

IAS 2009 Topper Interview Anupama (All India Rank 4)

“Aim high and work hard”

She wanted to be a part of the administrative machinery of the country which she thought, would help in channelizing her potential for the service of the nation and its citizens. Meet Anupama TV in a heart-to-heart talk with Competition Wizard.

Question: To whom and to what do you credit your success?

Answer: To the Almighty first of all. To my mother, Uncle, sister, grandmother, rest of my family for being the pillars of support for me; my best friend for boosting my morale and instilling confidence; my friends at BITS; my teachers at school, ALS, Kerala State Civil Service Academy, Pala Civil Service Institute and Prof. Rajashekharan for their timely guidance.

Question: Why did you choose Civil Services as a career?

Answer: I wanted to be a part of the administrative machinery of our country which I thought, would help me to channelize my potential for the service of the nation and its citizens. I also had a keen interest in government service.

Question: How should one assess oneself before deciding to opt for Civil Services as a career?

Answer: One's longing for this service can be the sole guiding factor when one pursues this goal. Therefore, passion and determination are very important.

One should make up one's mind to put adequate efforts as demanded by this examination.

Question: When did you consciously start your preparation for this examination?

Answer: After having done enough homework on the choice of the Optionals, coaching institute, preparation of study-plan, and basic reading by the end of my graduation, I started preparation in June, 2008.

Question: When should one ideally start the preparation process?

Answer: It could vary from person to person. But 12 – 18 months should be sufficient. I started 11 months before Preliminary which worked in my case.

Question: It is said that the Civil Services examination is one of the toughest nuts to crack. It requires constant and sustained hard work. How did you keep yourself constantly motivated? What was your source of inspiration?

Answer: My passion was my greatest inspiration. My family and friends had immense trust in my ability and their support helped me to remain focused.

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Question: In your opinion, how crucial is the selection of Optionals for success in the examination?

Answer: It is the most important step to the success in this examination.

Question: What should be the criteria for selecting them and how should one go about it? Should one opt for the subjects studied at college or go for new ones?

Answer: One's interest should be the sole criterion. I used [NCERT books, notes and problem solutions](#), UPSC syllabus and Main's previous years' question papers to make by choice. Subjects studied at graduation would help to save time in learning the concepts and collecting the books.

Question: How should one prepare for Prelim, Main and Interview?

Answer: One should integrate his/her preparation for all the 3 stages. This will produce better answers which are balanced in terms of facts and analysis.

Prelim: Don't overdo things here. For GS, find out the areas of your strength and prepare thoroughly (I studied geography, polity, mental ability, current affairs and biology). For Optional, focus on concepts first and then take up facts. One should also keep in mind Main's pattern here.

Main: Prepare notes and revise, Practice answer-writing. For Optionals, use standard text books, plan your answer beforehand. For GS, list out the probable topics and prepare thoroughly. Unlike Prelim, try not to leave out any area.
Answer: Interview: Develop balanced opinion about the current events. Take the help of newspaper editorials and multiple magazines here. Prepare bio-data thoroughly. Be truthful while filling up the bio-data form.

Question: How can one score well in Essay, GS and Interview?

Answer: Essay: Preparation for Optionals and GS will supplement essay preparation. Read thoroughly about contemporary events and develop opinion about them. While writing, plan the essay in the 1st hour. Be creative, but don't be too imaginative. Analyze the topic well. Concentrate on intro and conclusion. Maintain the logical relation between paragraphs.

General Studies: Give attention to both conventional part and current topics. Use standard text books for the conventional topics. Make use of journals, editorials and prepare notes for the current affairs. While answering, attend to the positive and negative, 'for' and 'against' aspects of everything. Analysis is more important than facts.

Interview: There is nothing to be scared about the interview board. Be confident. Maintain a smile always. Don't hesitate to say 'I don't know' when you are clueless. Join the discussions with interview board rather than following 'answer to the question' approach. Admit your mistakes in case you make any.

Question: What are the areas in GS Paper I and II in the Main examination in which the candidate can score marks easily?

Answer: Polity, geography, statistics and economics.

Question: Did you commit any mistake during your preparations?

Answer: Due to paucity of time, I couldn't prepare well on the events in the last 1 – 2 months before the Prelim, because of which I had to leave out a few 2-markers in the GS paper. This must have affected my GS marks slightly. Other than that, I don't remember having committed any major mistake.

Question: How many hours should one devote for the preparations regularly?

Answer: I studied for 13 – 16 hours regularly from July 2008 to October 2009.

Question: Could you please give the aspirants a list of reference for essay/GS/Optional I/Optional II and Interview?

Answer: Essay: Yojana, Kurukshetra, editorials of 'The Hindu' and 'Times of India'

General Studies: The Hindu, Frontline. [Doorsteptutor GS NCERT Question Bank](#), Wizard Indian Polity and Constitution, Wizard Geography for GS. [Modern India \(NCERT\)](#) and [Statistics \(NCERT\)](#).

Geography Optional: [Examrace Geography](#), Physical Geography Savindra Singh, Strahler & Strahler; Climatology-D. S. Lal, Indian Geography-Khullar, Bhardwaj; Models in Geography-Majid Hussain; Geographical Thoughts-S. Adhikari; World Geography-Tikka-Bali-Sheikhon; Human Geography-Majid Hussain. [NCERT text books](#), G C Leong; latest UN reports; Census of India; Atlas-Orient Longman and Oxford.

Interview: Same as that for GS and Essay.

Q: Besides text books what newspapers, magazines, novels and books of general interest should one read?

A: Read the available regional newspaper and magazine too.

Q: How one should read newspaper?

A: One should read newspaper as a source to, Facts for Prelim and Development of opinion about the events and issues. Focus on editorial, International and national events, economy, environment and science and technology.

Question: How did the Competition Wizard helps you in the preparation of the Civil Services examination?

A: I had been reading Competition Wizard since June 2008. It supplemented to my current affairs preparation at each level of exam and acted as a guide to reading newspaper when I started my preparation. I scanned through every issue to prepare for 2-markers in particular when I was running short of time.

Q: What is more important for this exam, intelligence or hard work?

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A: Hard work becomes important in preparation and intelligence comes into play in the presentation of what you learnt.

Q: Do candidates with a technical background have an advantage over general students?

A: I don't feel if such an advantage exists.

Q: Where did you prepare for the examination (at what place)? Does the place of preparation matter?

A: I stayed at Delhi and Trivandrum while attending the coaching classes but preferred to stay at home during revision. The place of preparation should pose a favorable atmosphere to study and have the necessary books and material readily available.

Q: In the course of preparation one is faced with many problems, queries and difficulties. Where should one go for help, especially the students staying in remote areas?

A: I obtained the help of professors, seniors in the relevant field, libraries and mediAnswer: Q: Do coaching institutes help? If yes, how should one select, when there are so many of them?

A: Coaching helps especially when one takes up a new subject as an optional. See the track-records and talk to the seniors to select the right institute. Also see if the institute focuses on mock tests and frequent evaluation.

Q: In which stage should one ideally opt for coaching?

A: I feel one should be done with the coaching before he/she starts exclusive preparation for Prelim. One can also go for mock tests 2 – 3 months before the exam.

Q: Why did you choose ALS in the first place?

A: Its reputation and meticulous planning especially for Geography as an optional made me choose ALS. It was suggested to me by my seniors. Also, the duration and timing of the classes matched exactly with what I had in mind. The frequency of tests also attracted me.

Q: What is so special about ALS?

A: 'At ALS things go as per plan' this is something not so common nowadays. Syllabus was thoroughly covered in time and adequate numbers of tests were conducted. Teachers were always available to everyone for feedbacks and clearing doubts. Moreover, the way they simplified things and motivated us gave me the feeling that 'I can make it' in the very first month of classes at ALS.

Q: Do you think that with increasing levels of competition, the preparation for Civil Services is getting too expensive?

A: Yes, it is:

Q: Could you suggest some ways of cutting down on expenses?

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A: I depended a lot on libraries and internet for my preparation which saved me a huge sum on books.

Q: Seeing the stiffness of the competition, is this exam meant for everyone who takes it?

A: Anybody who has the willingness to work now and serve later can make it.

Q: Is UPSC really unpredictable?

A: Proper planning can reduce the level of unpredictability. Surprises are possible but not everywhere. So one has to find out one's strong areas and prepare them thoroughly.

Q: What all do you think is needed to make it to the top?

A: Determination, hardwork, strong desire for service and proper planning.

Q: How would you rate luck as far as success in Civil Services is concerned?

A: Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

Q: How was the atmosphere during your Interview?

A: It was very cordial. I didn't realize I finished half an hour inside the room.

Q: What do you think is the right way to face Interview Board confidently?

A: One must understand that it's okay even if you can't answer every question. Also, prepare bio-data thoroughly and be sure about your opinion about major events.

Q: What types of questions did the Board ask?

A: Questions were mostly from bio-data and my places of stay. Opinions about a few general things around were also asked.

Q: What is the most important thing one should keep in mind while facing the Interview Board?

A: The panel is there to evaluate you on the basis of the qualities you possess and not the level of knowledge.

Q: During the Interview, did the board member (s) ask you any tricky question (s)?

A: No.

Q: How do you foresee your future as an administrator?

A: As an officer who perceives his/her career as a service to the nation and its citizens rather than a profession.

Q: Would you have a final word for the student community?

A: There's no end to what you can achieve. Aim high and work hard. If I could do it, each one of you can Plan properly and start off!

Exam Preparation

Took coaching for the second optional during the graduation time.

Started exclusive preparation 11 months before the Prelim. Attended Main classes for General Studies and Geography (1st optional). Devoted 20 days for the second optional in between:

Started Prelim preparation in January 2009. Took model tests from February to April.

May-August: Prepared notes for both Optionals and finished first round of revision. Also kept aside 1 – 2 hours a day to prepare current affairs and issues of national and international importance.

August-September: GS + Revision of Optionals.

September-October: Only revision.

November-January: Prelim preparation + General reading.

February-March: Interview preparation + Mock interviews.

Interview

My interview was in the afternoon session on April 1. I went in as the 2nd candidate to be interviewed by Purushottam Agarwal's Board. The candidate before me was a friend of mine (got 14th rank) and the smile on her face when she came out gave me enough confidence to enter and greet everyone pleasantly. I wore a formally stitched lavender churidar and black shoes. Just opposite to what I expected, I got no question regarding the reasons to choose the career, shift from engineering to civil service or choice of optional.

They first asked me regarding the languages, NGOs and social issues of Goa, where I did my graduation. Questions regarding tourism industry in India followed. One or two detailed questions from day's news baffled me and had to say 'I don't know' a couple of times.

Questions regarding economic growth were next in line. I got a big chain of questions about it and was asked to narrate the implications of a higher growth rate and to relate the plight of different sectors of economy with current growth rate.

Questions about literature and dancing (my hobbies), blood donation camps and NGO work (my activities) followed.

Questions were also from environmental protection Act, air pollution, legal education, ignorance of law, ice-melt, electronic voting machines etc.

They also asked a few questions regarding my home state.

During the interview, I was appreciated a couple of times for my answers.

About Me

Visit examrace.com for free study material, doorsteptutor.com for questions with detailed explanations, and "Examrace" YouTube channel for free videos lectures

I started nurturing my civil service dream from my school days when my uncle (Mr. Nandakumar) told me about this career and I got opportunity to read about the same. Academic life at BITS would only give me better exposure, I thought. Even when I entered BITS, I was sure about the path I had to take.

My 1st step into civil service preparation was in 2007 when during my vacation, I attended classes for my 2nd optional (Malayalam literature).

After I graduated in June 2008, I went over to attend Main's classes at ALS. I came to Kerala in December. From January I started Prelim preparation and took mock tests from a professor at Trivandrum. After Prelim, I resumed my Main preparation and was at home until results were out. I prepared detailed notes as well as synopsis and finished optional by August. Thereafter, I went to Trivandrum and joined the adoption batch at Kerala State Civil Service Academy.

After the Main, I took a short break with a few books of my interest, movies and trips. Thereafter I prepared simultaneously for Prelim and Interview. Later I joined the adoption batch at the Academy for interview classes. After the results, I took 5 mock interviews there and started off for UPSC.

The result came on May 6th, 2010!

Courtesy: Competition Wizard, July 2010

Sail through IAS Mains and Prelims (both English & Hindi): Fully-explained Prelims (Both GS & Aptitude) problems with detailed solutions. Notes & detailed answers for Mains GS, Essay, Compulsory (Hindi and English) papers and optionals.