

**Daily Reading Comprehension & Critical Reasoning**

Two RC passages (English-as-Language) and two CR passages (Argumentation). Read each carefully and answer based on what is stated or implied.  
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**PASSAGE 1 (RC) — THE QUIET REVOLUTION OF MAKER CULTURE IN INDIA (EDUCATION / TECHNOLOGY)**

**Q1-5**

**READ CAREFULLY AND ANSWER Q1-5 BASED ONLY ON THE PASSAGE.**

On the outskirts of Pune, in a single-room workshop above a sweet shop, a fifteen-year-old has built a low-cost prosthetic hand using off-the-shelf servo motors and a 3D printer she bought second-hand from a college. Her design draws on open-source files released by a group of volunteers in Mexico, refined over four iterations with feedback from a Delhi-based physiotherapist she has never met in person. The hand is not market-ready, but it is functional, and it is hers. She is one of perhaps thirty thousand Indian teenagers working in a phenomenon that observers, borrowing from an older American term, have begun to call 'maker culture'.

Maker culture matters for two reasons that are easy to underestimate. The first is pedagogical. The Indian education system has, for at least two generations, been organised around examinations whose principal demand is the recall of solved problems. Making something — a robot, a drone, a wearable health monitor — inverts that grammar. It begins with an unsolved problem of the student's own choosing, demands an iterative engagement with materials and constraints, and ends with an artefact that may or may not work. The cognitive style this produces — tolerance for ambiguity, comfort with failure, willingness to redesign — is one that recall-driven schooling rarely cultivates.

The second reason is structural. Maker culture is the closest thing the country has to a deeply distributed, low-cost research and development base outside the formal institutional academy. Workshops have sprung up in libraries, in repurposed cyber cafés and increasingly in school premises themselves. The Atal Innovation Mission of NITI Aayog has established more than ten thousand 'Atal Tinkering Labs' in schools across the country since 2016. The result is a quiet diffusion of fabrication capability into towns and small cities where industrial infrastructure was previously unavailable.

Sceptics raise two objections worth taking seriously. The first is that the artefacts produced rarely scale beyond the workshop. The second is that maker culture remains heavily concentrated in English-speaking, middle-class families, and risks becoming a new inequality rather than an equaliser. Both points are correct. But neither rebuts the deeper claim that a country which trains millions of young people to ASK questions of the physical world is, on the long view, training a different kind of citizen.

**1. The author's PRIMARY claim about the educational value of maker culture is that it:**

- A. Replaces the existing examination system
- B. Cultivates cognitive styles — tolerance for ambiguity, comfort with failure, willingness to redesign — that recall-driven schooling rarely produces
- C. Guarantees that students will become engineers
- D. Is suitable only for children who have already mastered the conventional curriculum

**2. The author's tone toward the sceptics' two objections is best described as:**

- A. Dismissive — the author rejects both
- B. Conceding — the author accepts that both points are correct but maintains the deeper case
- C. Hostile — the author is angered by the sceptics
- D. Indifferent — the author considers the objections irrelevant

**3. Which of the following, if newly established, would MOST WEAKEN the author's structural claim about maker culture as a 'distributed R&D base'?**

- A. Rigorous evidence that fewer than 0.1% of artefacts produced in Atal Tinkering Labs progress to even a workshop prototype, that the labs are concentrated in already well-resourced schools, and that the bulk of capability is captured by a handful of urban centres
- B. Evidence that the Atal Tinkering Labs have expanded from 10,000 to 12,000
- C. Anecdotal accounts of one teenager who built a prosthetic
- D. Evidence that maker culture has spread to other countries

**4. The phrase 'a different kind of citizen' in the final paragraph is best interpreted as:**

- A. A citizen of a different nationality
- B. A person whose intellectual habits are formed by asking questions of the physical world, in contrast to one whose habits are formed by recall of solved problems
- C. A citizen who is exempt from examinations
- D. A citizen who works in research and development professionally

**5. Which best describes the author's overall stance?**

- A. Uncritical celebration of maker culture as a panacea
- B. Cautious optimism — the author identifies pedagogical and structural benefits while acknowledging real limits
- C. Outright pessimism — the author considers maker culture a fad
- D. Neutral reportage with no normative position

**PASSAGE 2 (RC) — THE VANISHING INDIAN SPARROW (ENVIRONMENT / URBAN ECOLOGY)**

**Q6-10**

**READ CAREFULLY AND ANSWER Q6-10 BASED ONLY ON THE PASSAGE.**

The house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) was once the most common bird in Indian cities. In Delhi, in Bombay, in Madras and in Calcutta, sparrows nested in the eaves of houses, fed on grain spilt by hawkers, and were so ubiquitous that they were noticed mainly when they were missing — in the minutes before a thunderstorm, perhaps, or during the hottest hour of afternoon. They have now been missing for some time, and the missing has deepened. A national citizen-science count organised by the Bombay Natural History Society in 2010 estimated population declines of more than seventy per cent across the major metros. Anecdotal reports from Tier 2 cities suggest the decline has now spread there as well.

What killed the sparrow? Several culprits have been named. Glass-fronted buildings replaced the recessed eaves and ventilator grates in which sparrows traditionally nested. Pre-packaged grocery shopping displaced the grain hawker's spillage that was the bird's everyday food source. Mobile-tower radiation has been suggested but is, on the present evidence, weakly supported. Agricultural pesticide drift — particularly neonicotinoids — has been implicated more robustly because sparrows are highly sensitive to neuroactive compounds, and surveys correlate declining sparrow populations with the pesticide-intensive agricultural belts that surround major cities.

Conservation responses have been imaginative but small in scale. Volunteer-installed wooden nest boxes in Mumbai's Bandra suburb have produced a measurable, if modest, recovery in the local population. Bird-feeders are being placed in apartment-block balconies in Bangalore and Pune. The Tamil Nadu Forest Department is now training school students to monitor sparrow populations at neighbourhood scale. The common thread is that recovery, where it has happened, has come from civic action rather than from the formal regulatory apparatus.

The deeper lesson is not about sparrows. The bird is a sentinel species. What its absence tells us is that the everyday urban ecosystem that made room for sparrows also made room for human beings who could open their windows, sit on their verandas, and live closer to weather. The sealed, air-conditioned, glass-fronted city that has taken its place has hollowed out a habitat for everyone. Restoring the sparrow is, in the end, an exercise in restoring something architectural — and ultimately, something civic.

**6. The author identifies which of the following as the MOST ROBUSTLY supported cause of the sparrow's decline?**

- A. Mobile-tower radiation
- B. Pesticide drift, particularly neonicotinoids
- C. Climate change
- D. Predation by introduced species

**7. The author's overall conclusion is best stated as:**

- A. The sparrow's decline is irreversible and conservation efforts are pointless
- B. The sparrow's decline reveals deeper structural changes to the urban environment that have hollowed out a habitat for humans as well as birds
- C. The Indian Government should ban all pesticides immediately
- D. Sparrows are a minor concern relative to other birds

**8. In context, the phrase 'the bird is a sentinel species' most nearly means that:**

- A. Sparrows actively guard against environmental damage
- B. Sparrows are legally protected by sentinel laws
- C. The sparrow's decline serves as an early warning of broader ecological and architectural changes
- D. Sparrows are aggressive against intruder birds

**9. Which of the following BEST captures the author's tone when describing conservation responses?**

- A. Sarcastic and dismissive
- B. Measured appreciation — the author recognises imagination and impact while acknowledging the small scale
- C. Wholly enthusiastic
- D. Outright pessimistic

**10. Which of the following, if newly established, would MOST STRENGTHEN the author's claim that civic action has been more effective than the formal regulatory apparatus?**

- A. A peer-reviewed comparative study showing measurable population recovery in localities with volunteer nest-box programmes and no comparable recovery in localities relying only on government conservation directives
- B. Evidence that sparrows have been spotted in one suburb of Mumbai
- C. Evidence that the Forest Department has hired more officials
- D. Evidence that pesticide use has increased

**PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD CRYPTOCURRENCY BE BANNED FOR RETAIL INVESTORS? (FINANCE / PUBLIC POLICY) Q11-15**

**READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11-15.**

The proposal is narrowly framed. Cryptocurrencies — Bitcoin, Ether, and their thousands of imitators — would remain lawful to hold, transfer and trade between qualified institutional investors who meet minimum-net-worth and disclosure thresholds. But retail participation, the buying of cryptocurrencies by ordinary Indian savers through online exchanges, would be prohibited. Proponents rest the case on three observations.

First, the empirical record of retail crypto-investing in India is, on any honest reading, dismal. Surveys by independent researchers — covering tens of thousands of retail traders between 2021 and 2024 — show that the median retail investor has LOST money, often a substantial fraction of household savings. The losses are heavily concentrated among first-time investors aged between 18 and 30, drawn in by social-media marketing during bull cycles. Defenders of the current regime argue that 'investors should be free to make their own mistakes'. The reply is that 'their own' is doing a great deal of work — these mistakes are systematically engineered by advertising designed to exploit predictable behavioural biases.

Second, cryptocurrencies serve no settled productive purpose in the Indian economy. They are not used as a medium of exchange (the GST system, the UPI rail and the rupee work perfectly well). They are not, despite years of promotional rhetoric, a hedge against inflation (they correlate positively with risk assets and have underperformed even gold). They produce no cash flows. The case for their existence in retail portfolios rests entirely on price appreciation, which is a redistributive game — early entrants extract value from later ones — not a productive one.

Third, the regulatory machinery to enforce sensible disclosure on a global, pseudonymous and rapidly mutating asset class is largely absent. SEBI regulates registered exchanges. It has limited power over offshore platforms accessed via VPN. The result is that any Indian retail investor seriously committed to crypto-investing soon moves to platforms beyond the reach of Indian regulation, often incorporated in tax havens with minimal recourse. A retail ban would not eliminate this entirely, but it would remove the legitimating infrastructure of compliant-looking domestic exchanges that funnel first-time investors into offshore venues.

11. The MAIN CONCLUSION of the argument is:

- A. Cryptocurrencies should be banned for all participants
- B. Cryptocurrencies should be prohibited for retail investors while remaining lawful for qualified institutional investors
- C. Cryptocurrencies should be unrestricted for everyone
- D. The Indian rupee should be abolished

12. Which of the following is an unstated PREMISE on which the author's second observation depends?

- A. Productive purpose is a relevant criterion for whether a retail investment should be permitted
- B. All government schemes are economically beneficial
- C. Cryptocurrencies will be obsolete by 2030
- D. UPI is the only legitimate payment system

13. Which of the following, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the author's argument?

- A. Peer-reviewed evidence that retail crypto investors now have higher median returns than retail equity investors, that cryptocurrencies have decoupled from risk assets and consistently outperform inflation, and that domestic-exchange regulation has effectively limited offshore migration
- B. Evidence that retail crypto trading volumes have risen
- C. Evidence that one Indian exchange has registered with SEBI
- D. Evidence that some celebrities endorse cryptocurrency

14. The author's response to the 'investors should be free to make their own mistakes' argument is BEST characterised as:

- A. An emotional appeal to investor protection
- B. A challenge to the autonomy framing — that 'their own' mistakes are systematically engineered by exploitative advertising
- C. A constitutional argument under Article 21
- D. An argument from precedent in commodity markets

15. Which FLAW does the author implicitly identify in the defence of the current regime?

- A. The defence treats autonomous investor choice as the operative concept, ignoring the systematic behavioural engineering that shapes those choices
- B. The defence cites no legal authority
- C. The defence is based on outdated technology
- D. The defence assumes incorrectly that crypto is the same as equities

**PASSAGE 4 (CR) — THE CASE FOR RESERVATIONS IN PRIVATE SECTOR JOBS (EQUALITY / ECONOMY)**

**Q16–20**

**READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.**

Reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes in education and in public-sector employment have been a constitutional feature of independent India for seventy-five years. The proposal under consideration is that the same regime — at appropriately calibrated quotas — be extended by statute to private-sector hiring in firms above a defined size threshold (say, 200 employees). Opponents argue, predictably, that this would constrain the autonomy of private firms, raise hiring costs, and ultimately harm the very communities it seeks to help by stigmatising them as 'reservation hires'. These objections do not survive a closer look.

Begin with autonomy. Indian private firms operate within a thick regulatory environment that already constrains hiring in many specific ways — labour-welfare provisions, disability accommodations, equal-remuneration rules, factory-act safety norms and a battery of taxes and disclosures. None of these is thought to abolish private autonomy in any operationally serious sense. Adding an affirmative-action layer to this regulatory stack is a matter of degree, not of principle. Comparable economies operate equivalent positive-action regimes — South Africa's Employment Equity Act of 1998 being the most directly applicable model — without the autonomy collapse predicted by sceptics.

Hiring-cost objections rest on a casual assumption rather than on evidence. The available studies of mandated diversity hiring in comparable contexts find modest one-time adjustment costs, principally in recruitment-funnel redesign, and no measurable effect on long-run firm productivity. To the contrary, several studies find positive effects on innovation through the diverse-perspectives channel.

The stigmatisation objection deserves the most serious engagement. It is true that beneficiaries of any affirmative-action regime sometimes report being perceived as 'reservation hires'. But the empirical work on this question (Deshpande, 2017; Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014) finds that the effect is concentrated in the first year and dissipates as colleagues observe performance directly. Far more powerful, and rarely acknowledged, is the OPPOSITE stigma — that absent explicit reservation, applicants from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe backgrounds face systematic discrimination at the screening stage, documented in resume-audit studies showing callback-rate differentials of 30 per cent and higher controlling for credentials. The status quo IS a stigma regime. The choice is between two forms of stigma, not between stigma and its absence.

16. The MAIN CONCLUSION of the passage is:

- A. Reservations in private-sector hiring should be abolished
- B. Reservations in private-sector hiring should be extended by statute to firms above a defined size, at appropriately calibrated quotas
- C. Reservations should remain confined to public-sector employment
- D. South Africa's labour law should be imported wholesale into India

17. Which of the following is the unstated PREMISE on which the author's autonomy argument rests?

- A. Adding a regulatory layer of similar texture to existing layers does not, in itself, abolish private autonomy in any operationally meaningful sense
- B. Private firms have no autonomy at all
- C. Indian labour laws are unconstitutional
- D. South African law applies directly in India

18. Which of the following, if true, would MOST WEAKEN the author's argument?

- A. Rigorous evidence that private-sector reservation regimes in comparable economies have produced large, sustained, long-run productivity losses; that resume-audit callback differentials between SC/ST and general-category candidates are negligible after controlling for credentials; and that perceived 'reservation-hire' stigma persists indefinitely rather than dissipating in the first year
- B. Evidence that one Indian firm has voluntarily adopted diversity hiring
- C. Evidence that South Africa is a different country from India
- D. Evidence that some employees prefer not to disclose their caste

19. The author's reply to the stigmatisation objection is BEST characterised as:

- A. Outright denial that stigmatisation exists
- B. An empirical reframing — citing studies showing the perceived-stigma effect is short-lived and acknowledging it, while pointing to documented baseline discrimination as a competing and larger stigma
- C. A constitutional argument from Article 16
- D. An emotional appeal to fairness

20. The author's structural rhetorical move in this argument is BEST described as:

- A. Marshalling personal anecdotes
- B. Setting out the three principal objections, addressing each in turn with comparable-context evidence and empirical citation, and reframing the most serious objection as a choice between two forms of stigma rather than stigma versus its absence
- C. Citing constitutional text only
- D. Appealing to international treaties

**SECTION C — RAPID-FIRE GK & CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**Q21-30 · 10 Marks**

Standalone questions on current affairs, static GK, vocabulary in context and idiom usage. No passage required.

21. The capital of New Zealand is:

- A. Auckland
- B. Christchurch
- C. Wellington
- D. Hamilton

22. Who won the Nobel Peace Prize 2024?

- A. Narges Mohammadi
- B. Nihon Hidankyo (Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations)
- C. World Food Programme
- D. Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov

23. The 'Mission Karmayogi' scheme launched by the Government of India is primarily aimed at:

- A. Skilling unemployed youth in IT services
- B. Capacity-building of civil servants through a continuous learning platform (iGOT-Karmayogi)
- C. Modernisation of agricultural marketing
- D. Construction of national highways

24. In a 2024 ruling on electoral bonds, the Supreme Court of India:

- A. Upheld the electoral bond scheme as constitutional
- B. Struck down the electoral bond scheme as unconstitutional and directed disclosure of donor and recipient details
- C. Postponed a decision on the scheme
- D. Held that only natural persons may purchase electoral bonds

25. Choose the word CLOSEST in meaning to 'ephemeral':

- A. Lasting
- B. Transient
- C. Profound
- D. Significant

26. Choose the most appropriate meaning of the idiom: 'to bite the bullet.'

- A. To injure oneself accidentally
- B. To force oneself to do something unpleasant or difficult
- C. To eat hurriedly
- D. To declare victory

27. Fill in the blank with the most appropriate phrasal verb: 'Despite repeated reminders, she could not \_\_\_\_\_ the conclusion that he was lying.'

- A. come to
- B. look forward to
- C. put up with
- D. give in to

28. Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India guarantees the right to:

- A. Freedom of religion
- B. Freedom of speech and expression
- C. Freedom from exploitation
- D. Freedom of association

29. Which landmark Supreme Court judgment held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India?

- A. M.P. Sharma v. Satish Chandra (1954)
- B. Kharak Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh (1962)
- C. K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)
- D. Selvi v. State of Karnataka (2010)

30. Who is the author of the 2024 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel 'Night Watch'?

- A. Jennifer Egan
- B. Jayne Anne Phillips
- C. Hernan Diaz
- D. Joshua Cohen