

## Power of Detailing-1

At this stage, the strategy that you adopt to score well and get a good ranking should not be limited to gathering information on the subject but should include a deeper analysis of that information and improve your ability to grasp things. There are two aspects of this ability. The first part is related to psychology and your personality. I have already discussed this. The second part is related to preparing the subject, this is what you call preparing for civil services in the real sense. This is the preparation which most students focus on and are scared of. They are not wrong in this. This is not just because of the atmosphere but it is also a need of civil service exam.

The problem arises when a student becomes so influenced with the atmosphere that he overlooks the need of the exam. I am trying to help you familiarise yourself with the actual situation. I would like to use the word detailing here. I think I can also call it scrutinising. Before I get into the details let me talk about the renaissance artist and sculptor Michelangelo. I have seen the murals he has made in the church in Vatican City. I have also seen the sculpture of David by him in Rome.

The vitality and grandeur of his work has stayed with me as if it was just yesterday that I had seen these. What is it about his art and sculptures? I am not an expert therefore I cannot answer this. However, whatever I have understood of the situation I would like to present it to you in words of Michelangelo himself. I think his words can work like magic for students preparing for civil services.

He said: "Perfection is no small thing, but it is made up of small things." What a great thing has been said by a great artist. There are two words to note here-small and perfection. If we discuss these in details, a book can be written on it. They hold within them the secret of not just good art but also the success of life. Before I explained what detailing is to you, I would like to discuss another thing with you which might make it completely unnecessary for me to discuss detailing with you.

Whether it is about studying or about writing an answer our focus is usually on the main points. There is no doubt that the main things are the primary things. We cannot work without them. We cannot be careless with the important points because the structure of the answer depends on them. Do not think that focusing on small things is brushing aside important things. Generally, nobody disagrees with the important points. And generally nobody agrees with the small things either. And if someone actually does that then he becomes Michelangelo.

Small things mean things which do not seem important. Sometimes they could lack meaning. If removed, they will not drastically alter things. For example, if you remove the painting in your drawing room that does not affect the purpose of the room. The room will continue to serve the purpose for which it was built. Not having the painting will not have a negative effect. Work will go on. This is why people generally neglect the small things. This is the scenario when the painting is removed but what if the wall had nothing? Let's suppose, that you hung up the painting on an empty wall. There was no difference when the painting was not there but now that it is, has it not made a difference? Definitely, the wall is more pleasing to look at. Maybe, it is only for a moment but anybody who sees the wall appreciates the art. This is why people focus on interior designing of their house.

In a sense, you can think of detailing as interior designing. But when we talk about detailing here we are not talking about a room but how you study. How you design the process of your study we will discuss later. Let me discuss the word perfection with you. There are two types of perfection. Something is perfect because it does not lack anything. It has all the elements, principles and requirements. There is no lack of anything which would make one say that it is not perfect in normal life this is how we measure perfection. But the perfection Michelangelo is talking about is several steps ahead.

This is the stage where perfection achieves perfection. The house is ready, the doors have been fit, and the whitewash has been done. People can now come and stay here. If you ask the house owner he will say, "The house is ready." But when you start living there, is it complete?

The house is complete from the perspective of the one who constructed it but not the one who will live in it. The first stage is complete, the second stage has commenced. Once those who inhabit the house mould it according to their tastes, it will achieve perfection. But it does not end here, this is a never ending process. All things will make way for new things. When the house changes its inhabitants, the meaning of perfection will change. This is how things will go on.

There is a difference between completion and perfection. Completion means that something is finished and perfection means that it is finished from every angle. This means that nothing special is left to be done, however there is scope to do more. This is how knowledge develops, with the thought that there is still scope to do more. You must have heard the name of filmmaker Satyajit Ray even if you have never seen a movie made by him. You can believe me when I say that the power and speciality of his movies was the detailing that went into them. He would focus on every scene, research on small little details, so much so that it was difficult to spot any mistakes in them. The question here is not what is correct and incorrect.

The question here is of his credibility and it is this credibility which made him achieve perfection in the film industry. This is what also lent the movies their grandeur. Take a look at the painting by Raja Ravi Verma. Then look at your Madhubani painting. My intention is not to compare the two paintings. Since both belong to different types of art, it would be foolish to compare them. However, we can talk about their specialities. Both types of paintings are impactful and are widely appreciated. Both of them portray vitality. Both require hard work. But when it comes to detailing, you will find Madhubani paintings are more detailed than those by Verma.

The detailing is so in-depth that it seems like a mammoth task. Tiny dots in various colours and forms and small pictures depicted in them makes it seem unbelievable that a mere mortal could produce such work. Honestly, the beauty of these paintings lie in their detailing. In contrast, the beauty of paintings by Verma lie in their structure and not detailing. We can understand detailing in painting as precise characterisation. When it comes to interior designing it is precise decoration and when it comes to writing answers it is about precise description.

Let us look at what this minute detailing is and what role it plays. As I have mentioned above that everyone notices the main things and primary scenes in a painting. But the scenes that are invisible or the scenes that exist and are yet invisible, those that are minute, and thus not absolutely necessary, but if you're not there it would affect the beauty of the painting, this is what detailing is. If you become a devotee of this process then not only will you find yourself far ahead of your competitors in civil services but you will also feel the impact in your regular life.

The reason behind this is that when you go into details the person who sees the work or reads it is enlightened. The person feels enlightened because it seems as if it is something new. Of course something like this is going to affect that person. The examiner who is reading your answer must have heard or read about the topic many other times. He is not reading an answer like this for the first time. In fact, he will have to read answers written by many students in one sitting. Our education and the course material is almost similar. This is why our answers would be the same when it comes to facts because our reference material is the same.

The difference maybe in the language. However, if the facts are similar the language is not powerful enough to present them as vastly different unless one is writing literature or an essay. In such a situation, the element that matters the most is facts. An examiner would be wowed by a fact which is new. Obviously, this new fact is a

result of your talent which has been portrayed by detailing. Even if we do not count it as original talent we still have to agree that you have gone the extra mile and work harder than the others. This shows that you want to be different. If the examiner is convinced of this and he believes in justice then the only way to do justice with you is to give you more marks than the others.

Three basic principles can be useful in studying and writing answers. Let's discuss these in brief-

**(i) Provide Scope-** The truth is, this subtitle does not align with the basic characteristic of detailing. When we cover the full scope of a topic, it naturally loses its fine points because the process of gathering all the details at a single point is called being extensive. But, is this true? I will explain this to you in a different way. Let's use photography as an example. When you want to capture multiple scenes with your camera, it is called an expansive view. Definitely, the objects in this view will be so small that it will be impossible to view their fine details. Assume that it is a picture of a house. You will not be able to figure out the exact design of the doors and windows of the house. This is a form of scope.

However, the scope I am discussing here is focused. If an actor's face is captured from a distance, you will be able to identify the actor. However, the fine expressions on his face, the dimple on his left cheek, the tiny mole beside the right side of his nose and the little pimple on his chin will not be visible. These are the fine details of his face which should be visible in detailing.

You must have felt this type of detailing in stories and novels. I am talking about feeling here, not reading. If you read such a description casually, it is possible that you will think that these details are unnecessary and boring. However, if you feel these details, you will realise that this sort of detailing is the soul of the story. Only after understanding these, you will be able to comprehend the story; otherwise, your understanding will be limited to the outer surface.

Therefore, if the photographer wants to capture the details of the actor's face, what will he do? Definitely, he will focus the lens of his camera on the face of the actor. That is, with the use of his lens he will internalise the face of the actor. As a result, when you will look at the photograph, you will not only see the minute details of the actor's face, but you won't have to put any effort to notice the fuzz on his face and furthermore, the passing expressions in his eyes.

That is why you must have observed that whenever an emotional expression has to be portrayed in movies, the camera is focused there even if the emotion is depicted by a staggering gait.

This is what I mean by being extensive here. It is not about collecting unnecessary information. This is about focusing on a particular topic and gathering minute details on it. In simple words, it is about gathering as much information about a topic as possible. This is its extensiveness. However, I must warn you that collecting as much information as possible does not mean that you have to research and become an expert on the topic. Yes, you may use this technique in the elective subject, but you must not do this for general studies. You will become confused. You have to be extensive, but also focused. You can say that you have to turn this extensiveness into focus.

There are two stages of this. First, you have to understand a fact to such an extent that you know all of its dimensions and angles. This way you will gain knowledge of the topic. Most students limit themselves to this stage. In any case, most of their focus is on studying extensively. I feel that although this technique may place you on the list, if you want to be placed among the top contenders, you will have to reach the second stage.

What is the second stage? In the first stage, you provided extensiveness to the topic. You increased its scope. You dispersed it. Now, you have to work towards assembling it, which means taking the one or two important dimensions of that topic and extending them again. The dimensions you choose will depend on the probability of how many questions relevant to that dimension will be asked in the exam. How will you do this? I will explain it separately.

**(ii) Provide Depth-** This approach is to keep delving into a topic. The scope is visible, but depth is not. However, it does exist. The depth of any topic depends on how useful your analysis of a specific point is in the future. It is called having foresight. You use this in your everyday life.

You must have heard other people say, or you must have said: “his comment is pointless” or “he has a fantastic point”. Here, the focus is depth. Any statement without depth is pointless. You will praise a remark by saying, “What a great point!” only if that remark has depth. Any topic that is extensive but lacks focus, loses its impact. It is not effective, but when you change extensiveness to focus, you lose the space required to expand. However, you have to provide range. How will you achieve that?

Mumbai has the largest amount of multi-story buildings. Why is that? That is because the metropolis is surrounded by the sea on three sides. It is attached to the land only on one side. Therefore, it can expand only in one direction. The remaining three directions are captured by the sea. Mumbai can expand in three ways. First, it can expand towards the land, which is already happening. However, that has a limit as well. The following are the two remaining ways it can expand. Either the city expands underground, or it expands towards the sky, but it is not as easy to expand underground as it is to expand towards the sky. Therefore, Mumbai is expanding towards the sky. In this way, the city which could have expanded in terms of area is bound to become dense in terms of population. This density is the depth of a topic, and when you go into the depth of a topic, naturally, minute details start accumulating. Therefore, no alternative is left due to the lack of space.

**(iii) Realism-** This is important for arts and for knowledge, as well. Especially, for the knowledge required for the civil services examination. In arts, imagination is very common. Artists use this quite frequently. However, you may have noticed that the art that has the most impact is the art that has its wings attached to the realities on the ground. Here, you encounter such a strange combination of imagination and realism that fiction seems like reality and reality seems like fiction. Although the art contains both reality and fiction, they are indistinguishable from each other. You will be able to identify this in the movie “Band Baja Baraat” as I have mentioned previously. It is not a documentary, but it is no less than a documentary. You can call it a documentary. By realism, I mean detailing here.

When you will use realism in the field of knowledge, which I would like to call preparation for the civil services exam, it will be directly related to logic. Whenever we delve deep into a fact, we have three different ways, just like a set of three ladders, to explore. The first ladder is of facts. We gather these facts by being extensive. When you study a topic in different ways, you collect various facts. The second ladder is of imagination. It is not that imagination does not play a role in the field of knowledge. This kind of imagination is the ‘foresight’ I have mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, this imagination is not just made up of sentiments, it also contains an understanding of knowledge. However, this understanding doesn't have to be perfect like mathematics or science.

The third and the last ladder is of actual logic. You will build this ladder yourself. You cannot build this ladder in the absence of the first two ladders. The brain can only think logically when you have the facts and the ability to explore deeper than the outer surface of these facts. Otherwise, the facts will decay just like a seed that is lying on the surface of the earth. It needs to be somewhat inside the ground to sprout.

When you use arguments to make a point, those arguments could be perceived as imaginary. However, the facts and their analysis that you present should make the other person believe that your argument is probable even if you cannot convince them that it is the only possibility. But this is not a small feat. The entire field of knowledge is resting on this. However, you must keep in mind that you shouldn't argue for the sake of it. In doing so, the argument takes the form of a conflict. It is better not to argue than to take part in a destructive argument.

It is possible that after reading through all of this information, you might ask why detailing hasn't been discussed yet. I will answer your question briefly. Firstly, if you do not adopt the approach of detailing then you won't be able to come up with arguments. Arguments appear in the the brain only because of detailing. The path that leads here passes through detailing. Secondly, an argument is a form of detailing on its own. For example, you come up with a conclusion, and then gather facts to prove it. Then you discuss your conclusion from different angles. After obtaining the results from the discussions, you select the results that you can use to prove your point. My question is that how is this possible without detailing?

On the other hand, it could also be the case that you do not have a conclusion to begin with. You collect facts, analyse them, assess them, and then draw a conclusion from your understanding of these facts. The question here, as well, is that if you do not conduct detailing of these facts, how will you draw a conclusion? This is only possible through detailing.

At last, I would like to say that we are composed of two elements: the brain and the feelings. Both of these contribute continuously to the field of knowledge separately, as well as simultaneously. Therefore, do not think that you have to only use the brain for detailing, not feelings. Remember that feelings are necessary to provide the required space for the brain to grow. The only thing you should be careful about here is that this space does not become impractical. At least, it should be believable. However, it is guaranteed that once your conclusion is applied, it will be impractical. Nevertheless, it should be practical enough to initiate a discussion about its application. This means that even if it is impractical in reality, it should seem practical at the discussion stage. Therefore, do not think that your conclusion must be applicable in reality, but think of it as a way to realise possibilities.

Although this description has become lengthy, I had to do it. It was deliberate on my part. The truth is that I do not believe in providing techniques in the form of points. I am convinced that if a student after understanding any principle, internalises it, this principle naturally becomes a part of his life. To fully understand a topic, it is necessary to explain it from every aspect and every angle in detail. It is challenging to explain a topic in this way; nevertheless, I like such challenges. It is possible that this approach of mine may seem to you as a way to kill time. You may also curse me for wasting so much paper and polluting the environment for this little thing. However, I do not believe that I have done this, and it is possible that you will also change your mind in future. For the time being, I would like to point out that you should show faith in my approach and also support me in my way of explaining things in detail. Although not immediately, in future, you will find how beneficial this approach has been to you.

Friends, after this extensive explanation, in the next section, I will discuss the solutions that will directly help you in detailing.

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