

## **“Work in silence and let your success make noise for you”**

**Journey of how I became an IAS in first attempt... Hope it answers most of your queries...!!**

First of all I will like to thank all of you who appreciated my success and poured my FB page with best wishes. Most of you expressed a desire to know how I achieved this success and also asked so many questions about Books to read, Coaching, preparation strategy, etc. This is my sincere attempt to share my experiences which in a way will solve most of your doubts and will guide you in your preparation.

1. **An Accidental IAS?** : I call myself an accidental IAS because, two years ago UPSC was not even on my agenda, back then I was planning to apply for MS in Germany. I had given GRE-TOEFL and also had learnt two levels of German language (A1-A2). But as I spent more and more time in industry, my view point started changing. Routine job became monotonous. The feeling of spending rest of my life in this way became really boring. At the same time the passion for MS started dwindling and I started exploring other options which will make my life more dynamic, meaningful and satisfying. This was the beginning of an interesting and best phase of my life.
2. **Why Civil service by leaving a high paying job** (I was getting a very good salary in John Deere when I resigned): I chose civil services not because it has power, authority, and glamour but because it provides you an opportunity to live a dynamic, satisfying life. Each day is new, so nothing monotonous. It allows you to become an enlightened citizen of India, allows you to widen the horizon of your understanding. It allows you to help directly to farmers, downtrodden. Most importantly **it allows you to be a change that you want to see in the world. Rather than working for few shareholder of John Deere, I preferred to work for all stakeholders of the country, society.**
3. **UPSC preparation is quite interesting and not boring as commonly believed:** If your impression of UPSC is mugging up 30-40 boring books, then you are living in the Stone Age. UPSC has become very dynamic and believe me I have read hardly 10 books to prepare UPSC. UPSC is all about common sense ,To elaborate more, I will share some of the questions I faced in UPSC.
  - a) **Do you see Fairness cream ads?, what do they depict? (My answer- They depict our bias towards the concept of beauty)**
  - b) **What is the difference between spirituality and religion? (Religion is following a belief system, whereas spirituality is seeking and not blindly following. I could answer as I had Reading books on spirituality as my hobby)**
4. **Why Delhi and not Pune:** After leaving my job in John Deere. I had the option of preparing in Pune as I was settled there but I chose Delhi due to following reasons.
  - a) In Delhi you get top class guidance (UPSC classes in Pune are not that Competent)
  - b) In Delhi I could afford a limited social interaction ( I had stayed in Pune for 8 years, so friends from College, company would have taken away my weekends and other precious days from me)
  - c) Delhi provides you with best competition, so you are always on your toes competing with best talent from India
  - d) New place for new journey in life. Fresh energy in your life.
5. **How to Start preparation:** Once you have made UPSC your goal, then arrives the most important question how to start. This is how I went about it.

- a) Know the UPSC Exam pattern: Prelims, Mains and Interview
- b) Follow Roman Saini on FB or Unacademy.in: His videos will answer most of your queries like which books to read, how to read the Hindu, etc. He was a guiding light throughout my preparation phase. I will recommend all of you to go through his 20-30 videos before starting your UPSC journey. They will help you immensely.
- c) Talk to some successful candidates. Attend some sessions where successful candidates share their experiences. It acts as motivation and ignites a spark inside you.

#### 6. My Success Mantra: Some of it may help you.. Choose your own

- a) Bye Bye WhatsApp- Chatting is the most time, energy consuming task and its very tempting, may eat away hours of your study every day. (WhatsApp groups for UPSC preparation are nothing but waste of time)
- b) A sleep of 8 hours is a must: You are not here to become a Psycho, so never compromise on a sound sleep. It keeps you fresh and energetic.
- c) Make The Hindu or Indian Express as your BIBLE or Gita ( Never miss even a day's newspaper- 80% of UPSC is based on newspaper)
- d) Revision is the master key of UPSC Success: Instead of reading 10 different books, revise one book 10 times.
- e) Cultivate the habit of making your own notes. They help you a lot during revision in the last few days. Opening a bulky book 15 days before prelims of mains puts a lot of pressure on you. (I revised whole of philosophy in 6 hours before mains paper through my micro-notes)
- f) Follow only one good source for Current affairs (I found Vision IAS monthly newsletter really helpful, InsightsonIndia is also good). No need to read Pratiyogita Darpan, CStimes, etc.. They are waste of time.
- g) Plan your study or let others plan it for you (Joining a test series for prelims and mains makes your planning very easy). But never give a test without preparation.
- h) If you are taking coaching, then revise it daily. Keeping backlog for last 2 months will not help here. UPSC is "Kal Kare so Aaj.. Aaj Kare so Ab"
- i) Don't worry about your English accent, rural background. In fact they shall be your assets as you have seen the ground reality and are in better position to empathise with masses.
- e) Cultivate good hobbies to lighten up your mood and reduce stress ( I used to listen good music by AR Rahman, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, used to watch comedy shows like Big Bang theory, Chala Hawa Yeudya once in a while)
- f) Doing Yoga and Meditation helps you immensely ( I used to listen Osho's discourses to keep myself grounded and humble)

#### 7. List of books and class notes that I used: may help you.

##### a) General Studies:

Topic	Standard Must read Books	Class Notes
Modern India	Blpin Chandra, Spectrum	Baliyan Written Notes
Arts & Culture	R.S.Shama, Fine Arts NCERT	Baliyan Written Notes, Youtube videos
World History	Vision IAS Material	Baliyan written notes

<i>Post Independent India</i>	<i>Vision IAS Material</i>	<i>Baliyan written notes</i>
<i>Geography</i>	<i>New NCERT:6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, G.C. Leong, Mrunal.org Geography series (Prefer PPT presentation over videos)</i>	<i>Mapping tricks,shortcuts from Youtube</i>
<i>Polity</i>	<i>11<sup>th</sup> NCERT, Laxmikant</i>	<i>M.Puri Written Notes</i>
<i>Economy</i>	<i>11<sup>th</sup> NCERT, 12<sup>th</sup> NCERT (only Macro economy- don't worry about formulas ,graphs but focus on concepts), Mrunal.org selected videos</i>	<i>Budget Speech in detail Economic Survey in detail Shriram IAS notes or Ramesh Singh book</i>
<i>Environment</i>	<i>Some NCERT chapters (Refer Mrunal.org for list)</i>	<i>Shankar IAS, Roman Saini's environment and ecology videos</i>
<i>Ethics</i>	<i>Vision IAS material, Mrunal.org (prefer text over videos)</i>	<i>Refer previous years toppers answer sheets for case studies (Vision IAS)</i>
<i>Science and Technology</i>	<i>NCERT 6-10<sup>th</sup>, Vision IAS material</i>	<i>Follow current news from newspapers</i>

8. **Classes or Self study:** *I had joined classes and they helped me in focussed study. But a word of caution. Classes do not mean Vajiram, Shriram or ALS... Instead of joining comprehensive batches in these classes prefer module wise classes ( As modules help you to study a subject comprehensively and in one go, rather than studying one topic of history today and next topic after 10 days which happens in comprehensive GS classes)*

*I had joined following modules for general studies:*

- a .History- S Baliyan**
- b.Polity- M Puri**
- c. Economy- Ramesh Singh**
- d. Geography (Only Mapping)- Amit Garg**

9. **Selection of Optional-** *Start preparing for your GS and in the process select your optional. No need to take rash decision. Select such an optional in which you have interest and which you can sustain for next 2-3 years.*

*Socology, Political Science, Philosophy, History are safe these days (Avoid Geography and Public Administration)*

*I had selected Philosophy as an optional,as I was having a deep interest in Indian philosophies of Yoga, Vedanta, Sunyavad,Buddhism ( I used to do meditation at Osho mediation resort in pune and heard a lot of Osho's discourses. So developed curiosity to follow it further). It is very conceptual subject having short syllabus, It can give you very good marks and very bad marks as well.*

**Coaching for philosophy: Ambuj Srivastav (VVR classes)** *is one of the best in philosophy. I read only his notes and two other books (CD Sharma and O.P. Gauba ) for philosophy.*

10. **Avoid dilution of your efforts in the first attempt:** *I did not give any other exam (like CAPF,MPSC,etc) so as to give my 100% to UPSC. Many people waste their energy and time in giving multiple exams. I will suggest you to give one year fully for one particular exam so as to build a solid foundation and from thereon you can give other exams.*

- 11. Prelims: The most important phase of the exam:** As CSAT has been made qualifying, clearing prelims has become bit difficult so I will advise you to prepare GS sincerely.
- Keep practicing previous years questions (Since 2011 and even old papers if time permits)
  - Join a test series for prelims if possible to evaluate yourself (I had Joined Baliyan test series. Vision IAS, InsightsonIndia are good as well)
  - Read Budget, Economic survey, New schemes thoroughly
  - Economy, Polity and modern India are scoring areas for prelims. Prepare them well
  - Practice mapping for geography (8-10 questions will be related to mapping)
  - Have the habit of attempting more number of questions (I will suggest somewhere between 85-95 attempt). Take calculated risks, eliminate absurd options and make measured guesses (I have seen people attempting only 60-70 questions and missing the cut-off by 2-3 marks. Don't be one of them)
  - Try to make your own note so that you can revise them before prelims and mains (Opening a book before prelims and mains is really stressful. Notes will save you a precious time and energy)
- 12. Make best use of 100 days between prelims and Mains:** Believe me these 100 days will be the most important days of your preparation and they will either make you or break you. I will suggest following strategy
- Take a break of 5 days after prelims (Watch movies, go out with friends, get refreshed for the most exciting phase)
  - In next 10-15 days complete paper-1 of optional. By this time test series for GS and optional will start, so now onwards give 4 hours each to GS and optional and remaining time for The Hindu and current affairs. (Test series for Mains is a must. It will give required momentum for your preparation. Vision IAS is best for GS)
  - Take value Addition material of Vision IAS for mains ( It helps you prepare random topics like Disaster management, NGOs, Security, IR.etc)
  - Write 6-8 essays and get them evaluated. (Refer to Roman saini's two videos for Essay writing)
  - For Ethics Vision IAS material is very good (Also read Ethics topics from Mrunal.org). Go through the papers of previous year's toppers for case studies.
  - Keep following updates on new topics on Vision website
- 13. Gearing up for the last lap: Whether you will be in list or not will be decided by your mains performance but your score in interview will determine your rank.** So prepare sincerely here without any shortcuts.
- Take a break of 15 days after mains
  - Read a book by Madhukar Bhagat on Interview preparation
  - Prepare your DAF thoroughly (Make atleast 500 questions on your DAF. E.g. What is the meaning of Ravindra? Why Kumbha in Nashik is called Simhastha? How will you stop farmer's suicides?, Etc)
  - Give 5-6 mock interview to sharpen your skills and articulation of thoughts
  - Remains Calm and composed during interview
  - No bluffing or guessing in interview (Saying " I don't know, I am not aware of this" does not reduce your marks. I said it 8-9 times to Dewan sir)

**14. Some things worth doing in between (Additional Reading, viewing to give depth to your thoughts)**

- A) Read some good books such as : *Imagining India* by Nandan Nilekani, *Getting India Back on track* by Bibek Debroy, *Uncertain Glory* by Amartya Sen, *Pax Indica* By Shashi Tharoor, *Difficulty of Being Good* by Gurusharan Das, *India Unbound* by Gurusharan das, Etc
- B) Watch *Pradhanmantri Series*, *Samvidhan Series*, *Satyameva Jayate* episodes, *Justice Series* by Michael sandel
- C) *Rajyasabha TV debates* (Only relevant to syllabus)

**15. Last but not the least: Be a Nishkam Karmayogi:** Enjoy the process without worrying too much about the result. Cause irrespective of the results, you will be a good human being and enlightened citizen which is not a mean achievement. Enjoy exploring the great history of India, Become aware of the beautifully crafted Indian constitution, Explore Unity of India through its diverse geography and cultures. Always remember

- a) **Not taking risk in life is the biggest risk**
- b) **Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans (So Enjoy every moment of life)**
- c) **Work In silence and let your success make noise for you. (Don't make noise about your preparation to avoid uncomfortable questions during journey)**
- d) **Don't be too casual or too serious about life. Follow the Middle path and be sincere about life.**

**16. Understand the difference between being Alone and Lonely:** You need to be alone during studies but it doesn't mean loneliness. Loneliness is negative feeling when you are not able to spend time with yourself. Whereas Being Alone is a positive feeling wherein you are happy with yourself, your happiness flows from within you... meditation helps you to enjoy your aloneness and overcome stress, anxiety, performance pressure, etc. Hence I will like to conclude by saying "**Work in silence and let your success make the noise**", many of us make a lot of noise of journey (preparing for UPSC, giving CAT, Etc) and thus put additional burden of the expectations on them. Avoid this.

***I hope above blog help you to start your journey and reorient your energies in right direction. I will request you to share it with as many people as possible so that at least few sincere aspirants will benefit from it. If you still have some questions put them in comments section I will be happy to answer them...!!***