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UPSC Mains 2025 Essay

Year-wise PYQ pack · WRAP model answers with canonical links

Official UPSC stems in exam order. Each live answer sits on one WRAP URL; this PDF is the year pack, not a second copy of the article. Open the link under a question for the full page.

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains/essay/2025/>

Q1 · 125 marks

Truth knows no color.

Essay · 2025 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a dyed fact. Stand:** truth has no tribe; hearing still does.
- **Headings:** self, society, state, world, then one counter.

Earn **Gandhi** and **Ambedkar** once each. Peg **NFHS-5** or RTI, not a data dump.

Close on constitutional morality.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A child is told to colour a map. She paints the river blue because the book said so. The river outside her window is silt-brown. The book was not lying about water. It was lying about the world as lived. "Truth knows no colour" asks the same of us: do not dye a fact to match a side.

One stand

Truth does not wear a caste, a party colour, or a skin tone. Prejudice still decides who is allowed to speak it. Write to separate the fact from the dye.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Truth:** what survives a check - evidence, a witness, a file that can be opened again.
- **Colour:** the dye we add - caste, race, language, party, "our people".
- A fact does not become false because it is inconvenient. The fight is over who may say it.

Self

- We keep the news that flatters us. That is colour in the mind.
- Colourism in jobs and marriage markets is a daily Indian test of the line.
- A Dalit woman's testimony is not "bias". It is data the room often refuses. Truth has no colour; access to truth still has a postcode.

Society

- After a riot, rumour dyes the count. Prefer the slower official number to the faster WhatsApp number.
- Speed on a phone is also a colour.

State

- **FIR, RTI, census, CAG, the Election Commission:** boring offices that stop colour becoming "official truth".
- Courts exist to bleach a file that a government has dyed.

World

- Climate numbers do not care for national colour. War communiques do. Name the difference.

The counter

If truth knows no colour, why listen to the margin? Because the margin often holds the fact the centre dyed. The line forbids prejudice. It does not forbid looking closely.

Last paragraph

- **End on a habit, not a slogan:** slow the eye, name the dye, keep the fact. **Articles 14 and 19** are that habit in law. In the hall, grow each heading above into a full paragraph with one Indian case - this page is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2025/truth-knows-no-color/>

Q2 · 125 marks

The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.

Essay · 2025 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Guidance only.

Anecdote of a dispute ended by shared interest.

- **Sun Tzu + Kautilya:** force last. **Gandhi** as moral cousin.
- **Body:** self, reform, diplomacy, deterrence, information.
- **Counter:** some evils require fight. Close on a republic's unused wars.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A village dispute over a path is settled when the elder does not raise his voice. He walks both families to the well they already share. No one "wins" the path; the need to fight it dies. Sun Tzu's line is that elder, scaled to states: "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting."

Heading map

Unpack the quote

- **Sun Tzu**, The Art of War: supreme excellence is breaking resistance without battle.
- Subdue = change incentives, isolate, outlast, persuade - not only kill.
- Enemy = rival state, insurgent, epidemic, own rage.

Quote to earn: Kautilya's sama, dana, bheda, danda - force is last, not first. Gandhi's satyagraha: change the opponent's consent.

Self

- Anger is a small war. Pause is Sun Tzu at the desk.
- **Civil servant:** a file that removes a grievance subdues a crowd without lathi.

Society and politics

- Social reform that makes a custom expensive (education, law, shame) beats periodic riots.
- **Fact peg:** India's Constitution abolished untouchability (**Art. 17**); the fight continues in practice - law as non-battle pressure.

Statecraft

- **Diplomacy, trade, water treaties, cricket:** instruments that bind.
- **Fact peg:** Indus Waters Treaty (1960) survived wars - a channel that "fights" scarcity without a new front.
- **Nuclear deterrence:** peace of a grim kind - subduing by making fighting unthinkable. Name the moral cost.

Information and economy

- Sanctions, technology denial, supply chains - twenty-first century "war without fighting".

- Disinformation is a cheap battle; truth-telling is slower subduing.

Counter

Some enemies - genocide, invasion, a virus - do not yield to courtesy. Then fighting is not failure of art; it is the last article. The quote ranks methods; it does not forbid danda.

India pegs to expand

- **Neighbourhood:** talks, trade, and lines of control together.
- **Internal:** talks with insurgents plus development, not only AFSPA as personality.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** a republic's strength is the wars it does not need. Expand with one diplomatic case and one honest limit (when force is duty). This map is not the essay.

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Q3 · 125 marks

Thought finds a world and creates one also.

Essay · 2025 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Guidance only.

- **Anecdote:** map that finds vs map that creates.
- **Body:** science, social inventions, constitution, digital.
- **Quotes:** Kant or Tagore; Sen on identity; Ambedkar on caste as made.
- **Counter:** some facts are not stories. Close on responsible creation.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A surveyor in the 1950s walks a ridge and "finds" a village that was always there. A planner in 2025 draws a smart-city boundary and "creates" a world of who is inside the map. Same human faculty: thought. The line asks you to hold both - discovery and making - without collapsing into relativism.

Heading map

Two movements of thought

- **Finds:** Kepler, Ramanujan, a farmer reading clouds - the world answers.
- **Creates:** language, money, caste rules, nation, app - we inhabit what we named.
- **Stake:** wisdom is knowing which is which.

Quote to earn: Kant - we meet the world already structured by categories. Tagore - "the world is not a machine"; imagination is also truth-seeking. Amartya Sen - identities we make can wound or widen.

Knowledge and science

- Hypothesis finds; instrument creates a new visible (telescope, CRISPR).
- **Fact peg:** ISRO's missions did not invent Mars; they created a capacity and a public story of India in space.

Social worlds we create

- **Money is a thought that became a world (Keynes:** animal spirits; also trust).
- Caste is a created world that pretends to be found in nature - Ambedkar's labour is to unmake it.
- **Constitution:** a created world that finds dignity already in the person.

Politics and media

- A speech can find a grievance and create a mob.
- **Census** categories find people and create vote-banks.

Digital

- Algorithms create a feed-world; they do not find "the" public.
- **Deepfakes:** creation that impersonates finding.

Counter

Gravity does not negotiate. Hunger is not a narrative. The essay fails if "creates" becomes "anything goes". Creation is responsible when it answers to what was found.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** think as a trustee - find carefully, create accountably. A civil servant's notification creates a world for the poor; it must still find their actual queue. Expand; do not stop at this map.

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<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2025/thought-finds-a-world-and-creates-one-also/>

WRAP Exams

Q4 · 125 marks

Best lessons are learnt through bitter experiences.

Essay · 2025 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Guidance only.

- **Scene:** a first failure in office.
- **Stake:** bitterness teaches only when interpreted.
- **Body:** self, COVID/disasters, history, ethics.

Gandhi's experiments; Sen against famine-as-fate.

- **Counter:** some pain only wounds. Close on protocols.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

- **A young officer's first flood posting:** the boat comes late, a family is lost, the file is perfect. That night teaches more than a week of circulars. "Best lessons are learnt through bitter experiences" is true only if the bitterness is read, not worshipped.

Heading map

Unpack

- Lesson = revised action, not a quote in a diary.
- Bitter = failure, humiliation, loss, public shame.
- Best ≠ only. Books and other people's scars also teach.

Quote to earn: Aeschylus - "we suffer into truth" (often cited thus). **Gandhi** - My Experiments with Truth: error as method. **Tagore** - do not make a cult of suffering.

Person

- **Addiction, exam failure, a broken trust:** the lesson is a new rule of life.
- **Risk:** trauma without reflection = repetition.

Institutions

- **Fact peg:** COVID-19 exposed health-capacity gaps; subsequent vaccine manufacturing and digital certificates were lessons if retained.
- **Banking NPAs, a collapsed bridge, a stampede:** inquiry as institutional bitter lesson.
- **Disaster management after Odisha super-cyclone practice:** bitterness that built drills.

History

- Partition's bitterness taught, imperfectly, the cost of majoritarianism.
- Wars of 1962 vs later mountain infrastructure - lesson delayed is lesson taxed.

Ethics

- Do not tell the hungry that their hunger is a "lesson". The state's job is to spare avoidable bitterness.
- **Sen** - famines as failures of entitlement, not nature's classroom.

Counter

Privilege often learns from books; the poor pay tuition in grief. A just order reduces bitter classrooms and still keeps humility after failure.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** keep a notebook of failures, not an altar to pain. Policy should convert bitterness into protocol. Expand each heading; this is only the spine.

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<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2025/best-lessons-are-learnt-through-bitter-experiences/>

WRAP Exams

Q5 · 125 marks

Muddy water is best cleared by leaving it alone.

Essay · 2025 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Guidance only.

Pond anecdote. Stillness vs neglect.

- **Body:** mind, rumour, markets, diplomacy.

Watts/Tao, Aurelius, **Buddha** - one earned line.

- **Counter:** drowning child. Close on tool, not temperament.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A pond behind a school is kicked up by children every hour. By evening it is still brown. The gardener puts a bamboo screen and waits. By morning you can see the bottom. "Muddy water is best cleared by leaving it alone" is that wait - not neglect of the child who fell in.

Heading map

Unpack

- Mud = panic, rumour, ego, a market frenzy, a diplomatic insult.
- Leaving alone = stop adding energy; let sediment drop; then act on the clear view.
- **Cousin ideas:** wu wei, **Gandhi's** pauses, a judge's reserved order.

Quote to earn: Often linked to **Alan Watts / Taoist teaching:** muddy water clears by stillness. **Marcus Aurelius** - do not be yanked by first impression. **Buddha** - the stirred pond of mind.

Self

- **Social media argument:** more replies, more mud.
- **Grief:** some friends stir; time plus ordinary care clears more than speeches.

Society and media

- **Communal rumour:** a fact-check delay can be wisdom; a three-day silence from a leader can also be cowardice. Distinguish.
- **Fact peg:** Election Model Code - a pause on certain speeches so the pond can be voted, not only stirred.

Economy and policy

- **Currency panic:** over-communication can worsen a run; calm plus reserves can settle.
- **Fact peg:** 1991 reforms were stirring of a different kind - mud of licence raj needed movement, not stillness.
- **Environmental restoration:** sometimes stop dredging a river's every bend; sometimes desilt or the town floods. Case by case.

State

- **Police in a tense town:** showing force can muddy; a night curfew can be a still pond.
- **Diplomacy:** not every tweet needs a démarche.

Counter

Leaving a muddy well when a child is drowning is cruelty. Epidemic, fire, a missing person - stir immediately. The quote is about ego-mud and rumour-mud, not about duty.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** learn the difference between sediment and a drowning. Stillness is a tool, not a personality. Expand with one case of wise wait and one of needed haste.

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<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2025/muddy-water-is-best-cleared-by-leaving-it-alone/>

WRAP Exams

Q6 · 125 marks

The years teach much which the days never know.

Essay · 2025 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Guidance only.

Banyan vs tweet. Emerson's years vs days.

- **Body:** habit, education, infrastructure, climate, demography.
- **Counter:** some days are life-and-death. Close on two clocks.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A banyan does not look busy. A tweet does. Twenty years later the shade is the banyan's; the tweet is dust. Emerson wrote, "The years teach much which the days never know." The essay is about what only duration can teach - and what must not wait.

Heading map

Unpack

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**, "Experience": years vs days.
- Years = compounding, character, forest, constitution, climate, demography.
- Days = incident, mood, TRP, a viral clip.

Quote to earn: Keynes - in the long run we are dead (the counter-quote: some waits kill). **Nehru** - temples of modernity as a bet on years. **Gandhi** - means as years of practice.

Person

- **Skill, grief, marriage, recovery:** the day of resolve is cheap; the year of habit is dear.
- **UPSC itself:** a year of reading vs a day of panic.

Society

- **Education:** NEP's horizon is a generation, not a press conference.
- **Fact peg:** literacy and TFR (**NFHS-5** around replacement in many states) moved over decades, not news cycles.

State

- Afforestation, groundwater, a metro, a civil service cadre - year-logic.
- **Judiciary's delay:** years that teach the wrong lesson (justice denied).
- **Fact peg:** India's median age is still young; a demographic year-window is not infinite.

Planet

- **Climate:** days of weather vs years of carbon. IPCC is a years-teacher.

Counter

A missing child, a custodial death, a famine week - days must know. Emerson is against shallowness, not against urgency. The art is two clocks.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** keep a daily clock for harm, a yearly clock for building. A republic that only lives in the news feed never plants a banyan. Expand this; it is not the full canopy.

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<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2025/the-years-teach-much-which-the-days-never-know/>

WRAP Exams

Q7 · 125 marks

It is best to see life as a journey, not as a destination.

Essay · 2025 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Guidance only.

Yatra vs unpaid labourer.

Gandhi on means; Ambedkar on daily democracy.

- **Body:** person, education, GDP vs dignity, just transition.
- **Counter:** the poor need arrivals. Close on both clocks.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A pilgrim on a long yatra is asked, at a dusty dhaba, "How far to the shrine?" He says, "I am already on it." That is piety. A labourer on the same road, unpaid for weeks, cannot live on piety. "It is best to see life as a journey, not as a destination" is wise only if the road has water.

Heading map

Unpack

- Journey = means, learning, relationships, unfinished self.
- Destination = goal, rank, GDP number, "developed India" slogan, moksha as a stamp.
- **Stake:** hold the goal; refuse to crush the path.

Quote to earn: Gandhi - means are ends in the making. Tagore - "the road is my own."
Khalil Gibran (if used once) - not a quote dump. Buddha - the eightfold path.

Person

- **Careerism:** IAS as destination turns the academy into a war. Journey: curiosity, service.
- **Illness:** cure is a destination; care is the journey.

Society

- Education as marks vs education as a path (NEP's claim).
- Marriage as "settled" vs companionship as practice.

Nation

- **Fact peg:** GDP growth is a destination-metric; jobs, air, dignity are the journey's quality.
- Viksit Bharat as a date can motivate; it can also excuse today's cruelty "for 2047".
- **Constitution:** a journey of becoming equal - Ambedkar's warning that democracy is a daily habit.

Environment

- Net-zero year vs the journey of coal towns, just transition.

Counter

Hunger is not a journey to romanticise. Rights are destinations that must arrive in a lifetime. The quote rebukes obsession, not planning.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** pack water for the road, and still know the shrine's name. A civil servant measures both the file's end and how the queue was treated. Expand; this is only the itinerary.

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<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2025/it-is-best-to-see-life-as-a-journey-not-as-a-destination/>

WRAP Exams

Q8 · 125 marks

Contentment is natural wealth; luxury is artificial poverty.

Essay · 2025 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Guidance only.

Wedding-comparison anecdote.

Socrates + Gandhi on need vs greed.

- **Body:** mind, dowry, ecology, welfare floor.
- **Counter:** do not spiritualise hunger. Close on floor plus less theatre.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A man counts three steel plates after a wedding and feels poor because the neighbour hired a chandelier. Nothing left the house except peace. **Socrates:** "Contentment is natural wealth; luxury is artificial poverty." The poverty is made of comparison, not of empty tins.

Heading map

Unpack

- **Contentment** = enough, attention, unbought dignity (santosh, **Gandhi's** trusteeship).
- **Luxury** = not comfort; the treadmill of display.
- **Artificial poverty** = a lack invented by advertising, caste honour, GDP-as-self.

Quote to earn: **Socrates** (as traditionally given). **Gandhi** - "earth has enough for everyone's need, not for everyone's greed" (often so cited). **Schumacher** - small is beautiful. **Buddha** - tanha.

Person

- **Mental health:** FOMO, debt for a wedding, a phone as status.
- **Stoic cousin:** Epictetus - some things are not ours.

Society

- **Wedding and dowry inflation:** luxury as social tax.
- **Fact peg:** household debt and consumption surveys - aspiration can outrun income; use cautiously, no fake decimals.

Economy and ecology

- Luxury emissions vs a decent floor for all (housing, protein, Ujjwala as need).
- **Fact peg:** India still carries undernutrition alongside luxury housing - two worlds, one republic.
- **Circular economy, repair, public parks:** wealth that is not luxury.

State

- Welfare is not anti-contentment; it is a floor so contentment is possible.
- Conspicuous official spending is artificial poverty of the public purse.

Counter

- **Do not preach contentment to the landless.** **Ambedkar:** a hungry man is not "simple". Luxury of the few can be the theft of the many. The quote rebukes greed, not justice.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** raise the floor, lower the theatre. Contentment is a civic skill; luxury as identity is a tax on the soul and the planet. Expand each heading; this is not the full essay.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2025/contentment-is-natural-wealth-luxury-is-artificial-poverty/>

WRAP Exams

Compiled answer key

Last pages of this pack. Each question links to the WRAP model answer on wrapexams.com.

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Q1 125 marks	Q2 125 marks	Q3 125 marks	Q4 125 marks
Q5 125 marks	Q6 125 marks	Q7 125 marks	Q8 125 marks

Question-wise key

Q1 · 125 marks Solution

Q2 · 125 marks Solution

Q3 · 125 marks Solution

Q4 · 125 marks Solution

Q5 · 125 marks Solution

Q6 · 125 marks Solution

Q7 · 125 marks Solution

Q8 · 125 marks Solution

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