

Preliminary Examination: Preparation for CSAT

Why CSAT?

In the whole world democracy is expanding at a rapid pace. So much so, that even communist nations are disembarking towards democracy. As a result it has brought the economic and the political system close to each other. This has definitely brought a change in the responsibilities and values of the administrative officers. Now their responsibility is not limited to maintaining only the law and order situation in the country but also includes the holistic development of the society and the nation. In the process of fulfilling this responsibility, the erstwhile rules of bureaucracy has given way to systematic economic management.

Now an officer cannot treat himself as a VIP and limit himself only to a government car and house. He needs to go in the midst of people, understand their problems and find solutions for the same. He needs to formulate policies for development, take sound decisions and the biggest challenge is to show results for the decisions taken. In our country we have now been talking about social audits, which determines, what has been the actual benefit of policies and decisions to the common man. Thus, it becomes obvious that to fulfill all these responsibilities a very different mindset is required. Now instead of a ruler, a servant is called for. Instead of an administrator, we now need a manager. The main aim to include the CSAT paper is to find a person with such kind of a mindset and personality.

Three years back when this paper was introduced, clearly two categories of examinees could be seen. The first category included engineering and management students. These examinees wholeheartedly welcomed the CSAT paper because they found it in their favour. It is not that this was a paper which was suddenly speculated; similar questions featured in the General Studies paper but it did not constitute more than 10 percent of the paper. This was already featuring in the bank and management entrance exams; it is a different matter that their level was lower than this. This is the reason why this category of students were in favour of it. For the last two-three years the preliminary exam results prove that this has benefitted the engineering students. Since earlier only 10 percent questions were of the CSAT pattern, any student could manage them. But now, when an entire paper is based on it, it has become a little difficult.

For certain, the second category was of Arts students, who had left Maths a long time back and were quite apprehensive for obvious reasons. But the question is was this anxiety indeed valid? Whenever some changes come about, anxiety does happen. Slowly, things fall in place, like they now have. Here, I would like to point out that this matter of advantage or disadvantage is not one-sided. If Science students get benefitted from Maths questions, then Arts and Commerce students get the advantage in comprehension. Students with science background are a little weak in this subject. Thus, the truth is that this paper is 60% in favour of Arts students and 40% in favour of Science students.

The alphabet 'A' is the most important in the CSAT exam paper. It is the soul of this entire exam. 'A' stands for Aptitude. In general terms, aptitude means suitability, spontaneity, attitude and eagerness to learn. Neither Maths is aptitude, nor knowledge is aptitude. General Studies paper is associated with knowledge. Maximum students associate the CSAT paper with Maths, which is wrong. In reality, the different types of questions included in the CSAT paper are a means to check the mental capability of a person.

It is believed, not from recent times but from the times of Ancient Greek philosopher Plato's times, that the brain that knows Maths is a relatively better brain. You can call this the best quality of the brain. Here, from Maths I mean, counting, calculation, find solutions with quick thinking, and not just solving mathematical problems. Mathematical questions act only as tools. After all you need some instrument to check and judge.

You should understand that the six - seven types of questions that are put up in the CSAT paper are basically tools to check your mental aptitude. You should understand this properly. I am drawing your attention towards this because there is a large number of students who ask me "Sir, which books should we study for CSAT?" Their question clearly shows that they are not aware of the latent aim behind the CSAT paper. They have not understood the fact that books for CSAT are not supposed to be learnt, but understood, and after understanding to be applied.

Books only provide you a lab or a workshop to prepare for the CSAT paper. It is like a gym. When you go to a gym, you don't gather knowledge about the equipments kept there but you use them. You use them in a way suitable to you, so that your muscles become strong. This task is accomplished by doing, not by seeing and knowing about it. When you open the CSAT book and solve questions, and continue solving them, your mind becomes active in this process.

You can say that you are exercising your mind for the first time. You can never cross the river of CSAT by memorising by heart even if you have a grotesquely photographic memory. Here you will have to understand the formulas and learn to apply them. With every question the figures change. The relation between the figures change with every question. You may remember the formulas, but with every question the way the formula would be applied changes. This is like the seven notes of music which is used to create songs. The same notes are applied in different ways to produce different songs with different music and rhythm.

This is called 'creativity' or formative ability. This ability cannot be obtained by knowing, reading or memorising by heart, but, by doing. If you learn all the rules of swimming, can you become a swimmer? It can happen that without knowing the rules you may become a swimmer, but it can never happen that you become a swimmer by jumping in the pond just because you have done a PhD in the rules of swimming.

Creative mind is the best mind and the philosophy behind the CSAT paper is to find such kind of a mind. You can read any other kind of book for 4-5 hours but you cannot read the CSAT book continuously for this long. You can try and see for yourself. If I am saying you can't read it for so long, I don't mean absent mindedly flipping the pages, I mean understanding it in such a way that they become a part of your mind. You will get tired in a short while and start getting puzzled. You will realise that you are getting confused. You will get bored and exasperated. You should think why this happens with CSAT books? The answer is simple. Here the mind has to work aggressively.

Very few people want to work hard. Very few people can tolerate this discomfort of the mind. That is why very few people are very fond of Maths. But the fault here is not of maths. Maths is a dear friend and very reliable too. If you can accomplish it, you start loving it. If you are not able to accomplish it then accept the truth that somewhere you are responsible for it and not your friend Maths, which is logical and has mental ability. You must have met people who consider it their friend, that is why engineering students benefit from it.

Basic Elements of CSAT

You are aware that the CSAT syllabus has primarily been divided into seven points. Even though they are seven points but I will divide them into three main categories. Its first category is maths. Second category is associated with logical explanation and the third category deals with the knowledge of the language and presence of mind abilities. I have tried to understand CSAT in depth. I have also studied the last three years papers at length to understand what is the basic essence of this paper. After all this paper with its different tools and different questions is trying to test which special abilities of the mind? With regards to this, I would like to share the three main points which I have found. It is important for you to know this so that with the preparation

for CSAT you can also set your internal and mental balance. Never forget that preparation for CSAT is basically a mental preparation and not an acquisition of knowledge. If you don't understand this, then I doubt you will be able to profit out of it.

The main elements of CSAT are :

- Calculation
- Speed, and
- Focus

By calculation, I mean how quickly the mind can find a solution to questions. You are given questions in Maths which has questions related to averages, percentages, interest etc. Blood relations are discussed, puzzles are given, numerical patterns are given, English alphabet arrangements are given and you are asked to give the correct answers. How will you do this? Obviously, through calculation. Here, your ability to calculate can only be your saviour. No other solution would work here. Don't indulge in supposition and guess work. In General Studies paper you can still estimate because you may think you have heard it somewhere, read it somewhere, seen it somewhere, it could be this or that, but, here there is no scope. Here you can reach your correct destination only when your mind correctly calculates. The mind that can calculate with certainty is the best mind.

Now we talk about speed. In CSAT paper you have to solve 80 questions in 120 minutes. As compared to General Studies paper some leniency has been shown here because there in the same time you have to solve 100 questions, even though it is not so that the General Studies questions are very easy that this should be done. There the net of options is so confusing that the students don't understand what were the options they had just read above. Still, in General Studies paper if one is expected to answer 20 more questions in the same time, it is because there is a possibility of guess work there; but that is not the case with CSAT.

There is another point here. I am suggesting you an alternative solution here. Take 80 questions of the CSAT exam. First solve them in 120 minutes. Then check how much have you scored. Now solve the same 80 questions in 150 minutes. Again check your score. It would be better if you attempt it a third time and take 3 hours for it. You should not be amazed to see that your score has been consistently improving. Why is this so? The answer is clear.

This happened because you got more time. To solve the same 80 questions in 120 minutes, you will have to increase the speed of your calculation. Giving more time means reducing your speed. Isn't reducing the speed of your mind somewhere proving your mind is becoming sluggish? Would you want a sluggish Collector or SP posted in your district? A sluggish mind means a lazy mind, a lazy person and in turn a lazy officer.

Now the last point is about Focus. It means 'concentration of the mind'. In the CSAT paper, you are given paragraphs. I believe they are the simplest and the most scoring. All students should aim at scoring 100 on 100 in this. You can do it. The part on unread comprehension is associated with the technique of your reading. This reading technique is primarily associated with the focus of your mind. It tests with what focused approach you study facts, comprehend it and how long can you stick with it. In a subtle way, it shows the very important side of communication skills and psychology.

Unseen comprehension and the questions asked on that check your ability to understand dialogue. Never forget that the mind that cannot understand dialogue properly can never have a good dialogue with others. An administrator must have the ability to be accurate and compendious and this quality depends on how focused can that person remain on facts.

Preparation for C - Set

So friends, in order to prepare for C - Set, I would firstly like to advise you to free yourself for your mental ignorance. There is no doubt that if you are a student of Humanities and have only basic knowledge of English then C - Set paper will appear difficult and confusing to you. But I assure you it is like this only till you believe so. But once you summon up courage and decide to take it head on and you put aside your time in an organised fashion for its preparation, then certainly this paper will become your favourite paper.

I understand your situation that you have not been in touch with this subject for a long time. It must have been at least seven years that you would have been in touch with this subject. But don't forget that the seeds of it are still inherent in you. Now we only need to water those seeds in order to germinate them. A little heat of strong psyche and a little sprinkle of hard work will make the seeds sprout again in the dormant tree. Regarding this psychology behind the preparation of this paper, I would like to mention a few points:

(I) Logical Reasoning

Under this section, such questions are asked that determine how easily you solve any complex situations. Like A is bigger than B and B is smaller than C kind of questions. Actually these kind of questions are simpler but the maze of words tend to confuse you. You need focus to solve such kind of questions. To ascertain the correct answer for such questions, the best way is to draw a dotted chart as per each specific situation. The moment you make the chart you will realise that the way to reach the correct answer becomes very easy.

Under this, till now three other kind of questions have also been asked, like the ones with blood relations, in which familial relations are given; questions with puzzles - this is also a way of putting across a simple question in a complex manner. Both these kind of questions can be answered easily by making a chart. Of course, the more you practise these kind of questions, the more your speed will increase. Third kind of questions are based on directional knowledge, in which you are asked if a person started moving in a particular direction and after moving some distance turned in xyz direction, then he would be at which place now. It is best to answer such questions through linear maths. You should make a picture using lines and after judging the length keep moving the lines in those directions and you will arrive at the correct answer.

(II) Mental Ability

The specialty of these kind of questions are that from a distance they appear to be a irregular set of numbers but they are actually based on a set pattern. Under this, either some numbers are given, like 15, 55, 59, 99, 103, 305, 507, ? Or a series of alphabets may also be given, like, Z, U, Q, ?, L.

The scientific way to solve these questions is to write down the difference between 2 or 3 numbers or alphabets and based on that try to understand the pattern. But remember it is not very easy either. You will have to rack your brains.

Under this questions based on positions are also asked, like, " Rajesh's position is 15th from the beginning and 13th from the end. So how many students are there in the class?" This is very simple. If you apply your mind a little, you will get the answer.

(III)Calculus and Pythagorus theorem

This is related to mathematics. The good part is that its level is not above eighth class' Mathematics. Inspite of this, most of the Humanities students fear this exam. You know addition, subtraction, division and multiplication, don't you? If the answer is "yes", then one-third preparation has already been done. While the rest two-third preparation can be done by understanding and using the formulas as base for solving the solutions. This is the challenge, which is not that big.

In this category, questions related to the following formulas are asked:

- (i) Simple fractions
- (ii) Simplification
- (iii) Highest common factor and lowest common denominator
- (iv) Average
- (v) Age related questions
- (vi) Percentage
- (vii) Profit and loss
- (viii) Simple and compound interest
- (ix) Partnership
- (x) Ratio and proportion
- (xi) Work, distance and time
- (xii) Questions related to train
- (xiii) Boat and speed
- (xiv) Some tricky questions where formulas can't be used



All these questions are of basic level. The solution for this is to buy any mathematics book and after understanding these formulas, try solving the questions related to these. If you aren't able to do it on your own, you can take the help of a person who knows Mathematics. You shouldn't panic as you've cleared eighth class which had all these questions.

(IV) Geometry

This means lines, triangles, quadrilaterals, cones and circle. There will be shapes in the unsolved paper to stress you out. Are these the questions to panic you? Not at all. You'll realize that these are very simple questions once you study and understand them. It's difficult to answer them without studying.

(V) Data analysis

This is not new. It was there in the second question paper of General Knowledge in 2011. In a way this has been kept in CSAT. In these questions, mainly, documentary, data in a table, punishment document and line diagram are given. Then, based on any of the tables, questions are asked. Here, only practice matters, for which, many books are available. You'll get to know the way of practicing once you start reading them.

(VI) Ability to reason

This is directly related to your intelligence and that how well you can assimilate fixed fractions. You'll be shocked to know that 40-50% of the CSAT questions are asked from this category. So, you can understand the importance and the difficulty level of this.

The problems that the passage of this category create have been told earlier. I'd like to tell you more about this:

- (i) There are two ways of reading the prose. One is that you read the passage carefully and then read the questions based on it. Second way is to read the questions first and then the prose. According to me, the second method of doing it is better as you can find the accurate answers easily.
- (ii) You must read the given passage twice very carefully. While reading it the second time, you should mark the words which, you think, are related to the answers.
- (iii) Sometimes, the summary of the passage can also be asked. Hence, while reading, try to understand the main idea too.
- (iv) The English passage's level is that of tenth class. The sentence formation and the words used can be understood by a person who knows little English too. It's expected to understand this much English. Hence, you should start listening to English news on the radio and start devoting sometime in learning English. You can also read English newspapers and magazines.

I would like to suggest you that if you face a problem in understanding the passage in English, then don't be stuck to it. You can do it at the end, so that, the time in hand can be used effectively. You may gain something from this. I am sure that a person who knows little English can easily score 3-4 marks out of 8. Your planning should be to score more in other areas than this one.

(VII) Decision-Making

The way a passage is given in the ability to reason category, a problem is given in this one. As soon as you read this problem, try and derive two facts. First, that what's your status in it. In other words, how have you been asked to solve this problem. And secondly, that in which way is the problem seeking for a solution. Then, try building a relationship between these two facts. Now, you have to decide according to your solution and what the solution would be. I think that after deriving the facts, you would be in a position to answer easily.

At the end, I would like to say that the preparation for this paper is totally dependent on your practice. Kindly accept my good wishes.