

Idea of India 2018 Questionnaire

3rd annual edition, celebrating 72nd Independence Day of India

General Instructions

- Students can send in their research write-ups in teams of three
- There are two parts- Analysis and Synthesis
- The Analysis part gives the required subject background.
- Students would have to submit both Synthesis themes, would present only one in the competition, the team which secures more points in analysis round gets the first preference to pick a particular Synthesis theme.
- The team which would have submitted the best research shall present during the event.
- Describe the background work which was done to complete the research report.
- Interesting wrong answers are valued more than correct answers, at Sciensation!
- If you disagree with any implicit assumptions in the question, please state your point of view explicitly. You'd receive extra marks.
- Sciensation is very generous when it comes to awarding points, creative answers receive extra-marks!

Selection Criterion

- Examples- Can the student provide intuitive examples to justify the logic?
- Eloquence- Were the arguments explained carefully?
- Rigor- The arguments/assertions need to be justified.
- Robustness- Can the argument break down easily? How general is it?
- Elegance- Were the arguments beautifully constructed?

Scoreboard

	Examples	Eloquence	Rigor	Robustness	Elegance
Analysis: P1	/5	/5	/5	/5	/5
Analysis: P2	/5	/5	/5	/5	/5
Analysis: P3	/5	/5	/5	/5	/5

	Examples	Eloquence	Rigor	Robustness	Elegance
First Theme	/5	/5	/5	/5	/5
Second Theme	/5	/5	/5	/5	/5

Total (Analysis + Synthesis):

Analysis 1: Why Idea of India

Q1 Do we need countries? Why do human-beings organize themselves into groups? Why did we start as tribes, get into kingdoms and then nation-states? How are kingdoms different from nation-states? How are kings different from prime-ministers/presidents? Does a kingdom give you freedom? Does a country give you freedom? Why do we want such freedom? Why don't we want to listen to a king? Is a democracy different from a monarchy, how? Do we need patriotism? Do we have to like our country?

Q2. Simon Sinek talks of the What, How, Why questions while analyzing organizations, but can a country also be seen as an organization? Do most people understand what India comprises of? Do people understand how India works? Do people understand why India works this way? People know that Indian constitution is secular and doesn't endorse any specific religion, but do they know why? How old is the idea of secularism in India? Did we have ideas of secularism before independence or was it a Nehruvian/Gandhian idea? Was India a Hindu country before Britishers arrived or was it a secular country? Was Hinduism even one religion or is it a consortium of different beliefs? Why does Sanskrit language have highest amount of atheist literature? How did atheist Jains, theist Shaivites and atheist Buddhists co-exist and debate for several years? Does this answer why India chose to be secular?

Q3. Why do we have to ask the why questions? How we help people in answering these why questions? How do we answer these Why questions? Would an "Idea of India" help? Would we want to collect the niceties of the 2000+ year history of India and come out with a grand story of India? Would this grand story of India help in understanding India, in answering the Why questions? Would this grand story give a deeper purpose of being together as a country? Why is that deeper purpose important?

Q4: Do we need one Idea of India? What if few people are left out from this Idea of India? What if South Indians are left out, what if women are left out? How do we make sure every is included in the story? What if the story hurts a few people? What if the story asks everybody to be a vegetarian? Can this story force people to change their way of living? Does this story ask for blind belief? Can people question this story? If they question this story, are they hating their country? If your friend is making wrong choices, would you support your friend or would question him/her? Does your friend need "yes-men" around him/her or does he/she need to be questioned? Likewise, should this Idea of India be blindly followed or should it be subject to a good debate/dialogue/discussion?

Q5: Does an Idea of India help in decision making? Who takes the decisions on behalf of India? Would they be bound by centrally shared Idea of India? Would Bin Laden help the poor, what about Gandhi? Does a person's thought process affect decisions? What then guides the decision making of a country?

QFD: Come up with your own Idea of India and explain your idea is important and relevant.

Analysis 2: India & Patriotism?

Q1: Sarvepally Radhakrishnan in his book Indian Philosophy notes that India had this gentle mix of openness to ideas and commitment to core values, which helped her in evolving while keeping the identity intact. Do you think it is a good idea to listen to ideas from everywhere? Amartya Sen, in the book Argumentative Indians mentions how India didn't just ship spices and textiles, but also lots of ideas- Science, Mathematics, Astronomy, Surgery etc. Should we continue this tradition of exchanging ideas? Would this be the kind of idea we'd be proud of?

Q2: Does patriotism mean hatred for people of other countries? Should we hate innocent citizens of Pakistan? What does Indian culture tell us to do- to hate Pakistanis or to love them? Do we agree with what it says? Nehru was against the idea of "survival of the fittest", he believed that the wealth and power of the stronger nations should be used to help the weak ones, is this an Indian idea?

Q3: Tagore, the author of India's national anthem- Jana Gana Mana had said "I am willing to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than country. To worship my country as a god is to bring curse upon it". Would you agree with Tagore? Why do you think he is against the idea of worshipping the country? Can nationalism be used to make people hate those people whom they've never met? Can nationalism be used to fool people? Were Germans right in supporting Hitler? Can misplaced nationalism lead democracy into a fascist regime? Wouldn't an Indian approach to nationalism be a more contextual one, which critiques the thought before acting?

Q4: Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar questions what would happen if there is a conflict between national interest and the marginalized sections? Is this an important question? What should happen when there is a conflict between the economy (setting up factories) and the farmers? What about tribals and mining industry? Should the country stand for the weak and oppressed? Why was Nehru against war, do you think India had enough money to engage in a war? Was chest thumping nationalism more important or did India have to educate and feed it's already exploited citizens and colonially plundered economy?

Q5: What is the greatest form of patriotism? Do you think the national flag would like the hypocrisy of the salute, when the hand can't help a poor man? Do you think the national anthem would like the hypocrisy of your mouth which can't speak for the weak? Do you think nationalism is about the twice a year symbolism of singing songs or delivering speeches or is it about nation building? What is nation building, is it about standing for the weak and oppressed? What is India's idea of nationalism?

QFD: What is your definition of patriotism, going by the history of Indian thought?

Analysis 3: Freedom & Indian values

Q1: What do you know about India's freedom struggle? What is freedom? Is our government different from the British rule? Why did countries fight against colonial/imperial forces? What was the nature of nationalism in India during the freedom struggle? Why were women empowerment and Dalit emancipation an integral part of the struggle? Was the fight against British or our own internal evils?

Q2: Why did India choose nonviolence, to get freedom? If India is the only country to get freedom through nonviolence, is it special? What agenda does this set for the future generations? Would you agree with Mahatma Gandhi's "slow approach"? Would India get freedom quickly through violence? Do you think Indians had the courage to go for a violent freedom struggle? Is this the reason why India is usually very peaceful, why does India avoid wars as much as possible (lookup Nonaligned movement)?

Q3: Why were Gandhi and Hitler both influenced by the Bhagawad Gita? Is Krishna right or is Arjuna right? Was Krishna right in promoting the war or was Arjuna right in thinking about the consequences (killing his own cousins)? How does Krishna succeed in getting Arjuna to fight and kill his own cousins? Why do you think Hitler got his soldiers to carry a pocket Gita? But then who survives the Mahabharat war? Why do both Pandavas and Kauravas die? Why did Gandhi take Gita as a message of peace? Doesn't Krishna warn Arjuna that war will kill everyone and that nobody will be spared? Why did Hitler ignore this? Why did Oppenheimer derive inspiration from Gita while developing nuclear weapons? Does the Gita helping in going against your conscience? Was Gandhi a coward? Why did he choose peace/nonviolence? Who needs more courage a warrior or a messenger of peace? What does our freedom struggle convey to the generations to come? Was India different? Was India brave?

Q4: Why was India not in a hurry? Why does India care about the last man standing? Why can't India just focus on its economy? Is this a modern idea or an old Indian one? Does India believe in the idea of a global village, is it related to the idea of Vasudaikha Kutumbham? Did India have the concept of equality? Our Indian constitution talks of core values- Justice (social, economic, political), Liberty (no unreasonable restrictions on Indian citizens - what they think, their manner of expressions and the way they wish to follow up their thoughts in action), Equality, Fraternity (the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation), are they modern concepts or did India always believe in them?

Q5: When we think of India, we think of belief in culture, traditions, but Amartya Sen calls this an oversimplification, as Indians were fond of dialogues and had spent months discussing different questions, so should we Indians accept ideas just because a great man has said it? Or should ideas be rigorously critiqued? Is Bhagawad Gita a debate between Krishna and Arjuna? So, did Indians believe in sermon or reason? Should we accept culture the way it is or do we critique it?

QFD: What values does our 2000+ year old history inspire us to imbibe?

Synthesis1: Human Potential

Q1. Does a caterpillar have potential? Does a cub have potential? Does a seed have potential? Does a human baby achieve success immediately? Was Rome built in a day? How long did it take for India to achieve freedom? Does this potential need gestation? Why nurture a baby for that long? Why are mammals a lot more robust, in comparison to small insects? Should the parents take care of the baby for a long period, like mammals or for a short period? What are humans capable of doing?

Q2. What can you make with a piece of cloth? What can you make with some sugar and flour? What can you do with a stone and some wood? So do these materials make you rich? How do you improve these materials? Do you get richer if you can improve the quality of these materials? Which is the world's most fantastic material? India's first prime minister Nehru said that it is human material, would you agree with him? What makes you richer a piece of cloth or wood or an army of people waiting for a chance to prove themselves? How do we understand their potential? Was Nehru right in thinking this way, especially when he was leading a young country with so many people? If you were Nehru, what would you do to improve the quality of human material, to tap into the human potential?

Q3. Does a country need a healthy and educated population which feels empowered? Why would Food, Health, Education, Safety, Justice become important? How do we ensure that the country is healthy? Can doctors and hospitals alone take care of the country's health? What can you as an individual do? Do you blindly follow the doctor or do you question the doctor and learn what it takes to lead a healthy life? Do you depend on a teacher/school to give you education or do you take the responsibility of your education? Will the country be empowered if the people are empowered? Are people empowered when they depend on others or when they are self-reliant? How do you ensure that India is a healthy and educated country? They say "charity begins at home", so what should you do?

Q4. Does Technology leave people unemployed or does it eliminate jobs which people shouldn't be doing in the first place? Can Technology help in eliminating slavery by eliminating the need for jobs like scavenging? Now that Technological progress is lot faster than it ever has been, what kind of jobs should people be doing? Does Technology do more justice to human time? Would you be better off entering numbers into a sheet or would you rather analyze them and take good decisions? How do we prepare our people to be able to take up these kinds of challenging jobs?

Q5. If India has enough of basic resources- food, clothing, shelter, medicines, books, basic tech, internet etc, what should our priority be? Should we think about the jobs being lost due to technology or should we think of the new possibilities since our basic survival is being met by using machines? Didn't ancient India excel in Philosophy, as affluence meant more time for deep thought?

QFD: How you describe India's human potential and what is your way to improve it?

Synthesis2: Economic Potential

Q1. What is economy? Why does a country's production and consumption matter? Contrast two tribes one which kills a lot of animals and feasts on the meat and another which forages a lot of berries, what would be the difference? Why would we be interested in consumption and production? What is consumption is more than production? Is it just about production and consumption, or is it also about markets? Why does one have to be able to sell the produce? Shankar Jagannathan in his book "Widsom of the Ants" says that economics is born out of the wisdom and preparedness, but why would be interested in storage? Why should India be concerned about the economy and the jobs being created?

Q2. Why is the allegory of an elephant used to describe the Indian economy? Why is it so hard for somebody to break the Indian economy? Why can't external forces ruin our production, consumption and our markets? If it is hard to break, is it an advantage or is it a disadvantage? Does this make change impossible? Does it make change very slow or does it make it gradual or does it pave way for stable evolution? Indian middle class is considered as the great wall of the economy as they refuse to consume too much, they choose to save, is it a positive or is it a negative? If the consumption is less, won't it affect the economy by de-incentivizing the producers to create more? Is this strength or is it a weakness? Why can't Indian economy attack other economies, but only defend? Interestingly, this allegory also explains how Indian armies resisted western invasions, especially how Porus defended himself against Alexander-he used elephants and the Greek army couldn't figure out how to tackle them. Is it a happy surprise to see the gentle giant guard the civilization as well as the economy?

Q3. Does India have to look at external opportunities? Does it have to focus on exports? Can India explore domestic markets? Doesn't a strong domestic economy develop global reputation? If you're making good products locally, if you have the culture and expertise, can't you develop world-class products? Going by the allegory of the elephant, should we focus on attacking global markets or in developing strong local markets? Should we attack the enemy or strengthen ourselves?

Q4: Google's Eric Schmidt had said 40% of Silicon Valley startups are headed by Indians. Our education system works with the premise of creating job-seekers, but >85% Indians are self-employed, they have side-businesses even if they have corporate employment, so does this contradict our education system? How do we empower Indians to be entrepreneurially successful, so it can happen in India?

Q5: Can an elephant be compared with a quintessential Indian student? Do elephants take risks? Do Indian students risk their career? Do they do what the universities, companies expect them do or do they try something which makes the better? What if an elephant is a risk-taker?

QFD: What are your ideas to re-imagine the elephant- the Indian economy and what's your role?