a. lesser bills referred to parliamentary committees;
 - b. low productivity of question-hour.
3. During the pandemic – a complete session [Winter session] was missed.
4. Lack of discipline/decorum – frequent disruptions [PRS – LS lost 1/6th; RS lost 1/3rd of its time to disruptions]

Suggestion to improve

1. Following 15-point reform charter for better functioning of Parliament as suggested by Vice President
2. Making scrutiny of all bills by Parliamentary Committees mandatory.
3. Providing adequate time to opposition members to debate issues of public importance.

Question 5: “Pressure groups play a vital role in influencing public policymaking in India.” Explain how the business associations contribute to public policies.

Answer: Pressure Groups are a group of people organized actively to promote and defend their common interests and influence public policy. They act as the liaison between government and its members.

Role of Pressure Groups –

1. Promote opportunities for political participation without political party
2. Provide expertise and information to government;
3. Help in expressing views and needs of minority groups which remain unheard
4. Attract the attention of government on important issues
5. Act as safety valve in the democracy to vent out the pressure of people.

Role of Business Associations:

1. Engaging with the policy makers, government and civil society, influencing policies by way of articulating the views and suggestions of industry. (e.g. – FICCI, CII)
2. Communicate the grievances and demands of various sectors and industries to the government.
3. Conduct workshops, seminars, business meets and conferences to discuss, debate various upcoming and existed policies of the government.
4. Provides a platform for consensus-building and networking on key issues
5. Provide useful and credible research on existing and newer developments in areas such as industrial operations, infrastructure and technology.
6. Provide valuable information on potentials and new developments in foreign trade by studying the trade environment and imports regulations of many foreign countries.

Question 6: “Besides being a moral imperative of a Welfare State, primary health structure is a necessary precondition for sustainable development.” Analyze.

Answer: Welfare state is a modern concept of state with special responsibilities for state to improve the socio-economic conditions of the citizens and provide protective measures for their development. In India, the directive principles of state policy (DPSPs) under the Constitution provide the contours of welfare state.

Primary health structure is moral imperative of a welfare state due to following reasons:

1. Vicious cycle of poverty is created due to high out-of-pocket health expenditure, low productivity, low skills and low income.
2. Primary health structure is necessary for a citizen to exercise the right to livelihood and dignity as emphasized under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for free development of her personality.
3. Historical marginalization of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women in society create moral imperative on state to provide corrective action for improvement of their health and wellbeing.
4. DPSPs such as Article 47 to raise level of nutrition and public health, and Article 42 for maternity relief create constitutional obligation on state to provide accessible primary health structures.

Primary health structure is necessary precondition for sustainable development due to following reasons:

1. Without an effective primary health structure, the sustainable development goal of ‘Ensuring Healthy Lives and Promotion of Wellbeing for all’ is not possible.
2. Goal of universal health coverage requires robust primary health structure to address issues of inequities in public health.
3. Due to climate change, range of tropical and vector-borne diseases is expected to expand, making more people vulnerable to health issues.
4. Development is creating lifestyle diseases at rapid scale. Their management requires a working ground-level functionaries in primary health structures.

Health is fundamental to development. Life expectancy has expanded over the 20th century by leaps, but 21st century is looking at problems of inequities that require building primary structures to bring people along for sustainable and moral growth.

Question 7: “Earn while you learn’ scheme needs to be strengthened to make vocational education and skill training meaningful.” Comment.

Answer: The Ministry of Tourism is implementing a Scheme titled ‘Earn While You Learn’. It envisages to inculcate appropriate tourism travel traits and knowledge amongst trainees to enable them to work as ‘student volunteers’.

This scheme provides short term training, dedicated to travel industry, to college-going students pursuing graduation courses or graduates in the age group of 18 to 25 years.

Benefits of 'Earn While You Learn' Program

1. Provides opportunities to students to earn while learning to meet their expenses.
2. Exposes the students to the world of work before actual employment.
3. Gives students hands on experience and confidence thereby prepares them better for taking up jobs in future.
4. Enables the students to explore their subject preferences and develop them into a career.
5. Helps inculcate in the students values of hard work and dignity of labour.
6. Helps to channelize the in exhaustive energy of the young students in positive activities.

Making vocational training meaningful

1. Burden of providing for household expenses prevents many young people from undertaking vocational training which creates a void in daily income.
2. Has the potential to attract more people towards undertaking such programmes when income is ensured.
3. Give students hands on experience and thereby prepare them better for taking up jobs in future.
4. Help India reap its rich demographic dividend transition from a jobless growth economy to employable economy.

Question 8: Can the vicious cycle of gender inequality, poverty, and malnutrition be broken through microfinancing of women SHGs? Explain with examples.

Answer: Gender inequality results in unequal opportunities in terms of access to health, education, nutrition and quality jobs pushing women into poverty and malnutrition.

Microfinancing of women SHGs can target women sitting at the bottom of the poverty pyramid with higher socio-economic inequalities, in the following manner:

1. **Nutritional indicators:** Microfinancing of the women SHGs is linked to better nutritional outcomes for the whole family. It is important in breaking inter-generational poverty. For example, Self Employed Women's Association, works towards nutrition security amongst women.
2. **Community involvement:** Microfinancing of women SHGs, help break the barriers of social conventions and gender ideology, with enhanced community engagement. For example, Kudumbshree, initiative in Kerala started as a SHG.
3. **Decision making ability:** Microfinancing of women SHGs improves the decision-making ability of its members. With greater say in the matters of resource utilization, family planning etc. For example, Indira Kranti Patham enhanced human resource capacity of its women members.
4. **Socio-economic empowerment:** Mission Shakti initiative of Orissa government have led to better socio-economic indicators among tribal women.

5. Credit availability: Microfinancing of women SHGs is linked to increased credit worthiness of the members. Access to credit provides resilience against falling into poverty trap. For example, Jay Ambe SHG, in Rajasthan facilitates credit availability for its poor members.
6. Provide for non-farm employment is crucial in supporting the primary occupation of agriculture during times of agricultural distress.

Microfinancing of the SHGs can enhance the ability of women to augment the family income. While, it will enhance gender parity, it will also keep the women/children from falling into the vicious circle of malnutrition and poverty.

Question 9: “If the last few decades were of Asia’s growth story, the next few are expected to be of Africa’s.” In the light of this statement, examine India’s influence in Africa in recent years.

Answer: The last few decades saw the exponential rise of Asia driven by countries like China, Vietnam, India, etc. However, Asian growth is slowing down and is now being overshadowed by the growth of countries in Africa. Currently, the rate of return on foreign investment is higher in Africa than in any other developing region.

India’s influence in Africa

1. India shares long-standing ties with Africa and solidarity forged by the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi against oppressive colonial rule.
2. India is now Africa’s third-largest trading partner, accounting for 6.4 percent of African total trade for a total value of \$62.6 billion in 2017-18.
3. India also has a large diaspora in Africa, which India can engage in its favor.
4. India’s private sector companies are making inroads in Africa and exploiting these emerging markets.
5. India has time again has stood as a supporter of Africa in International politics tracing back to NAM which forged South-South cooperation.
6. Principled lending using cooperation like Asia-Africa Growth Corridor compared to debt-trap diplomacy of China.
7. India is providing grants-in-aid and Line of credits running into billions of dollars to help Africa in developmental needs.
8. During COVID-19, India used medical diplomacy to help African nations with essential medicines and vaccines. Moreover, India regularly assists African nations during natural disasters by carrying out HADR operations.
9. India also holds several diplomatic forums with Africa to increase its outreach in the continent like India-Africa Form Summit etc.

Africa offers a number of resources that are essential for India’s continued growth. Therefore, it is imperative for India to have favorable ties with Africa.

Question 10: “The USA is facing an existential threat in the form of a China, that is much more challenging than the erstwhile Soviet Union.” Explain.

Answer: The rise of China as a major global power, threatening the hegemonic power of the United States, has resulted in the debate of a new Cold War emanating between

the two economic powers. Thus, comparisons are being made about the threat faced by the US from China vis-a-vis the threat that was posed by the Soviet Union.

Challenges faced by the USA from China compared to the erstwhile Soviet Union

1. the Soviet Union led the Eastern bloc during the Cold War era through its military and ideological might. China, on the other hand, competes in administrative models and governance.
2. Compared with the largely theoretical promises of communism of the Soviet Union, China's real-life achievements with its development model appeal to many developing countries. Meanwhile, democracy and freedom have been on a sustained decline around the world over the past fifteen years.
3. The Soviet Union openly and directly regarded the United States as its enemy, which it could hardly co-exist with. China seeks to construct a "new model of major-country relationship" with the United States. Thus, making the threat more veiled and more dangerous.
4. China has not aimed to foster revolution and regime change—as the Soviet Union did—but worked with ruling elites, offering trade and investment opportunities without criticizing them for violations of human rights, corruption, or authoritarianism, as the US does. This has gained many allies for China in the developing world.
5. Compared to the Cold War era, the contemporary global economy is more integrated, especially with China being the top trading partner of many countries, thus an indispensable unit of global trade.
6. While the Soviet Union exhausted its economy while competing with the US in defense and space, China has kept its economy growing and is poised to overtake the US as the largest economy.
7. China is well-placed and planning to capitalize on emerging technologies, while the Soviet Union lost the war on the technological front long before its demise.

Question 11: The jurisdiction of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) regarding lodging an FIR and conducting probe within a particular State is being questioned by various States. However, the power of the States to withhold consent to the CBI is not absolute. Explain with special reference to the federal character of India.

Answer: CBI is India's premier central investigation agency which looks into matters of corruption or major criminal matter. The CBI draws its power from the DSPE Act, 1946 which deals with the extension of the power of CBI over states with the consent of the respective government.

CBI and Federalism:

1. The Police are under List II, i.e., it is exclusively a state subject. So only the state can make law regarding the same. However, the establishment of CBI under the DPSE act as police encroaches upon state jurisdiction.
2. Although, CBI is required to have "general consent" from the state government before beginning an investigation in the state. But these consents only lead to Red-tapism thereby delaying justice delivery.
3. The jurisdiction of CBI often comes into direct confrontation with state police which causes federal issues recurrently.

4. However, a weak central authority could be injurious to national unity. Thus, it is imperative to have some agencies that have jurisdiction over the entire country.
5. The confrontation between state and center over CBI is often more prominent when there exist different political parties at the state and center level.
6. The absence of a neutral body to manage or diffuse the confrontation between state and center further aggravates the issue.
7. The Supreme court and the high court can order CBI to investigate any crime anywhere in the country without the consent of the state.
8. Moreover, under article 131, states can drag center in case if they feel CBI violates their right. Thus, further complicating the confrontation.

A strong central investigation is imperative for the National unity and integrity of the country. So, there is a need to promote transparency in the working of CBI which can be ensured by making it a constitutional body.

Question 12: Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analyzing their structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures.

Answer: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and various State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs) have been constituted under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. These commissions are the watchdog of human rights in the country, that is, the rights relating to life, liberty, equality, and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforceable by courts in India.

Since its formation, the Commission has taken up some important projects and has, through its reviews, reports and recommendations, taken up the cause of prison inmates, patients at mental health asylums, bonded labourers, people with disabilities, women and children and the economically and socially marginalized sections of the country.

HRCs unable to assert their mandate and power:

1. The NHRC has been labeled as a toothless tiger because it is swamped with cases but has few resources to address them.
2. Much of the complaints that come to the commission are dismissed even before a preliminary hearing, critics argue that the NHRC shies away from contentious cases with political implications.
3. Its recommendations are non-binding on the government and thus ignored.
4. Limited jurisdiction into Human rights violation by armed forces and private parties.
5. The inability of NHRC to initiate cases beyond 1 year.
6. The officers conducting investigations are usually on deputation from the same forces that have been accused of violations and which creates a conflict of interest.

Remedial measure

1. More powers: Its decisions should be made enforceable by the government.
2. Armed forces: The definition should be restricted to only army, navy, and air force. Further, even in these cases, the Commission should be allowed to independently investigate cases of violation of rights.
3. Commission's membership: Members of NHRCs should include civil society, human rights activists, etc. rather than ex-bureaucrats.
4. Amending law: Misuse of laws by law enforcement agencies is often the root cause of human rights violations. So, the weakness of laws should be removed and those laws should be amended or repealed if they run contrary to human rights.
5. Independent Staff: NHRC should have its independent investigating staff recruited by itself, rather than the present practice of deputation.

The situation of persistent human rights violations across the country presents manifold challenges. There is a need to improve and strengthen the human rights situation. It is important to empower NHRC to make it work more efficiently and independently.

Question 13: Analyze the distinguishing features of the notion of the Right to Equality in the Constitutions of the USA and India.

Answer: While both India and the USA are culturally pluralistic societies which have a democratic form of government and similar judicial systems, they have different interpretation of the notion of Right to Equality.

Right to Equality in USA	Right to Equality in India
United States had derived this right from Declaration of Rights and most importantly, from the Bill of Rights. It was inserted in the Bill of Rights through fourteenth Amendment in year 1868. Concept of 'Equal protection of law' – equal treatment under equal circumstances. Emphasis on civil and legal equality Equality in procedural sense; focus on equality of opportunity. Original constitution did not prevent discrimination. E.g., Segregation against African-Americans before the Civil Rights Act, 1964.	In India, the Constituent assembly had the intent to inculcate this right in the constitution at the initial level. Assembly did the same by inserting them in Chapter III named as "Fundamental Right". Follows both – British model of 'Equality before Law' and American model of 'Equal protection of law' [Article 14] Both civil-legal as well as socio-economic equality. Substantive equality. Provides expressly for Affirmative action to ensure equality [Art 16]; Focus on ensuring Equality of outcomes along with equality of opportunity. [e.g., reservation in promotions] Prevents discrimination and abolishes untouchability since its inception and adoption. [Art. 15, 17]

Question 14: Explain the constitutional provisions under which Legislative Councils are established. Review the working and current status of Legislative Councils with suitable illustrations.

Answer: The Parliament, under Article 169, can abolish or create a legislative council by a simple majority, that is, a majority of the members of each House present and voting, if the legislative assembly of the concerned state, by a special majority, passes a resolution to that effect. Article 171 provides for the Composition of council.

Utility of State legislative councils

1. Bringing diverse opinion on policy making ; Functional representation of various groups [e.g., teachers, graduates, local representatives], thus enable non-elected persons to contribute to the legislative process.
2. Check hasty legislations by Legislative assemblies + prevent them from exercising too much legislation or executive authority
3. Nominated members who are apolitical background bring extra wisdom and provides forum for intellectuals and academicians who are not suited for electoral politics.
4. Brings pressure on Legislative assembly for policy making.

Concerns with Legislative Councils

1. They can be created and abolished by Union parliament by a simple majority.
2. Their recommendations are not binding on assembly + became back door for failed politicians
3. Burden on public exchequer.
4. Representing graduates in the house has outlived its utility
5. Politicization in selecting nominated members
6. Can create delay in policy making.

Question 15: Do Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees keep the administration on its toes and inspire reverence for parliamentary control? Evaluate the working of such committees with suitable examples.

Answer: The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee have been formed to cover all the Ministries/ Departments of the Government of India. Each of these Committees consists of 31 Members – 21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha to be nominated by the Speaker, Lok Sabha and the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, respectively. The term of Office of these Committees does not exceed one year.

Functions of Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee:

1. To consider the Demands for Grants of the related Ministries/Departments and report thereon. The report shall not suggest anything of the nature of cut motions;
2. To examine Bills, pertaining to the related Ministries/Departments, referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be, and report thereon;
3. To consider the annual reports of the Ministries/Departments and report thereon; and

4. To consider national basic long term policy documents presented to the Houses, if referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be, and report thereon

Significance of Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees

1. Emphasis on long-term plans, policies guiding the working of the Executive, these Committees are providing necessary direction, guidance and inputs for broad policy formulations and in achievement of the long-term national perspective by the Executive.
2. It is easier to examine a topic in depth by a committee of 30 than by an assembly of 700.
3. The work put in by the total 24 DRSCs in examining the Demands for Grants of all the ministries equals 30 days of functioning of the Parliament.
4. They enable input from experts and those who may be directly affected by a policy or legislation.
5. Being outside direct public glare allows members to discuss issues and reach consensus without worrying about constituency or party pressures.
6. Overall, secure more accountability of the executive towards the legislature.

Issues/Challenges of Standing committees

1. Meetings happen behind closed doors of which the minutes are never published creating the issue of transparency in the working of the committee.
2. The committee's recommendations are not binding in nature. This leads to bypassing the result of detailed scrutiny of the bill.
3. Lack of standing research support. There is an absence of dedicated researchers associated.
4. All the bills are not referred to the departmental standing committees.
5. One year tenure leads very little time for specialization
6. Attendance of MPs at the committee meetings is weak. Also, one committee had to deal with too many ministries

Question 16: Has digital illiteracy particularly in rural areas, coupled with lack of information and Communication Technology (ICT) accessibility hindered socio-economic development? Examine with justification.

Answer: "Digital Literacy is the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technologies for meaningful actions within life situations". It would bring the benefits of ICT to daily lives of rural population especially in the areas of Healthcare, Livelihood generation and Education.

However, Issues with internet connectivity in rural areas and lack of access to Information and Communications Technology coupled with frequent internet/electricity outages and high cost of internet. [only 15% in rural India have access to internet] furthered the rural-urban digital divide in India.

Digital illiteracy as a factor hindering socio-economic development:

1. Children are not able to access quality education or attend virtual classroom. This divide was further enlarged during the lockdown imposed due to the pandemic creating an imbalance between urban and rural education.
2. Acts as an impediment to access to tele-medicine. This becomes a challenge especially given the poor brick and mortar health infrastructure in rural areas.
3. Prevents rural youth from capitalizing on myriad of employment and income generation opportunities available through effective use of internet. E.g., e-commerce.
4. Digital illiteracy prevents effective e-governance and service delivery of government schemes to beneficiaries.
5. Digital illiteracy especially among women and girl-child has increased the gender imbalance in the rural areas.
6. Emphasis on digitization and computerization, while ignoring digital literacy has led the elderly population especially vulnerable to inaccessibility of government benefits and schemes.

It should be noted that digital divide is more than just an access issue and cannot be alleviated merely by providing the necessary equipment. There are at least three factors at play: information accessibility, information utilization and information receptiveness. More than just accessibility, individuals need to know how to make use of the information and communication tools once they exist within a community.

Question 17: “Though women in post-independent India have excelled in various fields, the social attitude towards women and feminist movement has been patriarchal.” Apart from women education and women empowerment schemes, what intervention can help change this milieu?

Answer: Status of women in post-independent India has continuously changed with changing socio-economic and political realities. This change has been a result of external agents and catalysts like government initiatives and from within with the help of women-led movements.

Women like Kalpana Chawla, Sindhutai Sapkal and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw represent diverse fields of social work and professional life where women have left their mark. But issues like Sabrimala controversy or Triple Talaq highlight that patriarchal barrier to women empowerment remain deeply entrenched in society.

Education and government schemes for women empowerment are not sufficient. A different set of interventions are needed such as:

1. **Urbanization:** Urban milieu breaks past rigid social structures with relative ease. For example, in domestic roles, social freedom etc.
2. **Public Safety:** It promotes greater participation of a greater number of women in economy and public life. It addresses personal anxieties and family barriers. Concepts like 24×7 cities can combine urbanization and needs of public safety.
3. **Family Values:** Gender equality needs to start within homes, in attitudes of parents, spouse and siblings.
4. An Indian equivalent of Athena SWAN charter is needed to promote women participation in STEM.

5. The cause of gender equality at work will be helped by balancing maternity leaves with paternity leaves.
6. Administrative reforms need to factor in gender inclusion especially in police. It can help de-emphasize the culture of violence in public life. Popular culture of cinema, music can play role in changing social attitudes such as movies like Secret Superstar or Dangal.

Education and empowerment schemes are necessary to support feminist movement, but issues hindering gender equality in India require more fundamental and practical approach.

Question 18: Can Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organisations present an alternative model of public service delivery to benefit the common citizen? Discuss the challenges of this alternative model.

Answer: Civil Society organizations (CSOs) refer to collectives that are separate from the state, government and business. These are organized by individuals for their private interests. A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a private, non-profit, voluntary, citizen-based group which functions to serve a specific social or political purpose.

Utility of CSOs and NGOs as alternative model of public service delivery:

1. Civil society organizations can provide a ready pool of volunteers and resources that the government can tap into. Issues of inclusion-exclusion error can be addressed through verification by independent teams of volunteers.
2. Gaps in last-mile delivery of public services can be addressed. For example, during covid lockdown, a number of NGOs, voluntary groups distributed food, ration and vegetables for the homeless and the migrants.
3. Skill enhancement and livelihood support schemes like National Rural Livelihood Mission can be made more effective through involvement of CSOs. For example, in quality control and marketing of products made by SHGs.
4. CSOs are better placed to render services and assistance in issues like domestic violence, administrative and legal assistance to marginalized sections, undertrials, sex workers etc.
5. CSOs and NGOs can play the role of effectively communicating the needs of people to the government. For example, PM Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan was launched in response to Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan's petitioning for distribute food grains to everyone.
6. Dissemination of trusted information to people and countering propaganda and disinformation can be done through partnership between government, CSOs and NGOs. For example, Oxfam's partnership with Poorvanchal Grameen Vikas Sansthan.

Challenges in use of CSOs and NGOs as alternative model for delivery of public services:

1. Ad-hocism and lack of continuity that NGOs face in dealing with the government undermines long-term engagement and testing of development models.
2. The 'big brother attitude' of the government officials and their mindset of construing NGOs simply as contractors fulfilling staffing requirements is not conducive.

3. There is also issue of mis-appropriation of funds by NGOs. Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology found various NGOs swindling government funds for personal use. As per CBI, less than 10% of the NGOs registered under Societies Registration Act, file annual financial statements.
4. Enforcement Directorate had zeroed in on some NGOs which were working as front organizations for the banned Communist Party of India and were suspected to have funded Naxal operatives.
5. Some NGO are accused of using foreign funds for provoking protests and stall governmental projects. For example, the protests against Kudankulam nuclear plant, Narmada Bachao Andolan, etc.
6. There have been reports of NGOs lobbying with parliamentarians and using the media to manipulate issues in their favor. Undue effect of NGOs on policy creates issue of democratic legitimacy.

CSOs and NGOs must be made an integral part of development process in the country. But there is no alternative to administrative channels for delivery of public service. Administrative reforms must be carried out in interest of efficiency, effectiveness and good governance.

Question 19: Critically examine the aims and objectives of SCO. What importance does it hold for India?

Answer: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental organization found in Shanghai, with the objective of political, economic and security cooperation between the member nations. India became a permanent member of the SCO in 2017.

The aims and objectives of the SCO includes the following:

To strengthen the relations between member states, by deepening political, security and economic cooperation.

To strive for joint cooperation between the members to confront threats emanating from terrorism, extremism and separatism.

SCO aims to move towards developing a democratic and equitable international political order.

To ensure joint efforts in maintaining peace, security and stability in the region.

To deepen engagements in field of trade/commerce, transport, tourism, environment, cultural linkages, education, research and technology.

A critical examination of aims and objectives of SCO is presented below:

1. India-Pakistan-Russia-China relations create a complex matrix of diverging and conflicting interests. For example: different interests in Taliban-Afghanistan.
2. China has shown little respect to international rule-based order. Cheque-book and wolf warrior diplomacy, Human rights violations and 're-education' camps, HongKong issue etc. raise serious questions on Chinese commitments to aims and objectives of SCO.
3. Under the disguise of economic co-operation, China has pushed its BRI project through SCO.

4. Pakistan and China are known to have supported terrorist and separatist organizations raising questions on RATS mechanism. China, Russia (Ukraine issue) and Pakistan are accused of destabilizing the regional peace, security and stability.
5. Limited developmental cooperation between SCO countries during COVID waves shows lack of broad-based engagement.

The SCO, as a regional inter-governmental organization holds following importance for India:

1. SCO allows India to deepen its strategic reach in Central Asia. India already has substantial soft power potential (Buddhist linkages, Bollywood movies etc.) in Central Asia, which it can exploit through SCO.
2. India's membership of SCO can boost energy security by providing access to mineral and energy resources of the Central Asian countries. The membership, with its emphasis in trade relations, provide an inroad for the Indian investors to explore the untapped market potential in the Central Asian region. For example, FICCI hosted the SCO Business Conclave.
3. SCO can provide a platform to discuss bilateral issues with Pakistan and China.
4. SCO can play a pivotal role in combating terrorism, extremism and radicalization. For example, Dushanbe declaration, aims towards regional stability.
5. India's presence in the SCO will help in India's aim to link itself to the larger Eurasian region, and to Europe via an INSTC. Thus, boosting connectivity in the region. SCO can play an important role in deepening people to people engagement through cooperation in the field of education, medicine, tourism etc.

The inimical acts of Pakistan, border dispute with China etc., factors could minimize the positive outcomes from SCO. In this light India's SECURE strategy should be adopted to make SCO more effective in regional growth and stability.

Question 20: The newly tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede the existing partnerships in the region? Discuss the strength and impact of AUKUS in the present scenario.

Answer: AUKUS is a trilateral security partnership between the United States of America, Australia, United Kingdom in the Indo-Pacific region. It may supersede existing partnerships in the region as:

1. May undermine the more well-rounded/balanced objectives of QUAD.
2. May weaken the five eyes alliance group, (New-Zealand has shown displeasure over the formation of AUKUS)
3. May weaken the ASEAN centrality in the region.
4. USA promoting security partnership with its Anglo-Saxon allies may leave India and others out from the regional security architecture.

The strength of AUKUS as a security partnership between the UK, the USA and Australia can be seen as:

1. Will greatly enhance, by providing nuclear submarines/hypersonic missiles to Australia, the capabilities of its members to project power in Indo-Pacific.

2. Will give its members a credible deterrence powers towards China by deepening military capabilities.
3. Enhance patrolling and surveillance power of its members in Indo-Pacific; Restore the sanctity of norms and rules-based order in the region.
4. Enhance the capabilities of the like-minded countries, in the emerging domain of Artificial Intelligence, quantum technologies, cyber security etc.

However, AUKUS have raised certain concerns which could be counter-productive for India such as:

1. May instigate a nuclear/conventional arms race in the region.
2. China and Russia may react by supplying sensitive defense technologies to other states.
3. AUKUS which is perceived as an anti-China grouping by China may lead to erosion of regional stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
4. Manner in which AUKUS was formulated ignoring France may increase trust deficit between the like-minded democratic countries on other matters of global importance.
5. AUKUS with its exclusionary vision may run contrary to India's vision of an inclusive Indo-Pacific.

Though AUKUS, offers the advantage of balance of power, strategic autonomy and a check on Chinese aggression, it also has significant challenges as it has been termed as Indo-Pacific NATO. Hence, to progress with consultations and collaborations will be a prudent way forward.