



# Mains Practice Question

## Essay Topics

1. A ladder is useless if it leans against the wrong wall
2. A traveler without a map is lost, but a traveler without curiosity is stagnant.

08 Feb, 2025    Essay Essay

### 1. A ladder is useless if it leans against the wrong wall

#### Quotes to Enrich Your Essay:

- **Stephen R. Covey:** "If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster."
- **Henry David Thoreau:** "It is not enough to be busy. The question is: "What are we busy about?"

#### Theoretical and Philosophical Dimensions:

- **The Importance of Purpose and Direction in Progress:**
  - Progress without clarity of purpose can lead to wasted efforts and undesirable outcomes.
  - Existentialist philosophers like **Jean-Paul Sartre** emphasize that human actions must be guided by conscious choice and meaning.
  - **Buddhist philosophy** stresses the right intention (**Samyak Sankalpa**) as an essential part of ethical action.
- **Ethical Considerations in Ambition and Success:**
  - Unethical pursuits, even if successful, ultimately lead to downfall (e.g., corporate fraud, environmental exploitation).
  - **Aristotle's concept of Eudaimonia** highlights that true success is about holistic well-being, not just material achievement.
  - The **Bhagavad Gita** teaches about **performing duty with the right purpose**, without attachment to mere success.
- **Societal and Economic Parallels - Growth vs. Meaningful Growth:**
  - Economic development without inclusivity leads to inequality and social unrest.
  - **GDP vs. Happiness Index Debate** - Countries must focus not only on economic progress but also on well-being and sustainability.

#### Policy and Historical Examples:

- **Misguided Policies and Their Consequences:**
  - **Subprime Mortgage Crisis (2008):** A reckless pursuit of short-term profits led to global economic collapse.
  - **Unplanned Urbanization:** Rapid but haphazard urban growth results in pollution, slums, and poor living conditions.
  - **Colonial Mercantilism:** Short-term economic exploitation of colonies led to long-term poverty and underdevelopment.
- **Strategic and Well-Planned Approaches:**

- **India's White Revolution:** Focused on self-sufficiency in dairy production rather than blind imitation of Western models.
- **Scandinavian Welfare Model:** Economic success combined with social security, ensuring balanced and sustainable progress.
- **Japan's Post-War Industrial Policy:** Prioritized long-term technological advancement and education over short-term industrial gains.

### Contemporary Examples:

- **Corporate and Business Strategies:**
  - **Startups and Unicorn Boom:** Many startups fail because they chase valuation rather than long-term sustainability.
- **Environmental and Climate Policies:**
  - **India's Renewable Energy Push:** Moving towards sustainability instead of relying on coal-driven industrialization.

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## 2. A traveler without a map is lost, but a traveler without curiosity is stagnant.

### Quotes to Enrich Your Essay:

- **Albert Einstein:** "I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious."
- **J.R.R. Tolkien:** "Not all those who wander are lost."
- **Confucius:** "Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance."

### Theoretical and Philosophical Dimensions:

- **The Balance Between Planning and Exploration:**
  - A rigid plan (map) without curiosity leads to limited growth, while curiosity without direction results in chaos.
  - **Stoic philosophy (Marcus Aurelius):** Encourages preparation but also adaptability in the face of uncertainty.
- **Innovation and Progress - The Role of Curiosity:**
  - **Leonardo da Vinci's** inventions stemmed from an insatiable curiosity rather than rigid adherence to existing knowledge.
  - **Space Exploration (ISRO, NASA):** While **blueprints (maps)** are necessary, breakthroughs come from **exploring the unknown**.
- **Education and Knowledge - Learning Beyond Syllabi:**
  - **Socratic Method:** Encourages questioning rather than rote memorization.
  - **Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan Model:** Advocated free-thinking education over rigid systems.

### Policy and Historical Examples:

- **Failures Due to Lack of Direction (Mapless Wanderers):**
  - **Dot-com Bubble (1990s-2000s):** Overzealous startups with no concrete business models collapsed despite having innovative ideas.
- **Failures Due to Lack of Curiosity (Over-Reliance on Maps):**
  - **Kodak and Nokia's Downfall:** Companies followed existing models (maps) but **ignored technological shifts (curiosity about future trends)**.
- **Successes from Balancing Structure and Curiosity:**
  - **India's IT Boom (1990s-2000s):** A blend of structured planning (government policies) and curiosity-driven entrepreneurship led to global leadership in software services.
  - **Indus Valley Civilization's Urban Planning:** Had a structured city plan but also **innovative adaptation to geography and trade dynamics**.

### Contemporary Examples:

- **Technology and Artificial Intelligence:**
  - **Google's 20% Innovation Time Policy:** Employees are encouraged to spend time on

**curiosity-driven projects**, leading to innovations like **Gmail**.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Ethics Debate:** While structured guidelines (maps) are necessary, ethical considerations and unknown variables require curiosity-driven exploration.
- **Global Economic and Political Landscape:**
  - **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** A long-term strategic vision (map) combined with adaptive responses to geopolitical realities.

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