

## The Idea and Preparations of Basics-2

### Why Basics?

The knowledge of Basics seems to be childish at the surface level. And that is the case too. But, there is an odd thing about it. And that is, to know about any topic, it is very important to know its basics and to know about a topic's basics, it is important to be aware of it in depth. It is similar to the question, what came first- the hen or the egg? However, it is not difficult. I feel that as soon as the two parts of the article are completed, you will be able to solve this puzzle on your own. And of course, at last, few things should be left for you as well.

Einstein gave a bizarre but true definition of knowledge, 'whatever is left after forgetting what we have read, is knowledge'. The formulas and their advantages of basics are hidden in this. Actually, till the time we remember what we have read, this memory registers its presence by intervening in our knowledge. However, it should leave us after making us strong. To give an example, when we eat food, then proteins, vitamins, become a part of our cells and the rest vanishes. When food is cooked in the kitchen, then, the chapatti is made from the flour, which is not there. Basics do a similar kind of work. If you are able to create a similar kind of relationship with your bookish knowledge, then, you will be able to understand Einstein's thinking. The truth is that it is only then that you will understand the importance of simple things like basics. Now, I would like to talk about it in the context of the civil service exam only.

It upsets you when you have a look at either the preliminary paper or the main paper. They disturb you to an extent that you aren't able to understand anything after reading them. You fail to understand what UPSC wants to know from you. You are unable to understand the question which is asked and till the time you don't understand it, you cannot do anything special with it. Now the question is, 'is nobody able to understand these questions?' And if some people are able to understand them, which does happen, then, why can't the other people get them? This proves that the questions are not such which can't be understood. The difficulty is at our end that we are unable to understand them. And the main reason for this is no comprehension of the topic's basics. As soon as you understand and clear the basics of the topics, you will be able to understand the questions. This is its first advantage.

You should try to understand the ethos of every subject of the main paper (except the paper related to essay and languages). Words like, analyze, interpret, and critically explain etc. are related to most of the questions. It is very clear that they are not asking for facts here, rather they are asking for the analytical skills using these facts and figures. That means UPSC wants to check your logical skills. Logical mind is not lazy and a person whose mind is not lazy, will not be lazy himself. Every nation needs a smart, energetic and dynamic administrator. And it is obvious that only that person's mind can be logical and analytical whose basics are crystal clear.

In many of the questions of the main paper, your opinions are asked. For instance, there is a General studies question, 'transfer of illegal funds is a serious security risk for a country's economic sovereignty. What is its importance for India and what steps should be taken to protect it from this?' now the part 'what steps should be taken' is asking your opinion. You will not be able to write your opinion till the time you know the basics of illegal fund and their transfer. There is no doubt in it that you can give a to the point answer to this question if you know its basics. It is clear that you can write original ideas and draw conclusions only when you have some knowledge of the basics.

The fourth and the last point is that you should never ignore the fact that knowledge is like liquids and not like solids. It keeps on increasing constantly and then, it reaches from one point to another where it mixes with them to make an entirely different object. And again this new object reaches somewhere else and mixes with

something there to form a new object. This process of knowledge has been continuing from ages and will continue as well in the future and it is only because of this that we have acquired this level of knowledge. However, this is not possible with information. Most of the information is like solid objects. They remain at one place. These can be used for decoration, but, not for mixing with something else to form a new object. Nonetheless, you should remember that the same information can be transformed into knowledge and can be changed into a liquid just like ice can be melted to make a liquid. As soon as you learn the basics of a topic, you will also learn the art of converting an information into knowledge and make it fluent. There is no separate identity of knowledge. It is a part of the information only. Don't you think after acquiring this capability, you can give the answers which UPSC expects, that is, 'meaningful, concise and corresponding'.

### **The challenges of Basics**

It is basically a key of converting 'reading processes' into 'learning processes'. That's why the problems faced during this conversion can be termed as the challenges of Basics. Since this process is related to intellect and mind, naturally, the problems related to it will also be linked with the science of mind and intellect.

You know very well that the mind works in a very subtle way. It recognizes even the pettiest thought and starts working on it for you. Although, not many people can understand it, but, your capability or incapability of identifying the mind's subtle way of working or not doesn't affect the learning process at all. So let's discuss all the important challenges which are faced while understanding the basics. I would like to highlight the fact that if you only read and then forget these challenges, then, this knowledge will not be useful at all. You are advised to read these challenges, especially, the ones related to psychology should be read carefully and then applied to yourself to see how these benefit you. It is only then that you will be benefit from this.

- Like I have already said, the thinking 'I know everything' is full of misunderstandings. This is a very dangerous thinking which kills the future journey of learning. You can replace this with 'I want to know'. It is right that you know, but, you have to know more as the process of knowing more is never ending. This truth of knowledge can help in the stability of your disturbed psychology.
- You should never the fact that 'simple is the most difficult'. If your mind considers something simple, then it means that you have declared your failure in the beginning itself. I believe that if the gap between what you could have achieved and what you have achieved is huge, then, this is a kind of failure, even if you have succeeded in something.
- You should also remember this important fact of knowledge that it is neither contained in length-width nor at the surface. It is related to depth and depth never ends. That is why the simplicity that you can see at the surface level is meant for the common people. You will have to become much better than these common people to become a Civil Servant. For this, you will have to get off the surface and as and when you start getting deep, you will start encountering complications. But it has to be begun from the surface. If you set your mind according to this thinking, it is only then that the mind will be able to get inside the surface and not remain on the surface level. Otherwise, millions-billions of the people keep wandering on the surface only throughout their lives.
- The purpose of whatever you have done in your normal studies was just to clear the examinations. It is obvious that if the purpose is to clear the examination, only one point would be there in the case of our method of studying, 'what can be asked in the examination?' You are not wrong if you feel that not many questions are asked from Basics. However, the truth of normal studies makes the civil service examination tougher as we had left the Basics just like that. Don't you think we have made a very big mistake by doing this in the past? However, if you repeat the same mistake in the Civil Service examination, then, UPSC, will definitely not make the mistake of making you successful. If you want to have a grip on the Basics, then, you should let go off this thinking that, 'questions are not asked from this'.

- There is, definitely, a shortage of such books which discuss Basics in detail by stating more and more examples. The main purpose of the books is on the syllabus that how can they include more and more syllabus in the least number of pages possible. And it is here that the possibility of explanation of Basics finishes. There is no doubt that dealing with the shortage of such books is a challenge and at this moment even I would like to apologize that I, myself, am not in a situation to tell you how to deal with this problem.
- However, getting instructions from the people who have good knowledge of Basics can be one solution of dealing with the problem of unavailability of good books. But this is also not that easy. You will find a lot of teachers. Many of them will even claim to guide you on this. Only you will have to see how much these claims are really benefitting you. They are beneficial if you are able to understand and then apply these basics. Then you shouldn't leave them. Otherwise you should neither be lazy nor hesitant to look for a new one as it is your need which is directly related to your life's goals.

### **The method of preparing for Basics**

Friends, I know that your main need is to know the ways of preparing the Basics. Then, why did I, unnecessarily, discussed the other things? Wouldn't it be better if I had started straight from here? This would have saved not only your time, but, my time as well? Aren't you thinking like this? If you are still thinking this, it means that you have still not understood the idea of Basics. In such a case, I would advise you to not read it further. Even then, if it is your need, then, you should read about this topic from the beginning. You should not only read, but also think over it. In fact, this chapter is related to the fact that a topic cannot be understood if its main idea is not understood. You can also say that whatever you have read till now is related to the Basics of 'how to prepare for Basics'. I would like to give you a homework to research on this fact. You have learnt that what are basics and its challenges till now. After knowing this, you should try to answer to this question 'how is the preparation of Basics done'. Looking at the entirety of the answer, it will be decided how much you have understood the basics of Basics. I believe that whatever answer you write now would be very different from the one you had written before. Isn't this the case?

I would, now, like to take you to those solutions, which will help in preparing for Basics. I would like to clearly state, here, that not only one solution is appropriate. Whatever solutions will be told to you aren't each other's substitute or options. They are each other's companion-in-arms. One solution is used in one case while the other somewhere else. In some situations, more than one solutions can be applied. That is why you should have an overall view for these solutions.

- The first two-three chapters of the books are generally related to the Basics. The topic is explained- using the definition of the topic, using its characteristics, its advantages-disadvantages, through its critical test, and its relation with the other topics etc. in the first few chapters. It includes the whole character of the topic. These chapters are not meant for memorizing, but, they are memorized. The deception is when the student considers himself to be a knower of the topic by just memorizing the topic's definition word by word. The deception further increases at the point when he thinks, 'oh! There is nothing difficult in memorizing this definition'. I truly believe that maximum time should be spent on this chapter.
- Any topic's knowledge can be developed chronologically, as the already existing knowledge is the reason for the birth of the next knowledge. Hence, it is very important to note that a topic should be studied neither from the middle nor by breaking it into parts. By doing this we finish the importance contained in different chapters. It leads to incompatibility between them. Chronology is an important part of learning Basics, just like, the Hindi alphabets 'ksh', 'tr' and 'gy', cannot be understood till the time the alphabets, 'ch', 'chh' and 'j' are not understood.

- There are many questions which have maps, pictures, graphs and tables. Students don't focus on them at all. They consider these to be decorative items, which is the biggest mistake. I consider this as limiting the cultivation of sugarcane into a glass of sugarcane juice. These are very important. Not only from this view that they contain the summary, but also because they help in creating the image in your mind. I will not start reading the theory of relativity till the time it creates a clear image of Einstein in my eyes. I don't understand how Geography and History can be studied without maps.
- This was about the pictures made on the paper. But, don't we find such pictures vibrant on the Earth? There are and I would call these sculpted images as 'vibrant model'. Friends, I would like to remind you again that every topic is a vibrant topic. Its breath pulsates in the vibrant society. The knowledge of this fact will help you in coming across the vibrant models of the society and will increase your understanding of the Basic. Don't you think you can understand the society through a family? If you understand a human being, you understand psychology and if you understand a family, then, you understand the society too. You go to the market. Don't you find the models of Economics there? You are living in a village, city or town. You travel. You can see the nature around yourself which takes different forms so many times. Have you ever seen this scattered nature as the pages of your Geography book? When you go to the Collectorate, there is administration and when there are elections, then our constitution. This is not different. They are the live models of any topic and you can make a live and speaking book for yourself by changing your thinking and by making these models live.
- There is one more point related to this. You read other people's viewpoints in- Economics, Sociology, Public Administration, Political Science, Philosophy and almost all other topics. You memorize these opinions, write in exams and even top them. I would, now, tell you a different way of doing it. I know that very few of you would have used this way. The method is to read about the person's life before reading his views, even if he is an author. You should know where this person is from and also about his background. How was his era etc. I believe it as the Basic of any philosopher, thinker and writer. You do this first and after doing this, you will be electrified on reading his ideas. There was a situation when you couldn't understand his ideas, but, now his ideas aren't leaving you. This method of learning works with this approach that a person's ideas are not very different from his era and his individual conditions.
- Whenever you read any chapter, especially the first two-three chapters of any topic, you may come across the terminology which you don't understand. Or perhaps, you understand them but only at the surface level. If you come across the word 'existentialism' while reading, it is very important to understand this word and its environment entirely to find out what it wants to convey and also to have a grasp on the Basics. For this a dictionary cannot help you as much as a person can. Such words are very important and with the help of these, you not only understand the Basics properly but also improve your language.
- Incidents happen around you every time. You are the witness of the incidents happening around you and you get to know of the world's news through newspapers. I would like to suggest you two types of relations towards these incidents. Firstly, you should try and apply the Basics related to the topic once you have seen and read about the incidents. Secondly, you should even try to draw the principles of Basics after reading or seeing the incidents. Don't worry! This is not a very tough task. It can be done with practice. This will benefit you in two ways. First is that you will repeat and practice the Basics that you have already read. And second is that it will train your mental ability. This will help you in understanding the Basics deeply and the more you understand then deeply, the more your chances will be of being a part of the successful candidates of the Civil Service examination. Your chances of being successful will increase with the deep understanding of Basics.

I know if I had explained this to you practically, it would have remained in your consciousness in a much better way. Every medium has its own limits. Keeping the limits of writing in mind, I have explained the Basics to you in much more detail by presenting my experience and thoughts in front of you. I believe that my article in two parts wouldn't have disappointed you.

**NOTE: This article by Dr. Vijay Agrawal was first published in 'Civil Services Chronicle'.**

