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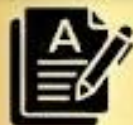
# AXIA IAS ACADEMY

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# Should the PIL jurisdiction be reconsidered?



**Anuj Bhawanja**  
Professor of law and author of 'Courting the People: Public Interest Litigation in Post-Emergency India'



**Talha Abdul Rahman**  
Advocate based in Delhi

## PARLEY

**P**ublic Interest Litigation (PIL) emerged in the 1970s as a transformative judicial innovation aimed at widening access to justice for the poor and the marginalised. This was achieved by relaxing the strict rules of standing to permit representative actions, and by broadening the scope of judicial notice to allow courts to take suo motu cognisance of public issues and convert them into litigation. Over time, however, concerns have been raised about the misuse of this jurisdiction. More recently, during the ongoing proceedings in the Sabarimala reference case, the Union government has urged the Supreme Court to reconsider the PIL framework altogether, citing the rise of "agenda-driven litigation." Should the PIL jurisdiction be reconsidered? Anuj Bhawanja and Talha Abdul Rahman discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Aaratrika Bhattacharya.

**Where should courts draw the line on who can file PILs?**

**Anuj Bhawanja:** The evolution of PIL can be traced to the Supreme Court decisions of the late 1970s, such as *Hussainara Khatoon & Ors. vs. Home Secretary, State of Bihar* (1979), which marked a departure from the traditional doctrine of locus standi, under which only an aggrieved party could approach the court, towards permitting representative standing. This enabled third parties to institute proceedings on behalf of marginalised groups unable to access justice due to systemic barriers. Over time, however, there has been a discernible shift towards a broader model of citizen standing, where individuals approach the court not as representatives of affected groups but in their own capacity as members of the citizenry. This transition has led courts to engage with issues in an open-ended and, at times, indeterminate manner. In my view, the court's jurisdiction ought, as far as possible, to be invoked by those who are directly affected or, at the very least, by those with a clear interest in the matter.

**Talha Abdul Rahman:** I do not believe that the rules of locus standi should be reverted to their earlier, restrictive form. The structural barriers that justified its relaxation decades ago remain largely intact, and courts continue to be inaccessible to the poor and marginalised. For instance, individuals whose homes are demolished by the state as a purported punitive measure may often lack the means or capacity to seek judicial redress. In such circumstances, if third parties step forward to challenge these demolitions on the ground that due process has



The Supreme Court of India

not been followed, they ought to be accorded standing. This is not merely a representative action, but an assertion of a constitutional guarantee – that the rule of law must be upheld in its full measure, even where the harm is not personally suffered.

**PILs often involve complex, polycentric disputes. Do they risk judicial overreach and the exclusion of key stakeholders?**

**TAR:** The concern is valid. There have been instances where courts, while hearing such matters, have had to respond to executive inaction. This then raises a recurring question: do they possess the institutional competence to navigate such issues? In my view, they do, particularly when assisted by able counsel and robust adversarial presentation. At the same time, courts have also consciously refrained from encroaching upon the domains reserved for the executive or the legislature. For instance, on April 29, the Supreme Court declined to direct the enactment of specific laws on hate speech, instead leaving any legislative redress to the appropriate authorities. This reflects an important reality – there are limits to what the courts can do.

**AB:** In the past, there have been several instances where courts, while hearing PILs, have proceeded without hearing those directly affected. This was particularly evident in a series of cases before the Delhi High Court in the mid-2000s concerning slum evictions, where PILs filed by resident welfare associations sought the removal of slums, but the slum dwellers themselves were not impleaded as parties. Similarly, the Supreme Court's handling of pollution-related litigation over the past four decades, much of it arising from PILs filed by environmentalist M.C. Mehta, highlights the limits of judicial intervention in addressing



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**TALHA ABDUL RAHMAN**

problems of such scale and complexity.

**How can courts address the rise of 'ambush PILs' filed to preclude genuine claims?**

**AB:** Increasingly, there have been instances of litigants rushing to court with poorly drafted petitions, often with the intention of securing an early dismissal and thereby precluding genuine litigants from approaching the court. These petitions are frequently driven by partisan motives. This is deeply concerning, as it risks prompting courts to deal with such matters in a cursory manner, without fully engaging with the complexities they warrant. In my view, this is not merely an issue of abuse of jurisdiction, but a problem rooted in the very nature of PIL itself.

**TAR:** It is often difficult to distinguish an "ambush PIL" from one that raises genuine grievances. Yet, their proliferation has fostered an environment of suspicion, with courts increasingly questioning the bona fides of petitioners. While this may not fully address systemic concerns, there are procedural safeguards. The Supreme Court Rules, 2003, require that a writ petition contain a specific pleading identifying the fundamental rights alleged to have been violated. In the absence of such a disclosure, the Registry may decline to list the petition. Courts have also imposed costs to deter such filings.

**Have courts ensured meaningful compliance with the directives issued in PILs?**

**TAR:** Ensuring compliance with the directives in PILs often depends on the bench. Where a judge is inclined to see a matter through, the case is kept pending, interim directions are issued, and compliance is periodically monitored. However, there has been a growing tendency in the Supreme Court to step back once a final judgment is delivered, leaving enforcement to the High Courts and trial courts. This is where gaps begin to emerge. In my view, the Supreme Court ought to retain some degree of oversight post-judgment, including initiating contempt proceedings for non-compliance.

**AB:** There are clear violations of several

important directives issued by the Supreme Court in PILs, often without any recourse to contempt proceedings. This tends to create a culture of impunity, allowing authorities to disregard court orders with little consequence. That said, the problem is more endemic and not confined to the PIL jurisdiction.

**Should guidelines be laid down on the role of the amicus curiae (a lawyer appointed to assist the court)?**

**AB:** The role accorded to an amicus in PIL proceedings raises several concerns. In dealing with complex cases, courts have, at times, expanded the role of the amicus to an extent that risks diluting basic procedural safeguards, particularly the right of affected parties to be heard. For instance, in *T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpal vs Union of India*, which originated as a PIL to protect forest areas in the Nilgiris and Kerala, the amicus, at various stages, was filing applications for directions and had effectively stepped into the role of the petitioner's counsel. The issuance of guidelines in this regard would be a welcome step.

**TAR:** Typically, courts appoint lawyers of a certain competence and integrity as amicus, with the expectation that they will assist the court in navigating the pleadings and arguments in a case. However, the role of the amicus is not uniform and can vary across jurisdictions. In my view, an amicus should refrain from taking sides and instead assist the court by fairly presenting the arguments on all sides. Given how fluid the role is, clearer guidelines are needed.

**What reforms are needed to strengthen the PIL jurisdiction?**

**TAR:** One requirement for entertaining a PIL should be that it is well-researched and confined to challenging enacted laws or executive action or inaction, rather than inviting the court to make policy choices. For instance, a petitioner should not approach the court seeking the enactment of a Uniform Civil Code.

**AB:** We need to return to the fundamental idea that PILs are an extrapolation of the principle underlying habeas corpus – that parties who cannot, for unavoidable reasons, appear before the court are represented by someone else. Only then will PILs retain their legitimacy.



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## • Key Terms and Explanations

- **Public Interest Litigation (PIL):** A judicial innovation that allows any public-spirited individual or organization to approach the court for enforcement of fundamental rights of those who cannot access justice themselves due to poverty, ignorance, or social disadvantage. Unlike ordinary litigation where the petitioner must be personally aggrieved, PIL is based on the principle that any citizen can act as a guardian of the Constitution. For instance, a journalist visiting a prison and finding undertrials languishing for years can file a PIL on their behalf without needing their formal authorization.
- **Locus Standi (Standing):** The legal right to initiate a lawsuit. Traditionally, only a person whose legal right has been directly violated could sue. In PIL jurisprudence, this was relaxed to allow "representative standing" where someone can sue for others, and later "citizen standing" where any citizen can raise matters of public importance. The classic example is *Hussainara Khatoon (1979)*, where a lawyer filed a habeas corpus petition for thousands of undertrial prisoners she had never met.
- **Suo Motu Cognisance:** The power of a court to take up a matter on its own motion without any formal petition being filed. Courts can pick up a newspaper report, a letter written to a judge, or even social media information and convert it into a writ petition. This is the broadest form of judicial activism where the court itself becomes the initiator of proceedings. For example, the Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance of the migrant workers' distress during the 2020 lockdown based on media reports.
- **Citizen Standing:** An evolved form of PIL where individuals approach the court not as representatives of specifically affected groups but in their own capacity as concerned citizens. This has led to what critics call "VIP PILs" where public interest becomes a cover for personal or political agendas. For instance, a person may file a PIL challenging a government policy simply because they disagree with it ideologically, without any directly affected community backing them.
- **Amicus Curiae (Friend of the Court):** A lawyer or expert appointed by the court to assist in complex PIL cases. The amicus is expected to present an objective legal position, conduct research, gather ground-level information, and sometimes act as a bridge between the court and affected parties. In the *T.N. Godavarman* case about forest conservation, the amicus has played such an active role that critics say the line between assisting and prosecuting has blurred.
- **Polycentric Disputes:** Problems that involve multiple interconnected issues, diverse stakeholders, and complex trade-offs where a decision on one aspect ripples out to affect many others. Environmental PILs are typically polycentric — closing a polluting factory affects workers' livelihoods, local economy, supply chains, and tax revenues simultaneously. Courts often struggle because judicial reasoning, based on binary rights-versus-wrongs, is ill-equipped for such systemic complexity.

- **Main arguments and substantive parts**

- **Core constitutional tension**

- The central issue is not whether PIL is good or bad in the abstract, but how far relaxed standing should go in a constitutional democracy. One side argues that without liberal standing, the poor and marginalised will again be excluded from justice; the other warns that excessive openness has transformed PIL into a platform for ideological litigation, docket inflation, and judicial policymaking.

- **Argument for retaining PIL**

- The strongest argument for retaining PIL is that the original structural conditions that justified it have not disappeared. Poverty, fear of reprisal, lack of legal aid, displacement, custodial abuse, arbitrary demolition, and bureaucratic opacity still prevent many affected groups from approaching the courts directly.

- This logic is powerfully illustrated by the undertrial prisoners' case in Hussainara Khatoon, where the Supreme Court intervened after distressing reports of long incarceration without trial. The judgment explicitly linked the failures of procedure, bail, delay, and poverty to Article 21, thereby grounding PIL in substantive justice rather than mere procedural technicality.

- **Argument for reconsidering scope**

- The argument for reconsidering PIL is not necessarily a rejection of social justice, but a critique of doctrinal drift. Once standing moves from representative access to diffuse citizen standing, courts may be drawn into abstract ideological conflicts, public morality contests, or policy disputes with no direct institutional handle.

- Recent submissions in the Sabarimala reference illustrate this anxiety. The Union has reportedly argued that PIL jurisdiction has grown into a "PIL culture," enabling persons without concrete injury to challenge laws and practices in ways that are anomalous compared to other constitutional systems.

- **Concern about exclusion of affected parties**

- A serious criticism of PIL is that, paradoxically, it can silence those in whose name it is brought. In eviction, pollution, and redevelopment matters, courts may hear elite petitioners, resident groups, NGOs, officials, or amici, while failing to fully hear the displaced, informal workers, or local communities who bear the consequences.

- **Concern about compliance**

- Another substantive concern is implementation. Courts may pass broad or aspirational directions, but unless there is sustained monitoring, administrative capacity, and follow-up, compliance remains partial, uneven, or symbolic. Hussainara itself showed how judicial recognition of rights must be matched by deeper reform in courts, bail, legal aid, and state capacity.

- **Historical evolution**

- **Pre-independence background**

- The formal colonial legal system was highly procedural, individualised, and expensive, designed more around adjudication and order than around social rights or mass access. Though writ traditions and representative actions existed in limited forms, there was no broad rights-based PIL jurisdiction in the modern sense.

- **Early constitutional phase: 1950s–1960s**

- After the Constitution came into force, Articles 32 and 226 created powerful remedies, but standing remained largely conventional. Courts usually required the petitioner to show direct legal injury, and litigation remained lawyer-driven, urban, and relatively inaccessible to weaker sections.

- **Transformative phase: late 1970s**

- The Emergency experience and the post-Emergency judicial turn created fertile ground for PIL. The Court became more sensitive to state violence, detention, prison injustice, labour exploitation, and rights deprivation among vulnerable groups.

- Hussainara Khatoon in 1979 is a milestone because it demonstrated how the Court could act on behalf of invisible undertrial prisoners and constitutionalise speedy trial and fair procedure under Article 21. The judgment's language reflects a shift from formal legality to social justice constitutionalism.

- **Expansion phase: 1980s**

- In the 1980s, PIL expanded through cases on bonded labour, prison conditions, child labour, labour rights, custodial abuse, environmental protection, and rehabilitation. The Court increasingly accepted letters, media reports, and public-spirited petitions, and treated procedure as a means rather than a barrier.

- The S.P. Gupta line of reasoning deepened the principle that a person acting bona fide and with sufficient interest could approach the court on behalf of those unable to do so. This period gave PIL its classic legitimacy as an instrument of democratizing constitutional remedies.

- **Governance and environmental phase: 1990s–2000s**

- PIL increasingly became a governance mechanism, especially in environmental regulation, urban planning, corruption, and institutional reform. This brought visible gains in some areas, but it also widened judicial involvement in technical and administrative questions, sometimes without robust stakeholder participation.

- **Procedural consolidation**

- The Supreme Court Rules, 2013 introduced procedural requirements for writ petitions, including clearer pleadings. This was partly a response to the need to filter out casual or poorly framed PILs while preserving genuine public causes.

- **Present phase: 2020s**

- The current phase is marked by reassessment rather than wholesale rejection. Debates around religion, constitutional morality, standing, and judicial review in the Sabarimala reference have re-opened the question whether PIL should remain broad, be narrowed, or be conceptually re-anchored in representational justice.

# COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: REVISITING PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION (PIL) IN INDIA

## PIL Emergence & Relaxed Locus Standi.



1970s Judicial Innovation:  
Widening Access to Justice.  
Relaxation of 'Locus Standi' (Right to Appear).



## Broadened Judicial Scope.



- Broadened Judicial Notice.
- Suo Motu Cognizance of Public Issues.



## Concerns and Recent Developments.

- Recent Debate (e.g., Sabarimala Reference): Calls to Reconsider PIL due to 'Agenda-Driven Litigation'.
- Misuse of Jurisdiction concerns.

## Expert Debate - Anuj Bhuwania vs. Talha Abdul Rahman.

Anuj Bhuwania	vs.	Talha Abdul Rahman
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return to Affected Party / Clear Interest model.</li> <li>• Evolution: Hussaiara Khatoon (Representative Standing) → Citizen Standing (Broad Model, Indeterminate Issues).</li> <li>• Danger of open-ended engagement.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Danger of Affec-ended Party / Clear Interest model.</li> <li>• Locus Standi Relaxation must continue.</li> <li>• Barriers remain: poor/marginalized.</li> <li>• Rule of Law must be upheld for all (even non-personally harmed).</li> <li>• Representative action asserts constitutional guarantee.</li> </ul>



## 5. Detailed Multi-Dimensional Analysis & Sustainable Ideas.

### A. Multi-Dimensional Impact

(Social, Legal, Political, Ethical, International, Economic)



### B. Sustainability

(Constitution, Institutional Capacity, Ethical)



### C. Key Challenges



### D. New Features & Unique Ideas

(Pre-Admission Research, Strict Implementation Monitoring)



### Final Recommendations.

#### WAY FORWARD: BALANCED REFORM

- Re-establish Locus Standi as needed (e.g., focus on Affected Groups).
- Codify Clear PIL Guidelines.
- Mandatory Stakeholder Involvement.
- Enhanced Judicial Restraint & Technical Assistance.

- **Logical and philosophical base**

- **The moral logic behind PIL**

- The philosophical basis of PIL lies in the difference between formal equality and substantive equality. A legal system may declare that everyone can approach the court, but where people are poor, incarcerated, displaced, or socially subordinated, equal formal access does not mean equal real access.

- **Constitutional philosophy**

- PIL is rooted in the transformative Constitution idea, under which rights are not merely negative shields against the state but tools for remaking unequal social structures. This aligns with the post-Maneka Gandhi reading of Article 21 as requiring fair, just, and reasonable procedure, not mere technical legality.

- **Democratic justification**

- The democratic defence of PIL is that it gives voice to those structurally underrepresented in political and legal institutions. It supplements electoral democracy by enabling constitutional courts to hear grievances that majoritarian politics or bureaucratic discretion often ignore.

- **Liberal criticism**

- The liberal-institutional criticism is that courts are not designed to govern polycentric policy spaces. Judges lack budgetary control, field administration, continuous stakeholder mapping, and democratic accountability, so their broad interventions may produce unintended consequences even when well-intentioned.

- **Epistemological concern**

- There is also an epistemic issue: how does the court know whose public interest is truly represented? PIL often claims to speak for “the public,” but publics are plural, contested, and unequal. A petition by a resident welfare association, an NGO, an activist lawyer, or a religious objector may each invoke public interest while representing sharply different social realities.

- **Best conceptual balance**

- The soundest philosophical balance is therefore neither strict individual standing nor unlimited citizen standing. It is a model of structured representative standing based on bona fides, demonstrable connection to the issue, inclusion of affected parties, and a rights-based rather than ideology-based threshold.



- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social dimension**

- PIL has historically empowered those excluded from formal justice, especially prisoners, labourers, women, displaced communities, and informal populations. Yet socially, it can also become paternalistic if outsiders speak over communities rather than enabling their direct participation.

- **Political dimension**

- Politically, PIL redistributes power by allowing courts to review executive inaction and state arbitrariness. But excessive judicialisation of public disputes may also reduce space for deliberation in legislatures, local bodies, and civil society institutions.

- **Legal dimension**

- Legally, PIL transformed the interpretation of locus standi, Article 21, procedural fairness, and continuing mandamus. The present challenge is to preserve its rights-protective capacity while preventing its slide into limitless constitutional intervention.

- **Ethical dimension**

- Ethically, the strongest defence of PIL lies in solidarity with the voiceless and the constitutional refusal to let poverty defeat rights. Its ethical failure begins when the language of public interest masks exclusion, ideological policing, or procedural manipulation.

- **International dimension**

- Comparatively, India's PIL jurisprudence is unusually expansive. That uniqueness can be seen either as a bold response to mass deprivation or as a "global anomaly," depending on whether one values social justice innovation more than strict standing discipline.

- **Economic dimension**

- PIL can protect labour rights, social welfare entitlements, environmental standards, and due process, all of which have economic consequences. However, unpredictable judicial orders in complex policy sectors may also create compliance burdens, uncertainty, and governance friction if not carefully reasoned.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class XI Political Theory**

- Chapters on Equality, Rights, Freedom, and Justice are directly linked because PIL operationalises the shift from formal rights to substantive access. Students can connect PIL to the idea that institutions must correct structural disadvantage, not merely proclaim neutrality.

- **Class XI Indian Constitution at Work**

- The themes of Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles, Judiciary, Judicial Review, and Rights of the Accused are deeply relevant. PIL is best understood as a practical extension of constitutional remedies and judicial creativity in the service of social justice.

- **Class XII Politics in India Since Independence**

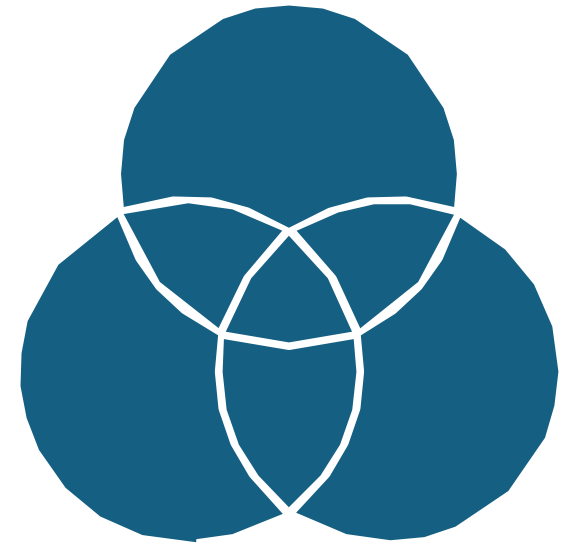
- The chapter on the expansion of democracy and changing institutions helps explain how courts emerged as active sites of accountability after the 1970s. The post-Emergency context is especially important to understand the rise of rights-conscious adjudication.

- **Class XII Sociology: Social Change and Development in India**

- Themes of exclusion, inequality, law, rights movements, and state-society relations connect well with PIL. The issue shows how law interacts with class, caste, gender, and urban marginality.

- **Class XII Economics / Indian Economic Development**

- Although indirect, discussions around poverty, inequality, informal labour, and state capacity help explain why formal legal rights often need procedural innovations like PIL to become meaningful.



- **Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus**

- **GS Paper II**

- This is the strongest linkage. Topics include the Constitution, powers and functions of the judiciary, judicial activism, separation of powers, pressure groups, civil society, vulnerable sections, and mechanisms for enforcement of rights.

- **GS Paper I**

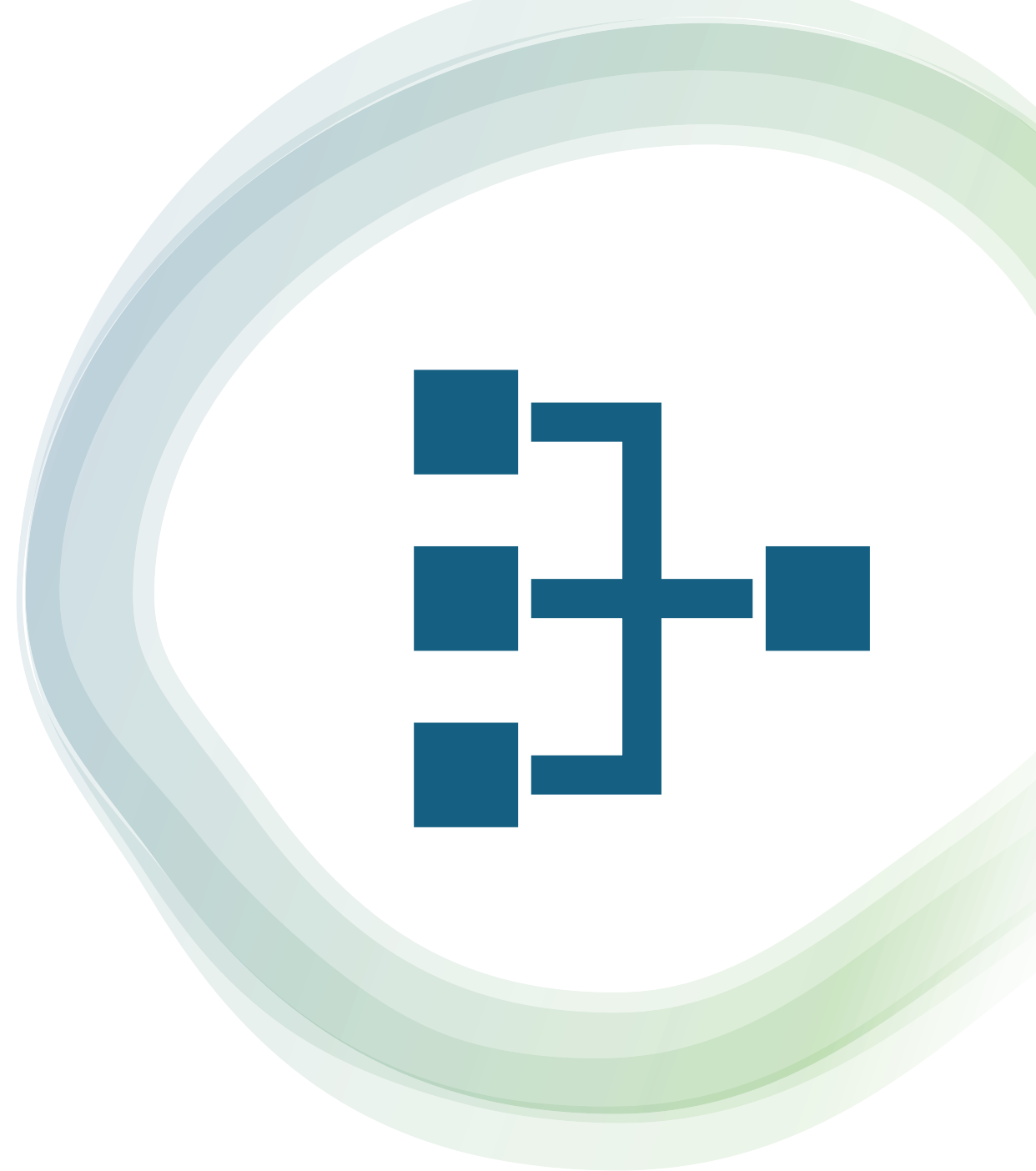
- There is a secondary linkage through social empowerment, urbanisation, women, marginalised communities, and social change. PIL often arises from conflicts around social reform, exclusion, and access to public institutions.

- **GS Paper III**

- There is an applied linkage where PIL intersects with environment, development, urban governance, welfare implementation, and regulation. Many governance failures reach the judiciary through PIL.

- **GS Paper IV**

- Strong linkage exists with ethics in public life, compassion, justice, impartiality, integrity of institutions, and balancing legality with morality. PIL raises classic ethical questions about means, ends, voice, and institutional responsibility.



- **Way forward**
  - **Preserve, but redefine**
    - The court should retain PIL jurisdiction but clearly state that its core purpose is representational access to justice for persons and communities who cannot effectively litigate themselves. This would preserve legitimacy while checking doctrinal sprawl.
  - **Adopt a tiered standing test**
    - A useful test could include: bona fides of petitioner, identifiable affected class, clear statement of violated rights, inability or difficulty of affected persons to access the court, and suitability of judicial relief. Abstract ideological petitions should be filtered more strictly.
  - **Ensure participation of affected groups**
    - No wide PIL should be finally decided without hearing directly affected stakeholders or their credible representatives. This is especially vital in cases involving eviction, environment, religion, welfare delivery, and urban governance.
  - **Clarify limits on remedies**
    - Courts should focus on rights enforcement, legality review, procedural fairness, and accountability frameworks rather than framing detailed policy in areas requiring ongoing technical management. That balance would reduce overreach while preserving constitutional oversight.
  - **Institutional reforms**
    - Strengthen legal aid, court accessibility, registry screening, amicus guidelines, and post-judgment compliance monitoring. The deeper lesson of Hussainara is that rights recognition must be supported by institutional capacity, not merely eloquent judgments.



- *General Studies Paper 2:*
- 2023: "Discuss the role of Public Interest Litigation in ensuring accountability of the executive to the judiciary."
- 2022: "Judicial legislation through PILs has become a parallel legislative process. Critically examine."
- 2021: "The expansion of PIL jurisdiction has led to judicial overreach into executive and legislative domains. Comment."
- 2020: "PIL has been both a boon and a bane for the Indian legal system. Discuss with suitable examples."
- 2019: "Trace the evolution of PIL from an instrument of social justice to a tool of governance."
- 2018: "Has the expansion of locus standi in PIL diluted the quality of judicial adjudication? Examine."
- 2017: "PIL is often criticized as 'Publicity Interest Litigation' or 'Private Interest Litigation.' Suggest measures to curb its misuse without restricting access to justice."
- 2016: "The Supreme Court's guidelines in Balwant Singh Chauhan case (2010) have not been effective in curbing frivolous PILs. Do you agree? Suggest reforms."
- 2015: "Discuss the role of PIL in environmental protection in India."
- 2014: "Critically evaluate the contribution of PIL in protecting the rights of the marginalized sections."
- 2013: "Judicial activism through PIL has strengthened Indian democracy. Discuss."
- *\*GS Paper 4 - Ethics:\**
- 2022: "A judge is faced with a PIL that challenges a major infrastructure project affecting tribal communities. The petitioner is a city-based NGO with no presence in the affected area. What ethical considerations should guide the judge's decision on maintainability?"
- 2020: "An amicus curiae appointed in a long-running environmental PIL is simultaneously consulting for the industry being regulated. Discuss the ethical issues involved."
- 2018: "A lawyer files a PIL knowing it has little merit but hoping for a favorable order in a politically charged matter. Analyze the ethical dimensions of such professional conduct."

# Heat action plans must go beyond emergencies

A fundamental problem for many heat action plans is that they involve episodic reactions to deep-seated systemic failures in urban design

A recent study by IIT Bombay shows that heatwaves over the Indo-Gangetic Plains are primarily driven by local land and atmospheric factors, rather than by hot air travelling from elsewhere. Another study in Springer Nature Research highlights that local weather conditions — such as soil moisture, cloud cover, and humidity — play a greater role in accelerating heatwave intensity and duration than previously understood. This means local land-atmosphere interactions could dominate more than regional, large-scale climate changes in creating extreme heat events. Morbid as their results may be, both these studies remind us that mitigating emissions can seem a lofty global goal for dealing with the climate crisis. Yet, simple interventions at a local level can help buffer citizens at least in the short and intermediate terms against extreme weather events, particularly intense heat waves.

Here's the good news: India is one of the few countries that has heat action plans ready for more than 100

cities with local and hyper-local interventions outlined. These plans are very simply strategic frameworks rolled out by state- and district-level bodies with multi-sectoral targets to respond to extreme heat events. Given the scale of the looming crisis with heat, these are not just imperative, they could be lifesaving.

This is what heat action plans have got right — the importance of early warning systems, upgrading existing infrastructure for an emergency response and training the medical community to respond to the crisis. Simple measures such as the specialised heatstroke immersion cooling unit set up by Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in Delhi or the setting up of cooling centres in cities like Jodhpur and Churu in Rajasthan are fine interventions. Other cities have innovated with adjusting working hours during a heat wave, while those such as Ahmedabad have a comprehensive roof-top cooling policy in place. (The city has incorporated passive cooling solutions such as solar reflective paint that can drop indoor temperatures by 3-6°C across hundreds of homes.)

There are some heat action plans that have been reduced to bureaucratic paperwork — prepared to meet formal requirements, but lacking meaningful implementation or follow-through. At first glance, the heat action plans of some cities or districts read more like Environment Impact

Assessment reports; they make the right noises with the correct glossary of terms but are lacking in strategic long-term interventions or any meaningful action to save lives or the environment.

Others are so glaring in their mistakes that they forget to change the name of the state and have simply lifted text from other reports. For instance, while analysing the heat action plan for the Dhaulpur region in Rajasthan, this author found several directives to the Jammu and Kashmir government, indicating that the text had simply been lifted from another report. It is unclear why the heat action plan for Dhaulpur, Rajasthan has direct forecasts of Jammu and Kashmir.

But for such glaring mistakes, heat action plans could do so much more. Delhi's Heat Action Plan, again, makes a reference to increasing greenery but doesn't map out problems such as low survival rates and lack of land availability for planting trees.

A fundamental problem for many heat action plans is that they involve episodic reactions to deep-seated systemic failures in urban design: For instance, large pockets of Delhi being devoid of any green cover, construction of cement-based expressways that add to the heat island effect with long stretches of expressways leading into the city becoming absolutely devoid of any shade or green cover.



Heat action plans can be tools of empowerment for vulnerable groups that stand to lose their livelihood during a heat wave. *BY ANITA*

Within city planning, there is now little space for the walker or the street vendor during a heat wave.

Then there are cities such as Thane that have comprehensive and respectable heat action plans in place with granular details and clear alignment of responsibilities within government departments with the right mix of hard science and innovative policy interventions. Developed in association with the Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW), the Thane heat action plan gets many action points right, while looking at historical trends and establishing effective pathways for response.

Heat action plans can be turned into windows of opportunities to provide cooling options to vulnerable populations who don't have a choice other than working in peak summer, such as delivery people, construction workers, and other daily wage workers.

So, what does this access to cooling

look like in city-based interventions? Does it mean the installation of air conditioners in government or community centres?

Or, can it go deeper, as the World Resources Institute mentions, through planting of shade trees, creation of shaded walking pathways, installation of reflective "cool roofs", creating porous pavements, and managing urban geometry to maximise shading and natural airflow?

Access to cooling cannot be a luxury. It has to be viewed as a right given the predictions of a scorching summer ahead. Heat action plans can be tools of empowerment for vulnerable groups that stand to lose their livelihood during a heat wave. The challenge is to ingrain these independent "pilot projects", currently managed by NGOs, in city planning.

Bahar Dutt is a conservation biologist and environment journalist. The views expressed are personal



Bahar Dutt

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- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Indo-Gangetic Plains (IGP):** A massive, fertile arc of land encompassing northern India. In the context of heatwaves, it is a "hotspot" where high population density meets specific geographical features that trap heat.
- **Heat Action Plan (HAP):** A multi-sectoral strategic framework designed to prepare for, respond to, and recover from extreme heat. *Example:* Ahmedabad's HAP, which includes color-coded alerts and cooling centers.
- **Urban Heat Island (UHI) Effect:** A phenomenon where urban areas are significantly warmer than surrounding rural areas due to human activities, cement structures, and lack of vegetation. *Example:* A concrete expressway in Delhi feeling 5°C hotter than a wooded park nearby.
- **Land-Atmosphere Interactions:** The exchange of energy and moisture between the earth's surface and the air. The article notes that local soil moisture and "dryness" can fuel a heatwave more than winds from afar.
- **Passive Cooling:** Building design techniques that reduce heat gain without using electricity. *Example:* Using solar reflective paint on roofs or "cool roofs."
- **Wet Bulb Temperature:** A measure that combines heat and humidity. It is the "real-feel" temperature that determines if a human body can cool itself through sweat.
- **Porous Pavements:** Road or sidewalk materials that allow water to percolate into the ground, helping maintain soil moisture and reducing surface temperature.

- **Main arguments**

- The central argument is that heat governance in India must move from a narrow emergency-response mindset to a structural urban resilience framework. If local land and atmospheric conditions strongly shape heat extremes, then city planning, water management, green cover, housing quality, public health systems, and labour protection become as important as broad climate mitigation.
- A second major argument is that India has already built a noteworthy institutional base for local response through heat action plans across many states, cities, and districts. This is significant because relatively few developing countries have attempted such distributed, localised heat planning at scale, and India's experience offers a governance model worth studying critically rather than celebrating uncritically.
- A third argument is that the quality of HAPs is highly uneven. Some plans are meaningful, science-based, and operationally aligned, while others remain template-driven, poorly localised, or weakly implemented, which undermines the very purpose of preparedness. For UPSC, this is a classic implementation gap: policy design exists, but capacity, institutional ownership, and accountability vary greatly across jurisdictions.
- The supporting evidence behind the positive side of HAPs includes interventions such as specialised medical response systems, cooling centres, revised working hours, and roof-cooling strategies. Ahmedabad's HAP and cool-roof efforts, for example, show how targeted local interventions can directly reduce heat exposure for vulnerable populations.
- The strongest caution in the overall argument is that episodic response cannot substitute for deeper corrections in urban design. If cities continue to expand concrete surfaces, reduce tree cover, neglect pedestrian shade, and leave informal workers exposed, then emergency advisories alone will have limited effect.
- A balanced reading also reveals an implicit counterargument: local interventions are necessary but cannot replace long-term climate mitigation. The more defensible UPSC position is that adaptation and mitigation are complementary, with local action reducing present vulnerability while global emissions reduction addresses the underlying intensification of heat extremes.

- **Historical evolution**

- Before Independence, the issue was not framed in modern climate terms, but heat vulnerability was embedded in colonial urbanism, agrarian distress, and uneven access to water, shelter, and public health. This period matters conceptually because many Indian cities inherited segregated planning, uneven green distribution, and weak worker protections, which still shape present-day heat exposure.
- After Independence, urban planning prioritised industrialisation, transport expansion, concrete-led growth, and large-scale public works, but heat resilience was rarely treated as a separate planning category. Over time, rapid urbanisation, informal settlements, declining commons, and vehicular infrastructure deepened the urban heat island effect, even though the language of “climate adaptation” had not yet fully entered policy discourse.
- A major turning point came with the broad climate governance framework after the National Action Plan on Climate Change, which recognised heat-health concerns in the late 2000s. Another milestone was Ahmedabad’s pioneering Heat Action Plan in 2013, widely seen as South Asia’s first structured city-level HAP, followed by NDMA guidelines in 2016 and their revision in 2019 to include short-, medium-, and long-term risk reduction strategies.
- The post-2010 period marks the real institutionalisation of heat governance in India, especially after repeated extreme heat events, rising mortality concerns, and growing evidence of climate-linked temperature extremes. By 2024, IMD and NDMA were working with more than 23 states and over 130 cities and districts on second-generation HAPs, indicating a shift from isolated pilots to wider administrative diffusion.
- The current phase represents a more sophisticated stage in which local thresholds, humidity, warm nights, ward-level risk mapping, and urban design are increasingly entering the planning conversation. This evolution is important for UPSC because it shows how disaster management in India is moving from reactive relief toward anticipatory governance and localised adaptation.



**AXIA**  
IAS ACADEMY

# CRITICAL ANALYSIS: LOCAL DRIVERS & URBAN HEAT ACTION PLANS (HAPs)

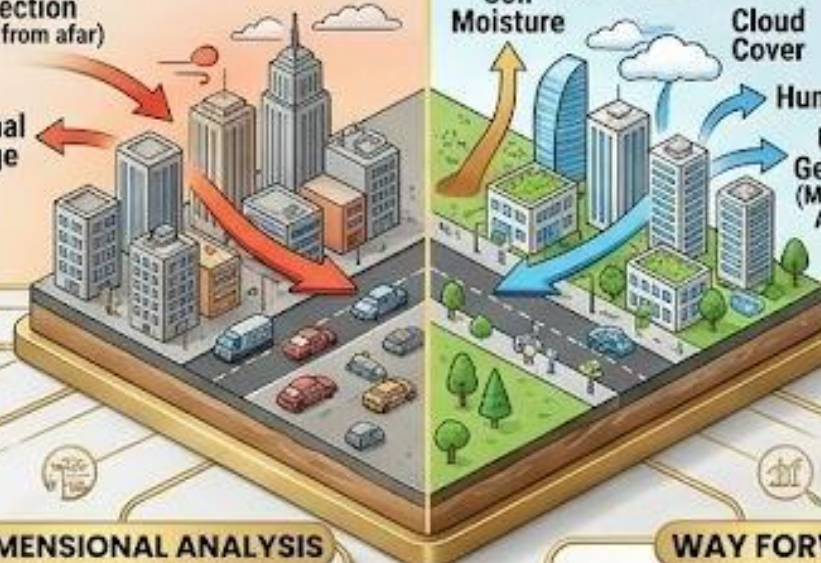
**AXIA ANALYTICS SERIES:  
GLOBAL CLIMATE, LOCAL ACTION**

## KEY TERMS DEFINED



## PREVIOUS UNDERSTANDING (LARGE-SCALE DRIVERS)

Advection (hot air from afar)  
Regional Change



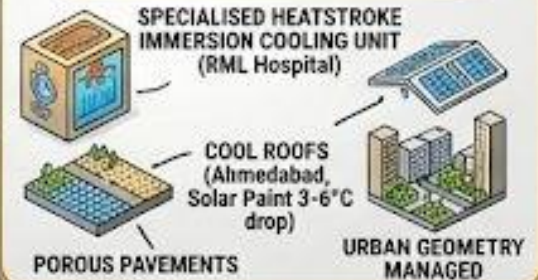
## IIT BOMBAY & SPRINGER NATURE INSIGHTS (LOCAL DRIVERS)

Soil Moisture  
Cloud Cover  
Humidity  
Urban Geometry (Maximized Airflow)

## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION



## MODEL INTERVENTIONS



## CRITIQUE OF CURRENT HAPs



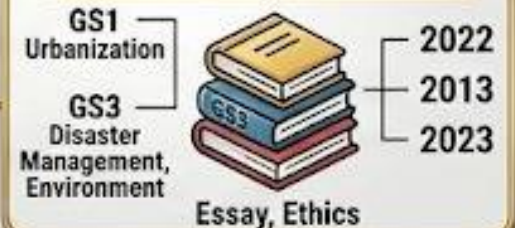
## MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



## WAY FORWARD



## SYLLABUS & PYQ LINKAGES



**FOR UPSC CSE PREPARATION:  
COMPREHENSIVE CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**



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- **Logical base**

- The logic behind the issue is fundamentally one of **subsidiarity**: when a problem is experienced locally and shaped by local conditions, solutions must be designed and delivered as close to the affected population as possible. The argument does not deny larger climate processes; rather, it says that broad climate signals are filtered through local ecologies, urban forms, and social inequalities before becoming actual human suffering.
- Philosophically, the debate rests on a shift from “nature as external threat” to “risk as co-produced by society and environment.” Heatwaves are therefore not just acts of nature; they become disasters when social arrangements such as poor housing, unsafe labour conditions, weak health systems, and exclusionary urban planning magnify exposure and vulnerability.
- There is also a clear public ethics foundation here: access to cooling, shade, water, health care, and safe working conditions should not depend entirely on private purchasing power. This aligns with a welfare-state and social justice perspective, especially in a country where informal labour, elderly persons, children, and low-income households bear disproportionate heat risk.
- Epistemologically, the issue is interesting because it calls for moving beyond a single-variable understanding of heat based only on air temperature. It favours a more layered knowledge framework using heat index, humidity, soil moisture, cloud cover, warm nights, local geography, ward-level vulnerability, and lived exposure.
- From a governance-philosophy perspective, the issue reflects the tension between procedural compliance and substantive justice. A city may have a formally approved HAP and still fail morally and administratively if its streets remain unshaded, its workers unprotected, and its warnings unusable for the vulnerable.

- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social**

- Socially, heat is a force multiplier of inequality because it punishes those with poor housing, outdoor work, weak nutrition, poor access to water, and limited health care. It also affects social groups differently, with the elderly, children, pregnant women, people with comorbidities, and informal workers facing especially high risk.
- Heat also reshapes everyday urban citizenship. When pavements lack shade, public transport stops are exposed, and markets have no cooling support, the city silently excludes walkers, street vendors, and low-income workers from safe participation in public life. In that sense, heat resilience is not only about climate adaptation; it is also about inclusive urbanism.

- **Political**

- Politically, heat action plans test the seriousness of decentralisation. The constitutional logic of urban local bodies suggests that municipalities should be central actors in local adaptation, yet many remain financially and administratively constrained. This creates a gap between assigned functions and actual governing capacity.
- Heat governance also has distributive politics. Deciding which wards get trees, cooling centres, cool-roof subsidies, or health outreach first is never purely technical; it reflects political priorities, visibility, and administrative will. That makes transparency and vulnerability-based planning essential.

- **Legal**

- Legally, the issue touches disaster management, environmental governance, occupational safety, public health, and municipal law. Heat planning gains legitimacy from NDMA guidelines, IMD forecasting norms, NCDC health formats, and local government mandates under the 74th Amendment framework.
- Yet the legal challenge is fragmentation. There is no single comprehensive heat law that binds urban planning, labour rights, health protection, and building standards into one enforceable architecture, so much depends on executive seriousness and interdepartmental coordination.

- **Ethical**

- Ethically, the central question is whether survival-level cooling is a private convenience or a public right. In a society with deep material inequalities, a purely market-led model of cooling is ethically weak because those who need protection most often cannot afford it.
- There is also an ethics of planning honesty. A copied, generic, or badly localised plan is not a harmless administrative lapse; it can become ethically indefensible because it creates an illusion of safety without real preparedness.

- **International**

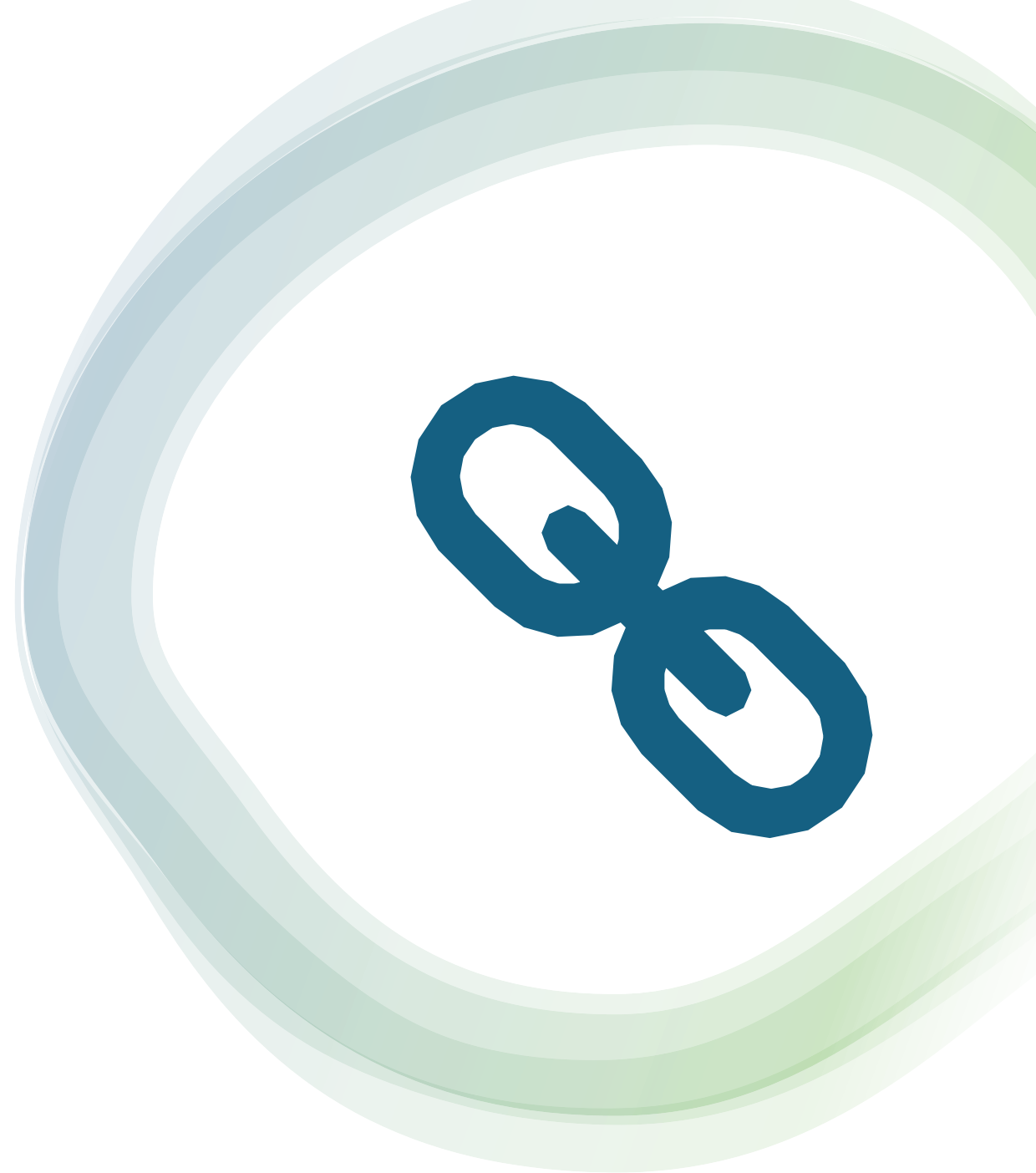
- Internationally, the issue sits within the larger climate adaptation agenda under the UNFCCC, the Paris framework on resilience, the SDGs, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. India's experience is especially relevant for tropical, densely populated, lower-middle-income countries trying to localise climate adaptation under resource constraints.
- At the same time, the science also reminds us that local adaptation cannot fully offset unchecked global warming. International climate justice therefore remains important, because countries like India face rising adaptation burdens while not being historically responsible for most global emissions.

- **Economic**

- Economically, heat reduces labour productivity, increases health costs, disrupts working hours, damages agriculture, raises electricity demand, and imposes hidden costs on the urban poor. Thane's HAP explicitly recognises the economic dimension, and broader assessments cited in such planning documents note significant GDP-related risks from heat stress in India.
- But adaptation can also be economically productive. Cool roofs, urban greening, shade infrastructure, better building design, and forecast-based prevention can reduce future health and productivity losses, making them not merely welfare spending but resilience investment.

- **NCERT linkages**

- This issue links strongly with **Class 11 Geography, Fundamentals of Physical Geography**, especially chapters on climate, atmospheric processes, and heat balance, because heatwaves emerge from interactions among pressure systems, radiation, moisture, and local surface conditions. It also connects with **India: Physical Environment**, particularly climate and natural hazards, as students can relate heatwaves to Indian seasonal patterns and regional variability.
- It also fits **Class 12 Geography, India: People and Economy**, especially chapters on human settlements and planning, because urban form, land use, transport surfaces, and green cover directly shape heat vulnerability. The same book's discussion of resources and development helps explain how ecological degradation and urban expansion intensify local heat exposure.
- From polity and civics, **Class 11 Indian Constitution at Work** and **Class 9 Democratic Politics** are useful for understanding decentralisation, local bodies, public accountability, and welfare obligations. These texts help students see why heat resilience is not just an environmental issue but also a constitutional-governance issue.
- In economics and social science, **Class 12 Macroeconomics** and **Class 10/12 social sector discussions** provide entry points into labour productivity, public health burdens, and state intervention. A student can draw on these NCERT foundations to connect climate stress with economic loss, inequality, and public provisioning.



- **UPSC syllabus linkages**

- The strongest linkage is with **GS Paper 3**, especially disaster management, conservation and environmental degradation, climate change, and science-policy interface. Heatwaves are a model topic where climatology, urban planning, public health, technology, and governance intersect.
- **GS Paper 2** is also deeply relevant because the issue concerns local governance, urban bodies, public health systems, welfare of vulnerable sections, federal coordination, and policy implementation. Questions on decentralisation, institutional capacity, and governance quality can easily use heat action plans as illustrations.
- **GS Paper 1** has a meaningful but slightly weaker linkage through geography of climate, urbanisation, vulnerability, and Indian society. Students can connect heatwaves with human geography, settlement patterns, inequality, and changes in environmental conditions.
- **GS Paper 4** is highly relevant where the issue is framed through ethics of care, public duty, compassion, accountability, and justice for vulnerable workers and residents. The contrast between a performative HAP and a truly life-saving HAP is an excellent ethics case.
- For **Essay**, the theme can support essays on climate justice, development versus ecology, urbanisation, public health, local governance, disaster preparedness, and rights-based welfare. For optionals, the strongest overlaps are with **Geography, Public Administration, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology, and Law**, depending on the angle adopted.



- **Way forward**

- The first reform must be to treat HAPs as living governance instruments rather than annual documents. Every plan should have city-specific thresholds, ward-level risk maps, budget lines, departmental standard operating procedures, seasonal review, and public dashboards on implementation.
- Second, India needs to move from temperature-only approaches toward impact-based heat governance. That means integrating humidity, warm nights, local soil and land conditions, health surveillance, and neighbourhood exposure patterns into warnings and response protocols.
- Third, long-term urban planning must incorporate passive cooling by design. Shade trees, reflective roofs, porous pavements, ventilation corridors, shaded bus stops, public drinking water points, street redesign, and protection of open green space should become standard urban resilience measures rather than isolated experiments.
- Fourth, vulnerable workers require explicit protection. Heat advisories should be linked to labour codes, modified work hours, rest-water-shade mandates, mobile cooling access, and emergency medical response for outdoor workers. This is where welfare, labour governance, and climate adaptation must converge.
- Fifth, municipal capacity must be strengthened through finance, data systems, and training. Without empowered urban local bodies, even the best-designed HAPs will remain fragmented, especially in rapidly growing cities where heat risk is inseparable from planning quality.



- **UPSC CSE Prelims:**

- 2018: With reference to IMD's criteria, which of the following conditions indicate a heat wave? (Options relating to temperature thresholds of 40°C for plains, departure from normal 4.5°C–6.4°C, etc.) — Direct linkage to heatwave definition.
- 2020: Question on urban heat island effect linked to temperature rise at night in cities.

- **UPSC CSE Mains (General Studies):**

- GS1 2021: "Explain the causes and effects of urban heat islands. Suggest measures to mitigate their impact in Indian cities." (15 marks, 250 words). Perfect fit with cool roofs, green cover, urban geometry.
- GS1 2013: "Bring out the causes for the formation of heat islands in the urban habitat of the world." Similar theme.
- GS3 2018: "Discuss the measures to deal with disasters in India." Under this, heatwave-specific preparedness can be highlighted.
- GS3 2022: "Climate change is a global commons problem. Explain how the international community is handling it. What steps have been taken by India in this regard?" The adaptation aspect (Heat Action Plans) becomes relevant.
- GS3 2023: "Heat waves are a silent disaster. Discuss the causes, socio-economic impacts, and the effectiveness of Heat Action Plans in India."
- GS2 2019: "Do government schemes for the vulnerable sections uplift them or leave them trapped? Discuss with examples." Can be tied to the inadequacy of cooling interventions for daily wagers.

- **UPSC CSE Mains (Essay):**

- 2018: "Normal human beings do not know that the world is a dangerous place."
- 2020: "The best way to predict the future is to create it."
- Thematic essays on climate justice, right to city, urban resilience.



- **Key terms and explanations**

- **Dukkha** is one of the most important concepts here. It does not mean only physical pain; it includes anxiety, restlessness, frustration, impermanence, and the feeling that worldly life can never provide lasting fulfillment. A simple example is that even after achieving success, a person may remain insecure or dissatisfied; this is also a form of dukkha.
- **Four Noble Truths** form the doctrinal core. First, life contains suffering; second, suffering has causes; third, suffering can cease; fourth, there is a path leading to its cessation. These truths are practical, almost diagnostic in nature: like identifying a disease, its cause, the possibility of cure, and the treatment.
- **Noble Eightfold Path** is the path to overcome suffering. It includes Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. In everyday terms, it asks a person to think clearly, speak responsibly, act ethically, earn honestly, and cultivate self-awareness.
- **Middle Path** means avoiding both extreme indulgence and extreme asceticism. The Buddha's insight was that truth and balance lie neither in luxury nor in severe self-mortification. For students, this can be understood as disciplined effort without burnout and aspiration without obsession.
- **Nirvana** refers to the extinguishing of craving, ignorance, and ego-driven suffering. It is not merely a place or a heaven-like condition but a state of liberation from the cycle of distress and attachment.
- **Mindfulness** is sustained awareness of thoughts, emotions, sensations, and actions. In modern language, it resembles reflective self-observation, though in Buddhism it is embedded in a deeper ethical and spiritual project.
- **Compassion** in the Buddhist sense is not pity but an active concern for reducing suffering in all beings. This is why Buddhist ethics is often linked to non-violence, tolerance, and universal welfare.
- **Enlightenment** is presented as awakening to reality as it truly is. It involves insight into impermanence, causation, suffering, and the non-absolute nature of ego.
- **Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta** is traditionally associated with the first sermon of the Buddha at Sarnath, where he set in motion the "Wheel of Dharma" by explaining the Middle Path, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path.
- **Mahaparinibbana Sutta, Nidana-katha, Lalitavistara, and Divyavadana** are associated with Buddhist textual traditions that preserve narratives and teachings connected with the Buddha's life and doctrine. Their mention highlights how Buddhist thought survives through textual, oral, and artistic traditions.

- **Main arguments and substantive parts**

- The central argument is that human suffering is universal, but its roots are psychological and moral rather than merely external. The text stresses that greed, pride, aversion, attachment, and ignorance are major causes of unrest in individuals, families, and societies. This gives the discussion a strong ethical dimension: the crisis of the world begins in the crisis of the mind.
- A second major argument is that the Buddha's teaching remains relevant because modern society is marked by violence, hatred, polarization, and emotional instability. The piece suggests that the antidote lies in self-discipline, compassion, self-reflection, and non-violence rather than reaction, revenge, or ideological hostility.
- A third argument is that Buddhism should not be reduced to a private, inward-looking philosophy alone. The text indicates that while the roots of suffering are internal, this does not mean social structures are irrelevant; rather, moral cultivation and humane institutions must complement one another. This is a very important balancing point for UPSC analysis because it prevents false binaries between personal ethics and structural reform.
- The article-like discussion also uses support from public voices, especially the Dalai Lama's appeal for peace, and from artistic-cultural representations of the Buddha in sculpture and painting. This expands the argument beyond theology and shows Buddhism as a living civilizational force in diplomacy, ethics, and cultural heritage.
- A subtle counterpoint also appears: if suffering is explained mainly through desire and ignorance, one may ask whether oppression, inequality, war, and unjust institutions are being underplayed. The text partly responds by implying that inner transformation and outer order are interdependent, but this remains a valid line of criticism for critical examination.

- **Historical evolution**

- **Pre-Buddhist and early Indian background**

- Before Buddhism emerged, the Indian intellectual world was already rich with Vedic ritualism, Upanishadic speculation, and the broader **Sramana** tradition that questioned orthodoxy, sacrifice, and social hierarchy. Buddhism arose in this fertile atmosphere of philosophical churn, urbanization, state formation, and social mobility in the 6th century BCE.
- The life of Siddhartha Gautama is central to this evolution. Born as a prince of the Sakya clan, he encountered old age, disease, and death, which exposed the universal reality of suffering. His renunciation and search for truth culminated in enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, followed by the first sermon at Sarnath and the foundation of a teaching tradition.

- **Ancient and classical phase**

- During the early Sangha period, Buddhism expanded through monastic organization, teaching networks, and royal patronage. The Mauryan emperor Ashoka gave the tradition a decisive historical push by linking dhamma with governance, moral restraint, welfare, and non-violence. This period is especially important for UPSC because it demonstrates how ethical thought entered statecraft.
- After Ashoka, Buddhism spread across South Asia and into Sri Lanka, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan. In India, Buddhist universities, monasteries, stupas, and artistic schools such as Gandhara, Mathura, and Amaravati turned Buddhist thought into a vast cultural system of learning and aesthetics.

- **Medieval decline and persistence**

- From the early medieval period onward, Buddhism declined in much of India due to multiple reasons: loss of patronage, absorption into wider Hindu traditions, institutional weakening, and invasions affecting monastic centers. Yet it did not disappear conceptually; many of its ethical values, symbols, and philosophical influences survived in Indian religious and cultural life.
- The Buddha continued to live through sculpture, sacred geography, texts, memory, and transregional traditions. This long continuity is why modern India can still invoke Buddhist heritage in diplomacy, tourism, constitutional morality, and civilizational identity.

- **Colonial and modern revival**

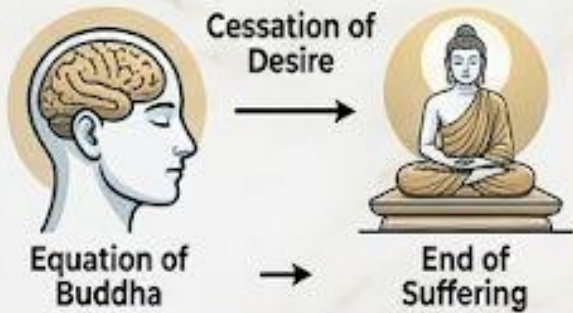
- In the colonial period, Buddhism was rediscovered through archaeology, philology, reform movements, and anti-caste reinterpretations. Sites like Bodh Gaya and Sarnath regained prominence, while scholars and reformers re-examined Buddhism as rational, ethical, and socially transformative.
- In the 20th century, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar gave Buddhism a radically democratic and emancipatory turn by linking it with dignity, equality, and social justice. This is one of the strongest bridges between ancient doctrine and modern constitutional values.

- **Contemporary relevance**

- Today Buddhism is present in global peace discourse, mindfulness movements, interfaith engagement, cultural diplomacy, and heritage preservation. In India, it is linked with the Buddhist circuit, international outreach, social harmony, and the projection of India as a civilizational state grounded in peace and wisdom.

**COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS:  
DUKKHA & THE PATH TO PEACE**

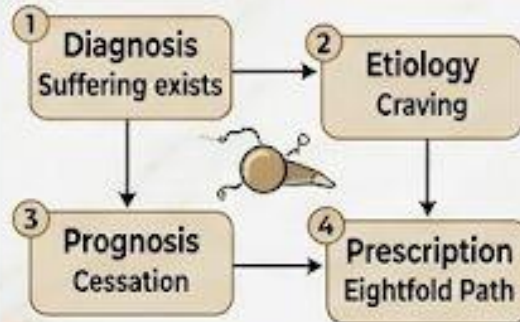
**INTRODUCTION:  
BUDDHA'S EQUATION**



**CORE PHILOSOPHY:  
THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**



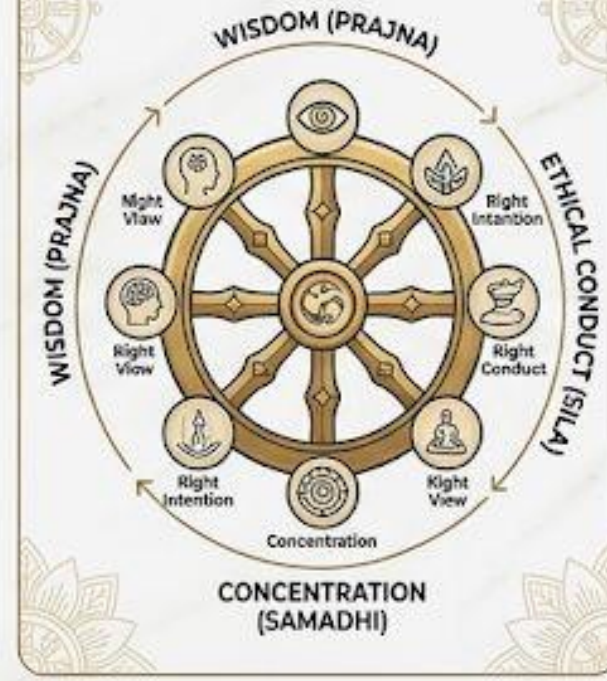
**CORE PHILOSOPHY:  
THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**



**INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL**



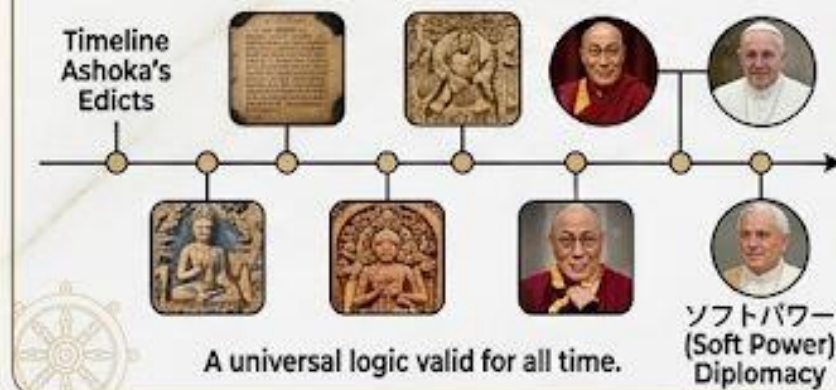
**THE EIGHTFOLD PATH  
(ASTANGIKA MARGA)**



**DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION**



**HISTORY & MODERN RELEVANCE**



**WAY FORWARD:  
ACTIONABLE POLICIES**

1. Secular Mindfulness in Education
2. Strengthening Cultural Diplomacy
3. Promoting Non-violent Dialogue

**UNWHOLESOME STATES CREATE CONFLICT;  
MINDFULNESS CREATES PEACE.**



## LOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL BASE

THE LOGICAL STRENGTH OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT LIES IN ITS DIAGNOSTIC STRUCTURE. IT DOES NOT BEGIN WITH DOGMA BUT WITH OBSERVATION: LIFE CONTAINS SUFFERING; SUFFERING HAS CAUSES; CAUSES CAN BE REMOVED; THEREFORE LIBERATION IS POSSIBLE THROUGH A DISCIPLINED PATH. THIS GIVES THE PHILOSOPHY A QUASI-EMPIRICAL AND THERAPEUTIC QUALITY.



PHILOSOPHICALLY, THE DOCTRINE RESTS ON SEVERAL ASSUMPTIONS. FIRST, HUMAN BEINGS ARE DEEPLY SHAPED BY DESIRE AND IGNORANCE. SECOND, REALITY IS MARKED BY IMPERMANENCE, SO ATTACHMENT TO FIXED IDENTITIES OR POSSESSIONS PRODUCES DISTRESS. THIRD, ETHICAL SELF-MASTERY IS POSSIBLE, AND TRANSFORMATION BEGINS WITH AWARENESS.



THERE IS ALSO A STRIKING PHILOSOPHICAL MODERATION IN THE IDEA OF THE MIDDLE PATH. IT REJECTS HEDONISM AND EXCESSIVE AUSTERITY ALIKE, WHICH GIVES BUDDHISM A BALANCED MORAL PSYCHOLOGY. FOR UPSC STUDENTS, THIS CAN BE LINKED TO IDEAS OF MODERATION, PRUDENCE, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, AND ETHICAL GOVERNANCE.



EPISTEMOLOGICALLY, BUDDHISM GIVES IMPORTANCE TO LIVED INSIGHT, DISCIPLINED REFLECTION, AND EXPERIENTIAL UNDERSTANDING RATHER THAN BLIND ACCEPTANCE. ONE MAY SAY THAT IT VALUES INTROSPECTIVE KNOWLEDGE, ETHICAL REASONING, AND TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE. THIS MAKES IT RELEVANT NOT JUST TO PHILOSOPHY OPTIONAL BUT ALSO TO ETHICS AND ESSAY WRITING.

- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social**

- Socially, the issue speaks to anger, alienation, family stress, loneliness, and communal disharmony. The Buddhist stress on compassion, moderation, empathy, and mental discipline offers a language to discuss social healing beyond punishment and blame. It is especially relevant in a time of online hostility and everyday emotional fatigue.
    - It also connects with caste and dignity debates when seen through modern reinterpretations, especially Ambedkarite Buddhism. Here, the language of suffering expands from individual psychology to social humiliation and the search for human equality.

- **Political**

- Politically, Buddhist thought raises questions about moral leadership and ethical statecraft. Ashoka remains the classic example of how power can be moderated by conscience, welfare, and restraint. In contemporary terms, the issue relates to peace-building, social cohesion, and the reduction of hate-driven politics.
    - At the same time, politics cannot be spiritualized to the point of ignoring institutions, rights, and accountability. A democratic system needs both moral culture and constitutional safeguards.

- **Legal**

- Legally, the issue intersects with freedom of religion, secularism, minority rights, heritage protection, and cultural rights. The state can protect Buddhist institutions and sites, promote heritage circuits, and support interfaith harmony, but it must do so within a framework of equality and constitutional neutrality.
    - The values also resonate with constitutional morality, especially dignity, liberty, equality, and fraternity. The strongest linkage is fraternity, because compassion and non-hostility create the emotional foundation for a democratic society.

- **Ethical**

- Ethically, this is one of the richest dimensions. The problem of suffering immediately brings in questions of self-control, right conduct, intention, non-violence, compassion, detachment from ego, and responsibility for one's speech and actions. These are directly usable in GS-4 answers.
    - The distinction between reacting and responding is particularly important. Buddhism encourages restraint rooted in awareness, not passivity rooted in fear. That is a nuanced ethical lesson for administrators.

- **International**

- Internationally, Buddhist heritage is a major instrument of India's soft power. Links with Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Japan, Mongolia, and other countries can be strengthened through civilizational diplomacy, tourism, education, and cultural exchange.
    - The message of peace also has value in a world marked by conflict and strategic mistrust. However, soft power is effective only when backed by credible domestic pluralism and heritage stewardship.

- **Economic**

- Economically, Buddhist circuits and heritage tourism can generate employment, infrastructure growth, and local livelihoods. Museums, conservation, pilgrimage routes, handicrafts, hospitality, and cultural industries all benefit from a well-managed Buddhist heritage economy.
    - At a deeper level, the ethic of moderation challenges consumerism and endless accumulation. While it does not reject material life altogether, it asks whether growth without restraint can produce social and mental well-being. That is a strong essay theme.



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- **Linkages with NCERTs**

- The issue connects well with **Class 6 History – Our Pasts-I**, especially chapters on early kingdoms, new ideas, and the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, because these chapters introduce the social and intellectual conditions in which the Buddha taught.
- It also links with **Class 12 Themes in Indian History, Part I**, where the rise of heterodox traditions, urbanization, and early Indian philosophical currents can be used to situate Buddhism historically. This gives students context, chronology, and social background.
- For polity and ethics connections, **Class 11 Political Theory** is important, especially chapters dealing with freedom, equality, justice, and rights. Buddhist compassion and self-restraint can be compared with broader political ideas of justice and ethical citizenship.
- For society and identity, **Class 12 Indian Society** helps connect suffering to exclusion, inequality, and social change. For philosophy-like framing, **Class 11/12 sociology texts** help students think in terms of individual agency and social structure together.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus**

- **Strongest linkages**

- **GS Paper 1:** Indian culture, ancient Indian philosophy, Buddhism, art and architecture, social history.
- **GS Paper 2:** Welfare orientation of the state, social harmony, constitutional values, soft power and international cultural relations.

- **GS Paper 4:** Ethics, human values, compassion, non-violence, emotional intelligence, moral thinkers, integrity in public life.

- **Additional linkages**

- **Essay:** Themes like peace, violence, happiness, desire, civilization, moral leadership, inner freedom, and social harmony.
- **GS Paper 3:** Sustainable lifestyles, tourism economy, cultural industries, and the psychology of consumerism.
- **Optional subjects:** Philosophy, Sociology, Political Science and International Relations, History, Anthropology, and even Public Administration through ethical leadership and humane governance.
- Among these, the deepest links are clearly with **GS-1, GS-4, Essay, History optional, Philosophy optional, and Sociology optional**, because the topic is simultaneously historical, philosophical, ethical, and social.

- **Way forward**

- The most balanced way forward is to combine ethical cultivation with institutional reform. Public policy cannot eliminate suffering in the spiritual sense, but it can reduce avoidable suffering through justice, health, education, social security, and peace-building. Ethical traditions such as Buddhism can enrich this effort by shaping the moral culture of citizenship.
- In education, Buddhist ideas may be introduced through value education, comparative philosophy, heritage studies, and emotional resilience modules without sectarian teaching. This would strengthen empathy, conflict resolution, and reflective thinking among students.
- In governance, the focus should be on compassionate administration, reduction of hate speech, community mediation, heritage preservation, and inclusive tourism development. In diplomacy, India can expand the Buddhist circuit and deepen cultural ties with Buddhist-majority and Buddhist-influenced societies.
- At the social level, the emphasis should be on dialogue, restraint in public speech, and rebuilding fraternity. The real lesson is simple but profound: a society cannot become peaceful if the minds that constitute it remain captive to fear, greed, and hatred.





- UPSC CSE Mains-type recurring themes
- Discuss the impact of Buddhism on Indian society and culture.
- Examine the relevance of Buddhist ethics in contemporary times.
- How do ancient Indian philosophical traditions contribute to modern governance and ethics?
- Discuss the role of compassion and non-violence in public life.
- Evaluate the significance of Ashoka's dhamma for statecraft.
- Compare inner moral reform and institutional reform as approaches to social conflict.
- UPSC Prelims-type recurring areas
- Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path.
- Buddhist councils, sects, and texts.
- Major Buddhist sites and associated events.
- Ashoka, dhamma, and inscriptions.
- Gandhara, Mathura, Amaravati schools of art.

**T**HE recent discourse surrounding the Kerala High Court's stance on campus politics—in which the court favoured a "congenial atmosphere" free from "political influence"—touches a raw nerve in the Indian educational landscape. It presents us with a false dichotomy: we are told we must choose either the sterile, apolitical silence of a 'purely academic' institution, or the chaotic, often violent mirror of state-level partisan warfare.

This choice is not only reductive; it is dangerous for the future of Indian democracy. To suggest that universities should be sanitised of political activism is to ignore their fundamental role as a laboratory for citizenship. However, the critics of campus politics are not entirely wrong: the infiltration of mainstream political parties into student life has often replaced intellectual debate with muscle power. The way forward lies not in banning politics, but in decoupling student activism from external party machinery.

A university is more than a degree factory; it is the first space where a young person interacts with the State and society as an independent adult. If we treat students as passive recipients of knowledge until the day they graduate, we cannot expect them to suddenly emerge as informed, critical and engaged citizens.

Political discussion, engagement and activism are essential pedagogical tools. They teach students how to negotiate differences, how to organise for a cause, and how to hold authority accountable. When a student group protests a fee hike or debates a national policy they are practising the very mechanics of a healthy democracy. By banning these activities, we are effectively telling the next generation that 'politics' is a dirty business best left to professionals, rather than a civic duty shared by all.

The real rot in Indian campus life is not the presence of politics, but the presence of party-political proxies. The AIJWP, NSUI and SFI are the youth wings of parties rather than organic campus movements. This dependency creates several systemic issues. The worst is external interference: when a student election is funded and directed by a national party, the issues debated are rarely about the campus library or hostel conditions. Instead, they become microcosms of national polarisations.

In Kerala, mainstream political rivalry often brings with it a culture of intimidation. The tension and lawlessness mentioned in various court rulings often stem from the fact that student leaders see themselves as foot soldiers for external bosses rather than representatives of

The judiciary should not aim to silence the campus; it should aim to protect the campus from the street. Student activism without party politics can balance academic discipline with democratic vigour

## CAMPUS AS A CRUCIBLE: A WAY TO REIMAGINE STUDENT POLITICS

SHASHI THAROOR



1st Sabha MP, Chair of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and Sabha Akademi, among others



2020-21

their peers. Party discipline also inevitably discourages independent thought. Students are pressured to adopt the 'party line' on every issue, which is the antithesis of the critical thinking a university is supposed to foster. The stifling of nuance is contrary to the pedagogical ethos that should animate a university.

If we accept that political engagement is necessary but party-political interference is toxic, we must look for a middle path. The goal should be to foster autonomous student governance. We should move toward a model where student unions are strictly independent of registered political parties.

This is not a radical idea. I was elected president of the St Stephen's College student union in 1974 in an election blissfully free of organised political parties. Many of the world's leading universities operate under 'independent student unions' where candidates run on individual

platforms or campus-specific conditions.

To be sure, any argument for keeping national parties off campus must acknowledge the real advantages they offer. For many first generation or rural students, organisations like the NSUI, AIJWP or SFI provide the cash, mentorship and networks that make political participation possible. Their national reach also gives student unions leverage when confronting an unresponsive university administration or state government. And exposure to national level mobilisation and party discipline is part of learning how real world politics works.

Yet, none of this requires the formal presence of external party organisations inside the university. Funding, training and mentorship can be institutionalised through need-based student development programmes; student unions can be empowered through statutory protections rather than partisan patronage; and the

skills of negotiation, consensus building and disciplined collective action can be cultivated within autonomous campus bodies. In other words, the benefits that national parties currently provide can be secured through healthier, more transparent mechanisms.

To bridge the gap between academic discipline and democratic vigour, we need a three-pronged reform. The first element is financial and organisational decoupling. Strict regulations should be placed on election spending with a mandate that all funds must be raised internally or provided by the university. Any evidence of funding from a registered political party should lead to immediate disqualification.

Second, university administrations and student bodies should work together to ensure that union charters focus on campus-specific governance—academic quality, student welfare and local social justice. By shifting focus to the immediate community, the incentive for external parties to intervene diminishes.

And third, rather than shutting down political debate, universities should institutionalise it. Instead of chaotic rallies, campuses should host structured debates, town halls and 'civic forums'. These should be spaces where students can debate national issues—yes, even controversial ones—without the fear of being branded by a party label or facing physical retribution.

The Kerala High Court and the Lyngdoh Committee are right to be concerned about the political atmosphere prevailing above the academic. But their solution—leaving everything to the discretion of educational institutions—can lead to a paternalistic environment where any dissent is labelled 'indiscipline'. The judiciary should not aim to silence the campus; it should aim to protect the campus from the street. The doctrine should be one of institutional neutrality. The institution itself remains neutral, but it provides a protected, safe space for its students to be un-neutral, passionate and political.

The purpose of a university is, at bottom, tutelary. But learning to be a citizen is just as important as learning to be an engineer or a historian. By choosing a path of independent student activism, we can create a generation of thinkers who understand that while they may or may not belong to a party, they certainly belong to a democracy. Let the campus be a place where ideas go to battle, so that the students don't lose it.

(When you pass this, please email @shashi@tharoor.in)

Full article on [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Democratic Vigour:** This refers to the active, energetic participation of citizens in the political process. In a university context, it implies that students aren't just passive learners but are actively questioning, debating, and engaging with societal issues. *Example: A student-led town hall discussing the impact of local environmental policies.*
- **Institutional Neutrality:** The principle that an educational institution, as a body, should not take sides in partisan political battles. This ensures the university remains a "sacred space" for all viewpoints. *Example: A university refusing to endorse a specific political party during national elections.*
- **Decoupling:** In this context, it means breaking the link between campus student unions and national/state political parties. The goal is to ensure student leaders are accountable to their peers rather than "high commands" in New Delhi or state capitals.
- **Paternalistic Environment:** A top-down administrative style where the authorities act as "parents" who know what is best for the "children" (students), often at the cost of the students' liberty and agency.
- **Apolitical Silence:** A state where political discussion is discouraged or banned, leading to a sterile environment. While it may look peaceful, it often masks a lack of critical thinking and civic awareness.

## Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

The core thesis posits that student politics is an essential pedagogical tool, but its current form in India—heavily influenced by national party machinery—is toxic. The argument is built on the belief that universities are not "degree factories" but laboratories for citizenship.

**The False Dichotomy:** We are often presented with a choice between "apolitical silence" and "chaotic partisan warfare." The article rejects both, suggesting a middle path of independent student activism.

**The Problem of Party Infiltration:** Mainstream political parties bring "muscle power" and "money power" to campuses. This turns student leaders into "foot soldiers" for external bosses rather than representatives of student interests like library facilities or hostel conditions.

**The Pedagogical Value of Politics:** Engaging in protests or debates is how students learn to negotiate differences, organize for a cause, and hold authority accountable. These are skills required for a healthy democracy.

**The Reformative Blueprint:** To fix the system, three shifts are proposed: **Financial decoupling** (no external funding), **Focus on local governance** (student welfare over national rhetoric), and **Institutionalizing debate** (moving from chaotic rallies to structured "civic forums").

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of student politics in India has moved from the heights of idealism to the depths of partisan fragmentation.

- **Pre-Independence Era:** Student movements were the backbone of the freedom struggle. Figures like Subhash Chandra Bose and Bhagat Singh emerged from a culture of intense student activism against colonial rule.

- **The Post-Independence Idealism:** In the 1950s and 60s, campus politics focused on nation-building and socialist ideals. However, the 1970s marked a turning point with the **JP Movement (1974)**, where students led a massive uprising against corruption and authoritarianism, eventually leading to the Emergency.

- **The Rise of Partisanship:** Post-1980s, national parties (BJP, Congress, Left) realized the potential of campuses as recruitment grounds. This led to the dominance of the ABVP, NSUI, and SFI, bringing national polarizations into the dormitories.

- **The Lyngdoh Committee (2006):** Following Supreme Court intervention, this committee recommended age limits, spending caps, and the disassociation of candidates from political parties to cleanse the system.

- **The Modern Judicial Stance:** Recent years have seen High Courts (like Kerala) taking a stern view of campus strikes, often prioritizing the "right to education" over the "right to protest," sparking the current debate.



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presents

## A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: CAMPUS POLITICS IN INDIA – A UPSC CSE PERSPECTIVE

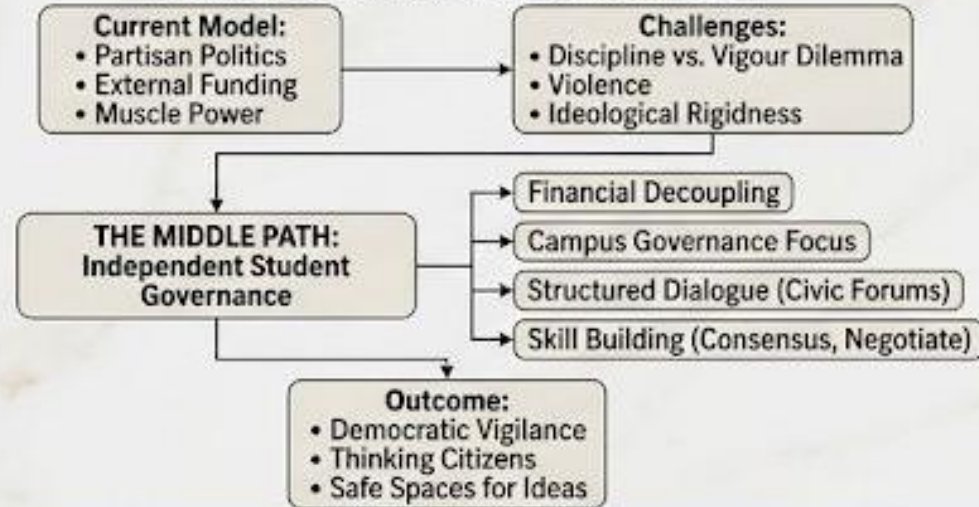
### Logical & Philosophical Base

- Rooted in Liberal Democratic values, viewing students as “independent adults” and “citizens in training,” rejecting total apolitical silence or partisan warfare.
- Advocates for a dialectic culture where “ideas go to battle” in a controlled environment, fostering critical thinking over physical conflict.

### Historical Evolution

- Tracing the journey from pre-Independence idealism and the JP Movement to increasing partisan fragmentation post-1980s.
- Highlighting key interventions like the Lyngdoh Committee (2006) and the ongoing judicial debate over student strikes.

### CAMPUS POLITICS: THE PATH TO REFORM - DECOUPLING AND REVITALIZATION



### GS PAPER LINKAGES

**GS II:** Pressure Groups, Formal/Informal Associations, Governance;  
**GS IV:** Ethics of dissent and responsibility; **Essay:** Themes of Etsas.  
**Essay:** Themes of ‘Democracy’ and ‘Youth in Nation Building’.

### Previous Years’ Questions (PYQ)

UPSC 2011 (GS II) – Lyngdoh recommendations; UPSC 2017 (GS II) - Pressure groups.  
UPSC 2012 (GS II) - Lyngdoh recommendations; UPSC 2017 (GS II) - Pressure groups.  
UPSC 2013 (GS II) - Lyngdoh recommendations; UPSC 2017 (GS II) - Pressure groups.

### Multidimensional Impact

**SOCIAL:** Acts as a societal leveler, enabling first-generation students to lead.

**POLITICAL:** The nursery of leadership; removing party ties might shift dynamics.

**ECONOMIC:** Balancing student activism with class regularities to protect public investment.

### The Way Forward

- Strictly enforcing the spirit of the Lyngdoh guidelines for transparent elections.
- Institutionalizing structured debates to discuss complex issues without party labels.
- Empowering unions on campus-specific governance matters like welfare and quality.


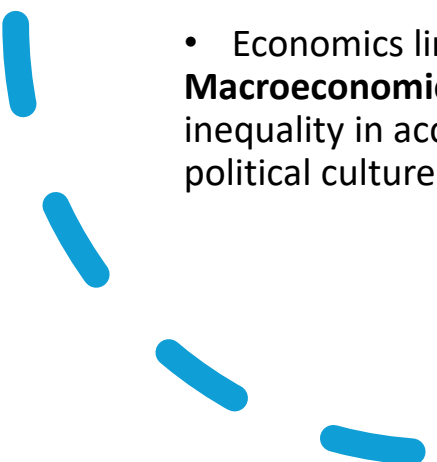
- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- The arguments are rooted in **Liberal Democratic Philosophy**, specifically the ideas of John Dewey and Paulo Freire regarding education as a practice of freedom.
- **The University as a "Microcosm"**: The logic assumes that if a student cannot practice democracy in the safe, controlled environment of a university, they will be ill-equipped to handle the complexities of the real world.
- **The Theory of Social Contract**: Students are viewed as "independent adults" rather than "passive recipients." This shifts the philosophical status of a student from a subject to a citizen.
- **Anti-Totalitarianism**: By advocating for the decoupling of party influence, the argument leans on the idea that pluralism flourishes only when local groups are autonomous and not swallowed by large, monolithic entities (State or Party).
- **Epistemic Conflict**: The philosophy suggests that "ideas should go to battle so that students don't have to." This prizes intellectual friction over physical friction.

- **Multidimensional Analysis**

- **Social:** Student politics acts as a leveler. It is often the first place where students from different castes and classes interact as equals. However, party-led politics can also replicate societal divisions and "muscle power" hierarchies.
- **Political:** Campuses are the "nurseries of leadership." Most of India's current frontline leaders started in student unions. A ban on campus politics could lead to a leadership vacuum or a monopoly by those with dynastic connections.
- **Legal:** There is a constant tension between the **Right to Education** and the **Right to Protest**. Courts are increasingly viewing strikes as a violation of the rights of non-participating students.
- **Ethical:** Is it ethical to allow 18-year-olds to vote for the Prime Minister but deny them the right to organize politically in their place of residence (the campus)?
- **International:** Globally, top-tier universities (Ivy League, Oxbridge) have robust student governments that are independent of national parties. India's struggle is to move toward this "Professional Unionism."
- **Economic:** Frequent strikes and campus shutdowns lead to a waste of public resources and delay the entry of graduates into the workforce, impacting the "demographic dividend."



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- Linkages with NCERTs
  - This issue connects strongly with **Class 11 Political Theory**, especially chapters on Equality, Freedom, Rights, Citizenship, and Justice. These chapters help students understand why democratic participation, dissent, and public reasoning are central to political life. The debate on campus politics directly illustrates the tension between liberty and order, rights and regulation.
  - It also links with **Class 10 Democratic Politics**, especially chapters on Power Sharing, Democracy and Diversity, Gender-Religion-Caste, and Outcomes of Democracy. Student politics often reflects diversity management and representation in miniature form. A campus can thus be read as a small democratic society where inclusion and conflict resolution are tested.
  - There is a meaningful connection with **Class 12 Politics in India Since Independence**, especially themes of democratic expansion, social movements, regional aspirations, and institutional development. The historical evolution of student politics can be linked to broader patterns in post-independence democratic participation and contestation.
  - From sociology-oriented learning, the issue connects with **Class 11 Sociology: Understanding Society** and **Class 12 Indian Society**, especially discussions on social inequality, institutions, identity, youth, and social change. Student politics is a vivid case of how social cleavages and collective agency interact within institutions.
  - Economics linkages may also be drawn from **Class 11 Indian Economic Development** and **Class 12 Macroeconomics** indirectly, particularly in the context of public expenditure on education, privatization, youth aspirations, and inequality in access. This is useful when discussing why the nature of higher education affects student engagement and campus political culture.
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- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**

- The strongest linkage is with **GS Paper 2**, especially governance, constitution, polity, representation, pressure groups, and issues relating to education and social justice. The issue sits at the intersection of democratic participation, higher education governance, institutional autonomy, and constitutional freedoms.
  - A strong linkage also exists with **GS Paper 1**, particularly Indian society, youth, social empowerment, and post-independence developments. Student politics reflects social cleavages, generational aspirations, and the role of youth in shaping political culture. Historical evolution from the freedom struggle to present-day campus polarization can be used in GS-1 answers.
  - There is an important **GS Paper 4** connection because the issue is deeply ethical. Themes of tolerance, empathy, civil discourse, public service values, non-violence, leadership, and responsibility in public institutions are all embedded here. The distinction between dissent and disorder can be used effectively in ethics answers and case studies.
  - The issue also fits **Essay** topics on democracy, education, youth, dissent, institutions, citizenship, and freedom. It can enrich essays with layered arguments about how democracies reproduce themselves through education and participation. For students with **Political Science and International Relations** optional, the topic links directly with political theory, democracy, state-society relations, and constitutionalism. For **Sociology optional**, it connects with youth, power, institutions, social stratification, identity, and education.
-

- **Way Forward**

- The first step is to institutionalize **autonomous, issue-based, transparent student politics** rather than leaving campus participation either unregulated or suppressed. Universities should create clear election rules, spending limits, debate formats, disclosure norms, and grievance mechanisms. Student unions should be tied to campus issues such as academics, welfare, inclusion, infrastructure, and safety.
- Second, there should be a conscious separation between legitimate student participation and direct external partisan control. This does not mean banning political thought or ideological debate. It means preventing outside funding, coercive patronage, and proxy control by party organizations. Campuses should remain politically alive but organizationally autonomous.
- Third, institutions need strong **deliberative platforms** beyond elections: open forums, policy councils, student-faculty committees, social audit spaces, gender forums, and structured consultations. Elections alone do not create democracy. Continuous participation does. This also reduces the temptation to treat every issue through agitation alone.
- Fourth, campus governance must become more inclusive. Women, marginalized caste groups, minorities, persons with disabilities, and first-generation learners should have meaningful representation and safe participation spaces. Without inclusion, campus democracy remains formally procedural but substantively unequal.
- Fifth, administrators must be trained in constitutional values, conflict mediation, and youth engagement. A purely disciplinary approach often escalates tensions. Universities need mediation, restorative practices, and proportional responses. The goal should be democratic order, not merely administrative silence.
- Finally, a civic culture of debate must be rebuilt. Student politics should be associated with manifestos, argument, negotiation, and accountability rather than symbolic aggression. In the long run, the best safeguard against destructive campus politics is not depoliticization, but deeper democratic pedagogy.





- **For UPSC Mains, repeatedly relevant themes include:**
  - Role of educational institutions in democracy.
  - Pressure groups and informal associations in polity.
  - Freedom of speech, dissent, and constitutional morality.
  - Youth, social movements, and democratic participation.
  - Social justice, inclusion, and institutional reform.
  - Ethics of protest, dialogue, and public responsibility.
- **For UPSC Prelims, related conceptual areas often include:**
  - Fundamental Rights and reasonable restrictions.
  - Constitutional bodies and committees concerning education or governance.
  - Student movements in modern India and post-independence politics.
  - Democracy, representation, and civil society concepts.



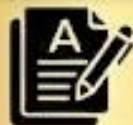
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