

Please respond to all the four questions. Each question carries twenty marks and the break-up, where ever required, is given within parentheses. Please structure your answers with the skills you may have acquired while redacting your self-study assignment. You might want to use a page for ordering your thoughts and remember to keep an eye on the clock.

Time: 3 hrs; Marks: 20 x 4 Qs = 80

Question 1

Drinking tea is common in contemporary India but this practice was almost unknown before the arrival of the British. While Idlis and Dosas are considered to be part of South Indian cuisine, the process of fermenting the batter was incorporated from Indonesia. Potatoes and tomatoes were unknown to a greater part of the world until five hundred years ago; but, these are today an integral part of the Indian diet. While these changes occurred over a period of a few centuries, Indian dietary habits have altered rapidly over the past three decades in many ways. Write a structured essay elaborating on how the study of food and dietary practices (including food production, processing, sale and consumption) over the last decade could be a way for understanding change in contemporary India.

Question 2

Over the last quarter of century, affirmative action in the form of caste-based reservation has been a significant policy of the Indian State. Explain the rationale behind caste-based affirmative action in India (10 marks). What are the arguments in favour and against the ideology of meritocracy (the belief that individual merit must be the defining factor in the domains of education and employment) (10 marks)? You might want to employ Pierre Bourdieu's concept of culture capital while considering the concept of merit.

Question 3

Write a short note on i) India's policy of non-alignment ii) Look East policy since 1991 (10 marks) The Indian State has frequently accused external agencies for fomenting terrorism in India. One of the counter measures suggested by certain strategic experts is covert action in those countries that aid insurgency in India.

Examine the pros and cons of India intervening in the internal affairs of other countries for the sake of her own national interest (10).

Question 4

Please revise the study given below and respond to the following questions: What are/have been the travails faced by the Indian diaspora (10)? List four ways in which Indian diaspora has significantly influenced world culture (4). Is the Indian diaspora significant for contemporary India? Please give three reasons and substantiate these with arguments (6).

Source: Lal, Vinay, "Diaspora Purana: The Indic presence in world culture". This version published (with slight modifications) published in *The International Indian* 10, no. 6 (February 2003), pp. 29-31. https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/Diaspora/indic_presence.html Accessed 03 May 2017

The Indian diaspora has come out of the shadows in recent years, and its largely forgotten history, which encompasses narratives of displacement, migration, the cross-fertilization of ideas, and the emergence of new cultural forms and practices, is increasingly being viewed as an important and intrinsic part of the story of late modernity and humanity's drift towards globalization, transnational economic and cultural exchanges, and hybrid forms of political, cultural, and social identity. South Asians have transformed the face of the country that once colonized them, and in 'Balti Britain' chicken tikka masala has become, and not a moment too soon in a country notorious for its own impoverished culinary traditions, the national dish. Indian food provides the assurance that one no longer has to eat an English breakfast three times a day, as Somerset Maugham maintained, in order to eat well.

In the 1990s, Trinidad and Fiji both saw the emergence, though scarcely without misgivings on the part of considerable segments of their population, of prime ministers of Indian descent. Meanwhile, software engineers were bringing Indians into the top echelons of the American corporate world, and graduates of the Indian Institutes of Technology were being courted the world over. Once upon a time Indians were devouring the novels of Walter Scott and Charles Dickens; now, both the novel, and the English language, have been enlivened in the hands of South Asian writers of the diaspora -- Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, V. S. and Shiva Naipaul, Vassanji, Harold Sonny Ladoo, Rohinton Mistry, Anita Desai, and K. S. Maniam. Even Bollywood, which always had a global presence in the southern

hemisphere, now seems poised to encroach upon territory that Hollywood took for granted. The diaspora is never far from Bollywood's horizon. These are but fragments of a story that is now beginning to be told of a comparatively small diaspora that has indubitably become a part of world culture.

European travelers to the Indian subcontinent and colonial scholars did everything to encourage the idea that India was a stagnant country and its people largely immobile, but this view betrayed Europe's own parochialism and the inability of Europeans to confront some of the exceedingly cosmopolitan cultures of the Indic world. Buddhists and later Hindu kings were carriers of Indic culture to Southeast Asia in the second half of the first millennium, and though Bali is generally characterized as the Hindu "paradise" or "getaway" in Muslim Indonesia, the Prambanan plains of central Java are a striking testimony of the infiltration of Hindu culture into all of Southeast Asia. Down to the present day, the Javanese are steeped in the culture of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. India also developed extensive links with central Asia, Aden and the Gulf, and the east coast of Africa, and one effect of the European presence in India was the excision of the memory of these forms of interculturality. Gujaratis, Hakkas, Cantonese, Malayalis, Arabs, Bataks, Acehnese, Malays, Minangs, and Parsis mingled together.

Before European hegemony commenced in the modern period, the Indian ocean trading world provided the conditions for a multiculturalism that the Western world, which did everything to eliminate diversity and plurality, now claims as its signal contribution to world history. There is evidence of Indian settlements in east Africa extending back to the 12th century. Most historians, even those who have sought to move away from the narratives furnished by the framework of colonial knowledge, are unable to begin their narrative of the Indian diaspora before the nineteenth century, but the Gujaratis had justly established a diasporic presence in the early part of the second millennium. So renowned had the Gujaratis become for their entrepreneurial spirit, commercial networks, and business acumen that a bill of credit issued by a Gujarati merchant would be honored as far as 5,000 miles away merely on the strength of the community's business reputation. They traversed the vast spaces of the Indian Ocean world with confidence, and a Gujarati pilot guided Vasco da Gama's ship to India.

Under Portuguese rule the Indian Ocean trading system went into precipitous decline, and not until the nineteenth century did the Gujarati diaspora find a new lease of life. Gujarati traders migrated under the British dispensation in large numbers to Kenya,

Tanganyika, South Africa, and Fiji, among other places, and Mohandas Gandhi, himself a Gujarati, has recorded that the early political proceedings of the Indian community in South Africa were conducted in the Gujarati language. In East Africa their presence was so prominent that banknotes in Kenya, before the country acquired independence, had inscriptions in Gujarati. Khojas, or Gujarati Ismailis, flourished and even occupied positions as teachers and educators in Muslim countries around the world. And yet Gujaratis then occupied a miniscule portion of the Indian diaspora, since the singular misfortune of the greater number of Indians who would become the agents for India's magnificent diasporic presence was to experience the world as indentured laborers, a disguised form of slavery.

When slavery was abolished in the 1830s in the British Caribbean, and labor shortages threatened to reduce plantation owners to bankruptcy, it became expedient to import labor, largely from the Gangetic plains and present-day Tamil Nadu. The first shipload of Indians arrived in Trinidad in 1845; others went to Guyana and Surinam, and yet others to plantations in Mauritius (where Indians first arrived in 1834), Fiji, and Malaysia, or to help build railroads in east Africa. Nationalist opinion, and the efforts of English sympathizers such as C. F. Andrews, brought the system of indenture to a close in 1917, but not before 1.5 million Indians had sold themselves into debt-bondage. They lived in appalling conditions, in the "lines" formerly inhabited by the slaves. These Indians humanized the landscape, tilled the soil, and put the food on tables: they are the great unsung heroes and heroines of the diaspora.

Today the United States has among the largest Indian diasporic populations. The students, Ghadarites, and Punjabi farmers of the early twentieth century were isolated by the prohibitions placed on the entry of Asians in the 1920s; many men married Mexican women, and thus we have Punjabi-Mexican Americans. Who can say what would be the most accurate characterization of the progeny of a Punjabi-Mexican American wedded to an Indo-Fijian Canadian who had then settled in the US? The vast bulk of Indians arrived in the US following the immigration reforms of 1965, and though they occupy a disproportionately significant and highly visible place in the professions, Indians also ply taxis in New York and dominate the Dunkin Donuts franchises around the country. The Patels' grip on motels is a cliché, just as the corner shop in England, once one of the quintessential expressions of Englishness, is now a Gujarati institution. Though their overt political presence is still very minimal, and only one Indian, Dilip Singh Saund, ever served in Congress, no one doubts that the Indian-American lobby on Capitol Hill is becoming increasingly important. These Indian-Americans prevailed upon the US administration to exercise pressure upon

Pakistan to pull back its troops from Kargil in 1999; and yet their precarious position within civil society is underscored in numerous ways. If in the 1980s Hindu women in New Jersey were targeted by “dotbusters”, in 2001, following the events of September 11th, Sikh men were attacked because their turbans were construed as evidence of their loyalty to Osama bin Laden.

At this present juncture of history, the Indian diaspora gives rise to uncertainties as much as promises and the accomplishments enumerated earlier. A significant portion of Indian Malaysians still live in and around plantations, and alcoholism and subtle discrimination have together drained the life out of the community. Electoral politics in Trinidad, where Indo-Trinidadians and Afro-Trinidadians account in equal measure for 85% of the populations, is seared by an intense racial divide. Indo-Fijians accounted for a little more than half of Fiji’s population less than 15 years ago but, following coups in 1987 and again in 2000, have left the country in droves. Though they have not been expelled, as were Indians from Uganda and Kenya, they are unable to farm the land or find employment in government offices. They are doubtless the victims of grave forms of discrimination, but is anyone listening to them? Apart from engaging in grand rhetorical exercises in impotent institutions such as the Commonwealth, India can do little for them. In the Indian diaspora, as in India itself, there is an increasing disjunction between those who lead working-class lives and those who shuttle back and forth between metropolitan capitals. That the contemporary Hindi film is increasingly attentive to the diaspora is worthy of note, and flattering to diasporic Indians, but have we asked why its conception of the diaspora is confined to the modern West?

The modern Indian diaspora began in conditions of extreme adversity, and it is incumbent upon us not to allow the accumulated narratives of Silicon Valley “miracles”, the masculinization of Hinduism among diasporic populations in the Anglo-American world, and the musings (and lately rantings) of Salman Rushdie to monopolize our understanding of a diaspora that has also nurtured soft forms of Hinduism, new forms of Chutney music, and even, from within the depths of Ramacaritmanas country in Fiji, the first novel ever written in Bhojpuri. Our Indian diaspora needs a hefty Purana.