

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 SOCIOLOGY OF INDIAN MARRIAGE MARKETS IN THE DIGITAL AGE (SOCIETY / CULTURE)

Q1–5

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

Few institutions in India have undergone as quiet a transformation in the past two decades as the marriage market. For most of the twentieth century, matchmaking in middle-class India was the preserve of extended families and a small network of community brokers, who circulated photographs, horoscopes and word-of-mouth résumés through a slow, opaque process governed by caste endogamy and geographic proximity. The arrival of matrimonial websites in the late 1990s — and, more recently, of curated mobile applications — has not so much overturned this system as it has digitised it, exposing its underlying logic to fresh sociological scrutiny.

The most striking continuity is the persistence of caste as the dominant filter. Empirical work on the largest Indian matrimonial platforms shows that the overwhelming majority of users specify caste preferences even when registering profiles in English, and that the rate of intra-caste matches has fallen only marginally despite the apparent abundance of cross-caste options. What has changed is the granularity of sorting: users now filter not only by caste but by sub-caste, gotra, height, complexion, professional qualification and annual income, producing a market whose information density was unimaginable a generation ago.

This density, however, comes at a cost. Scholars have noted a phenomenon they call 'choice fatigue': users, presented with hundreds of plausible matches, find it harder rather than easier to commit. The paradox is sharpened by the unequal sex ratio on most platforms, where men outnumber women by margins of two-to-one or more, prompting women to set increasingly stringent filters and prompting men to inflate the credentialing portions of their profiles.

A parallel transformation concerns who actually does the searching. While the platforms market themselves to individual users, ethnographic studies suggest that parents continue to write profiles, send introductory messages and arrange meetings — often using the daughter's or son's account. The technology has thus expanded the reach of the family without quite displacing its authority. Whether this represents adaptation or stagnation is a question that the next decade of data will answer.

1. As used in the passage, the phrase 'choice fatigue' most nearly refers to:

- A. The exhaustion users experience from logging into multiple matrimonial sites.
- B. Difficulty in committing to a partner due to the cognitive burden of evaluating an excess of plausible options.
- C. The eventual withdrawal of older users who find the platforms culturally alienating.
- D. The reluctance of parents to delegate matchmaking decisions to their children.

2. The author's primary claim about the impact of matrimonial platforms on the Indian marriage market is that they have:

- A. Largely dismantled caste endogamy by exposing users to cross-caste options.
- B. Replaced family-mediated matchmaking with autonomous individual choice.
- C. Digitised an existing system without fundamentally altering its underlying logic.
- D. Reversed the historical preference for arranged marriage in urban India.

3. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the author's argument about the persistence of caste as a filter?

- A. A new study finds that 60% of inter-caste marriages registered in metros in 2024 originated on matrimonial apps.
- B. Recent surveys show that English-speaking urban users skip the caste field when registering.
- C. Sub-caste filters are the single most-used search field on the largest platform.
- D. Cross-caste matches succeed at the same rate as intra-caste matches once initiated.

4. The author's tone in describing the role of parents on matrimonial platforms can best be characterised as:

- A. Sharply critical and reformist.
- B. Detached and analytic, treating the phenomenon as evidence of adaptation.
- C. Nostalgic and approving of traditional family authority.
- D. Alarmed at the loss of individual autonomy.

5. Which inference about gender on matrimonial platforms is best supported by the passage?

- A. Women dominate matrimonial platforms in absolute numbers.
- B. The skewed sex ratio incentivises women to apply tighter filters and men to inflate credentials.
- C. Platforms have eliminated the historical disadvantages women faced in arranged matches.
- D. Most matches are now initiated by women using premium subscriptions.

PASSAGE 2 (RC) – THE INDIAN OCEAN TRADE NETWORK – FROM MONSOON SAILS TO CONTAINER LANES (HISTORY / ECONOMICS)

Q6–10

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

Long before the term 'globalisation' acquired its modern resonance, the Indian Ocean was already a stage on which a recognisably global economy played out. From the early centuries of the Common Era, mariners from Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Swahili coast and the Malay archipelago harnessed the predictable monsoon winds to weave a commercial fabric whose threads bound African ivory, Arabian frankincense, Indian textiles, Chinese porcelain and Indonesian spices into a single market.

The Indian Ocean trade differed sharply from its Mediterranean and Atlantic counterparts in two respects. First, until the arrival of Portuguese armed fleets in the early sixteenth century, it was largely a stateless commerce: no single empire controlled the sea-lanes, and merchants of different faiths and ethnicities cooperated through privately enforced contracts, customary law, and the reputational sanctions of close-knit diaspora communities. Second, the trade rested on the seasonal predictability of the monsoons, which allowed sailing schedules to be planned with extraordinary precision and which made the great port cities — Calicut, Cambay, Hormuz, Aden, Malacca — into pivots of multinational settlement.

NAME: _____

ROLL NO: _____

BATCH: _____

The Portuguese intervention disrupted this older order by introducing the cartaz system of pass-based licensing and by attempting to extract rents through naval coercion. The English East India Company and its Dutch rival later inherited and intensified the militarised template. By the nineteenth century, steam navigation and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 had compressed sailing times so drastically that monsoon timetables ceased to dictate commerce, and the Indian Ocean ports were rewired into the imperial trunk-routes of London, Liverpool and Rotterdam.

The late twentieth and twenty-first centuries have produced a surprising echo of the earlier era. Container shipping has made the Indian Ocean once again the world's busiest maritime corridor — between forty and fifty per cent of global container traffic now traverses it — and its great choke points, Bab-el-Mandeb, Hormuz, and the Strait of Malacca, command the strategic attention they last received under the early modern Portuguese. The actors have changed; the geography has not.

6. The author identifies which TWO features as the distinguishing characteristics of pre-Portuguese Indian Ocean trade?

- A. State monopoly licensing and reliance on Atlantic-style insurance markets.
- B. Statelessness of the sea-lanes and reliance on seasonal monsoon predictability.
- C. Use of armed fleets and standardised gold-based currency.
- D. Centralised control by the Mughal navy and use of overland caravan routes.

7. As used in the passage, 'cartaz' most likely refers to:

- A. A type of fast-sailing vessel introduced by Indian shipwrights.
- B. A licensing pass demanded by the Portuguese as a precondition for safe passage.
- C. A customary code of commercial honour observed by Gujarati merchants.
- D. A monsoon wind pattern affecting voyages from Malabar to Hormuz.

8. The author's central thesis about the trajectory of the Indian Ocean economy can best be described as:

- A. Continuous decline from the medieval golden age to the present.
- B. Steady linear progress driven by the application of European naval technology.
- C. A long arc of stateless commerce, militarised disruption, and a contemporary return to centrality — with the geography enduring across regimes.
- D. Total subordination of Asian commerce to European interests after 1869.

9. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the author's claim about the modern resurgence of the Indian Ocean?

- A. Trans-Pacific container volumes have grown faster than Indian Ocean volumes in the last decade.
- B. The Suez Canal, a key Indian Ocean conduit, has seen a 60% rise in laden transit tonnage between 2015 and 2024.
- C. The Northern Sea Route through the Arctic is projected to carry 30% of east-west trade by 2050.
- D. Three of the world's five largest container ports are now in the Caribbean basin.

10. The author's overall tone in the closing paragraph is best characterised as:

- A. Triumphant about European maritime achievement.
- B. Quietly observing a historical irony — that geography reasserts itself across centuries.
- C. Alarmed at the militarisation of contemporary sea-lanes.
- D. Sceptical that container shipping can match the cultural depth of earlier exchange.

**PASSAGE 3 (CR) — SHOULD INDIA MANDATE ELECTRIC-ONLY SALES OF TWO-WHEELERS BY 2030?
(ENVIRONMENT / INDUSTRIAL POLICY)**

Q11–15

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q11–15.

India is the world's largest two-wheeler market, with roughly twenty million petrol-powered scooters and motorcycles sold every year. Two-wheelers account for nearly a third of urban transport emissions and an even larger share of street-level air-pollution exposure for pedestrians, vendors and cyclists. A growing chorus of policy commentators argues that the Government should announce a binding mandate: from 1 April 2030, no internal-combustion two-wheeler may be sold for first registration in India. Only electric models would qualify.

Proponents of the mandate offer three principal arguments. First, the technological case: battery prices have fallen by roughly eighty per cent since 2015, charging networks are expanding, and the total cost of ownership of a quality electric scooter is already lower than that of its petrol counterpart over a five-year horizon. Second, the public-health case: cutting two-wheeler tailpipe emissions to zero would, on conservative estimates, prevent tens of thousands of premature deaths annually in dense Indian cities and would yield outsized improvements for low-income households living near arterial roads. Third, the industrial-policy case: a credible mandate would compel domestic manufacturers to commit capital to electric platforms, secure India a competitive position in a globally growing segment, and prevent the home market from being captured by Chinese imports in the absence of a forcing function.

Opponents counter that the mandate is premature on three counts. The electricity grid still draws over seventy per cent of its power from coal, so a wholesale switch would relocate rather than eliminate emissions. Charging infrastructure remains thin outside the largest cities, and the rural buyer — for whom a motorcycle is often the only motorised transport — would be disproportionately burdened. Finally, the existing two-wheeler manufacturing supply chain employs over a million workers, and a hard cliff in 2030 risks abrupt dislocation without a parallel re-skilling pathway. Better, the opponents suggest, to set a graduated, market-share-based target with periodic review than to pre-commit to a date that may have to be quietly abandoned.

The debate, in short, is not whether electric two-wheelers will dominate India's future — almost everyone now concedes that they will — but whether a hard 2030 mandate is the right instrument for arriving there.

11. The principal conclusion of the proponents in the passage is that:

- A. Petrol two-wheelers should be taxed out of the market by 2025.
- B. A binding mandate requiring all newly registered two-wheelers to be electric from 2030 onwards is justified.
- C. Battery prices alone will phase out internal-combustion engines without policy intervention.
- D. India must restrict imports of Chinese electric two-wheelers to protect domestic industry.

12. Which of the following is an UNSTATED ASSUMPTION underlying the proponents' industrial-policy argument?

- A. Indian manufacturers will respond to a credible mandate by committing capital to electric platforms rather than exiting the segment.
- B. Chinese imports will fall to zero once the mandate is announced.
- C. Petrol-engine production lines can be physically retooled for electric drivetrains within twelve months.
- D. Battery-cell manufacturing will be fully localised in India before 2030.

13. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the proponents' public-health case?

- A. An independent study finds that the largest source of urban PM2.5 in Indian cities is road dust, not vehicle tailpipes, and that two-wheeler emissions contribute under 5%.
- B. The World Health Organization has tightened its annual PM2.5 guideline from 10 to 5 micrograms per cubic metre.
- C. Electric two-wheeler sales already exceeded one million units in India in FY25.
- D. Battery fires in electric two-wheelers have caused 17 fatalities in the last 18 months.

14. Which of the following, if true, would most STRENGTHEN the opponents' grid-emissions counter-argument?

- A. Renewables now account for over 45% of India's installed power capacity.
- B. A peer-reviewed life-cycle analysis finds that, given India's current coal-heavy grid, well-to-wheel emissions of an electric two-wheeler exceed those of a comparable petrol scooter for the first 40,000 km.
- C. The Government has announced 500 GW of non-fossil capacity by 2030.
- D. Electric two-wheelers are exempt from registration fees in 14 States.

15. The opponents' suggestion of a 'graduated, market-share-based target with periodic review' is best characterised as:

- A. A strengthening of the proponents' position.
- B. An alternative policy instrument that concedes the long-run direction while disputing the choice of mechanism and timeline.
- C. A rejection of the underlying premise that electric two-wheelers will dominate the market.
- D. An argument that no policy intervention of any kind is required.

PASSAGE 4 (CR) — SHOULD THE RIGHT TO STRIKE BE RECOGNISED AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT FOR PUBLIC-SECTOR EMPLOYEES? (LABOUR LAW / CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM)

Q16–20

READ THE ARGUMENT AND ANSWER Q16–20.

Indian constitutional doctrine on the right to strike of public employees has, since the Supreme Court's decision in *T.K. Rangarajan v. Government of Tamil Nadu* (2003), been clear and stern: government employees have no fundamental, statutory, equitable, or moral right to go on strike. The judgment was delivered against the backdrop of a mass strike by Tamil Nadu State employees that had paralysed essential services for weeks, and its reasoning rested on the asymmetric power of organised public workforces and the vulnerability of citizens who depend on State-delivered services. Two decades later, a growing body of labour scholars, trade unionists and constitutional theorists argues that the time has come to revisit Rangarajan and to recognise a constitutionally protected — though qualified — right to strike for at least non-essential categories of public-sector workers.

The reformist argument runs as follows. First, the right to form trade unions is already protected under Article 19(1)(c), and the right to collective bargaining is recognised as flowing from it; a right to bargain that excludes the only credible economic weapon of the workforce is, in practice, a hollow right. Second, the International Labour Organization, of which India is a founding member, treats the right to strike as an essential corollary of freedom of association under Conventions 87 and 98, and most democracies — including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan and South Africa — recognise public-sector strike rights in some qualified form. Third, the Rangarajan rule has, in practice, not eliminated public-sector industrial action but merely driven it into less orderly forms — mass casual leave, work-to-rule and 'sit-in' protests — which often inflict the same disruption with fewer of the procedural safeguards a recognised strike framework would impose.

Opponents reply that public services differ fundamentally from private employment because the State is not a profit-maximising employer that can be coerced into concessions through revenue loss; the cost of a public-sector strike falls on third parties — patients, students, commuters, applicants — who have no voice at the bargaining table. They point to recurrent strikes in hospitals and transport corporations as evidence that even 'qualified' strike rights tend, in practice, to be invoked in essential services. The duty to ensure continuous service delivery, they argue, must override the workers' interest in this particular form of protest, and conciliation mechanisms — not strikes — are the constitutionally appropriate avenue.

16. The principal CONCLUSION advanced by the reformists in the passage is that:

- A. T.K. Rangarajan should be overruled in its entirety and an unqualified right to strike recognised for all government employees.
- B. A constitutionally protected but qualified right to strike should be recognised for at least non-essential categories of public-sector workers.
- C. Article 19(1)(c) already guarantees an absolute right to strike.
- D. India should withdraw from ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

17. An unstated ASSUMPTION required for the reformists' second argument is that:

- A. ILO conventions, even when unratified domestically, are binding on Indian courts.
- B. Practices in other democracies are a relevant benchmark for shaping Indian constitutional doctrine on workplace rights.
- C. Public-sector unions in Western democracies achieve higher wages than Indian unions.
- D. The Indian Government intends to ratify ILO Conventions 87 and 98 in the near future.

18. Which of the following, if true, would most WEAKEN the reformists' third argument (that the Rangarajan rule has displaced rather than eliminated industrial action)?

- A. Empirical data show that mass-casual-leave incidents in central-government services have averaged 22 per year since 2003, slightly below the pre-2003 strike average of 18 per year.
- B. An independent labour-bureau audit finds that recorded public-sector mass-protest incidents in India fell sharply after 2003 and have remained at fewer than three per year, with negligible measurable disruption.
- C. The Indian Railways recorded its longest-ever loss of working days to industrial action in 2024.
- D. Public-sector unions have grown in registered membership by 40% in the last decade.

19. The opponents' core argument relies most heavily on the premise that:

- A. Public-sector employment contracts expressly prohibit strikes.
- B. Strikes in any sector are economically irrational.
- C. The cost of public-sector strikes falls disproportionately on third parties who have no voice at the bargaining table.
- D. Conciliation mechanisms have a 100% success rate in resolving public-sector disputes.

20. Which of the following, if true, would most **STRENGTHEN** the opponents' position?

- A. A study finds that in jurisdictions where public-sector strike rights are recognised, even 'qualified' rights are invoked in essential services in 70% of cases, with severe spill-overs to third parties.
- B. Most Indian public-sector employees are members of recognised trade unions.
- C. ILO Conventions 87 and 98 have not been ratified by India.
- D. T.K. Rangarajan was a unanimous two-judge bench decision.

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. Which country is the world's largest producer of natural rubber as of 2024?

- A. Indonesia
- B. Thailand
- C. Vietnam
- D. India

22. In the sentence 'Her arguments were **SPECIOUS** but persuasive', the word in capitals most nearly means:

- A. Honest and clear
- B. Superficially plausible but actually false
- C. Cleverly succinct
- D. Aggressively delivered

23. The 'Right to Privacy' was recognised as a fundamental right by the Supreme Court of India in:

- A. K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)
- B. M.P. Sharma v. Satish Chandra (1954)
- C. Kharak Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh (1962)
- D. Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)

24. The idiom 'to bury the hatchet' means:

- A. To hide a weapon
- B. To make peace and end a quarrel
- C. To abandon a difficult project
- D. To plan in secret

25. Which of the following is the antonym of 'PROLIX'?

- A. Verbose
- B. Concise
- C. Hostile
- D. Complex

26. Which Article of the Constitution provides for the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India?

- A. Article 124
- B. Article 148
- C. Article 280
- D. Article 324

27. Which Indian state hosted the 2024 G20 Tourism Ministers' Meeting in Srinagar?

- A. Himachal Pradesh
- B. Jammu and Kashmir (Union Territory)
- C. Uttarakhand
- D. Punjab

28. Choose the option that best replaces the underlined portion: 'Neither the principal nor the teachers **WAS** aware of the incident.'

- A. was aware
- B. were aware
- C. is aware
- D. has been aware

29. The author of the book 'The Ministry of Utmost Happiness' is:

- A. Arundhati Roy
- B. Jhumpa Lahiri
- C. Kiran Desai
- D. Anita Desai

30. The currency of Indonesia is:

- A. Ringgit
- B. Rupiah
- C. Baht
- D. Peso