



ZFI Fellow Ms Ruha Shadab -
mock interview session in progress
at ZFI office

Civil Services interview held in UPSC on 10.06.2015

Interview Transcript
Sri D K Dewan's Board
10th June 2015
Afternoon Session
4th in Number
Arrangement of board
M2 (lady) M1 C M3 M4

Walk from the door to the table was 15-17 feet

C: Looking at you DAF I'm intimidated by all your interests. (I smile) .
You've interest in many languages. Spanish, German, Arabic. All difficult.
Are you learning them all together?

A: No , Sir

C: Which one are you doing right now?

A: Spanish

C: Which continent has the largest number of Spanish speakers?

A: South America

C: Which country there does not speak Spanish?

A: Brazil

C: Which language is spoken there?

A: Portuguese

C: Why?

A: Because Brazil was colonized by Portugal

C: Why do you want to do civil services after becoming a doctor?

A: Sir, there are two independent reasons. Firstly, I became a doctor being highly inspired by my father and also due to the nobility of the profession; however, during my college days I realized that what really drove me was the plight of the relatives of the patients who would wait outside on the walkways for days in the heat and cold. I wanted to do something for them. I knew the canvas was large. I could work in Preventive healthcare or health infrastructure. I wanted to work to improve the quality of life of people at large and civil services provide that platform. Secondly, the versatility in the services. Being in one ministry or department today and in a few months in another involves constant learning, adaptability and creative problem solving. All these aspects of the services greatly interest me.

C: Let me come to these one by one. Shouldn't your priority be the patient and not his relatives since the relatives are healthy?

A: The patients are being tended to, but the other lot of people is completely neglected and is put through unnecessary hardships.

C: The mobility you talk about in the services, isn't that a relic of the colonial era? Don't we need technical expertise in the bureaucracy? (Doesn't let me counter this point) Any way, we've had civil servants for over sixty years, but the plight of people like you have witnessed still is poor. What then can you do?

A: Sir, I will be an honest and hardworking civil servant

C: You mean to say that currently civil servants are not? Have we not improved over the last so many years?

A: The progress of the country has been greatly due the bureaucratic workers. I will play my part as an efficient and honest civil servant to further the direction of progress that we are set out upon

C: Okay, tell me about the situation in Sri Lanka. What are the issues there?

A: New President wants to bring about electoral reform. Curtail powers of the President which were increased during the previous head's rule. Rehabilitation of the people displaced during the civil war, infrastructure development. At international relations level, we see a shift from their leanings towards China back again to India.

C: And?

A: Sorry sir, that's all I can think of right now

C: Have the electoral forms happened?

A: The twentieth amendment had been tabled. I can't recollect its passage with surety

C: Can you name the President and PM of Sri Lanka?

A: Sorry sir, I don't remember.

(Blanked out)

C: All right, tell me about Turkey

A: Turkey recently has elections in which the incumbent party lost absolute majority. Though it is still the largest party.

C: What does this signify?

A: This shows the dissatisfaction of the people with the President.

C: Why?

A: The president wanted to change the government's system to a presidential one. There was increasing concentration of power. He was becoming autocratic.

C: And..

A: Corruption and lack of development. A want of opportunities for the youth.

C: And..

A: Sorry, Sir, that's all the reasons I can think of at the moment

C: What does this signify for the region?

A: Since the president will now have some coalition compulsions and the result will be taken to mean concern with his policies, he is likely to take a less extreme stand. Moderation in his behavior will bode well for the region especially at this time of many extremist voices.

C: And.. he was leaning towards?

A: Turkey was leaning towards Russia. Some geopoliticians also suggest Turkey was playing a dual game in Syria which has escalated problems

C: And.. leaning towards....

A: The president was becoming more rightist

C: More rightist?

A: More extremist

C: Name the President of Turkey

A: Mr Recep Erdogan

C: Since how many years has he been the President

A: I don't know, Sir

C: Tell me about Egypt

A: The president is General Fattah al Sisi. He overthrew Mohd Morsy who had become the President through democratic process after the uprising in

Egypt. He is currently being incarcerated for his Human Right violations and corruption charges

C: Are those the only reasons?

A: That is all I can remember at the moment.

C: Was there a military coup?

A: Umm.. As far as I can remember?

C: Military coup?

A: I'm not sure, Sir

C: Do you know an NRI holds two passports? Can you name them?

A: Indian passport and OCI

C: What are the two terms

A: OCI and PIO

C: What has happened recently?

A: They've been merged into a single entity

C: Is it already being implemented?

A: Sorry sir, I don't know

C: (points to M1)

M1: There is an officer's son. A child. And his driver's child. The two race. Who is likely to reach 100m first?

A: I beg your pardon, Sir

M1: Repeats

A: (I again clarify)

A: I would bet my money on the driver's son
(Everyone nods)

M1: Correct, but then why is Amir Khan talking about shooing away malnutrition

A: Sir, here an officer's driver is likely to be well paid and informed to give and afford proper nutrition to his child

M1: I am not talking about this case in particular

A: Malnutrition is prevalent in India due to a variety of factors form impoverishment, poor sanitation, uninformed parenting, high disease burden

M1: What would you do to tackle this?

A: I would take the following measures. Ensure mid day meals throughout the year, including vacations, floods, drought. Inform mothers about the kinds of foods that should be given to children of different age groups. Conduct campaigns about malnutrition. Involve the locals by means of

gram sabha for instance to have awareness. And also, not segregate hygiene and sanitation from the plan to eradicate malnutrition

M2: You debate? I'll give you a topic

NGOs should have greater transparency and accountability

Speak against

A: Maam, may I take a moment to collect my thoughts

M2: Yes (after 30seconds)

You can also speak for

A: May I speak both against and for?

M2: Yes, of course

A: Should NGOs have greater transparency and accountability? I'll first present an argument for.

The progress of a country needs participation from its government, citizenry and social sector, rather social organizations. NGOs play an important role in raising concerns of the people and work for many objectives in the interest of society

However, they are not immune to vices. Some of them receive funding from foreign organizations which might have ulterior motives. The NGOs can whitewash their intentions and mislead the public.

Another source of the funding is from the public who give NGOs money in good faith. This good faith must not be exploited and hence greater transparency in their functioning should be present

NGOs also receive money from the Govt and therefore they should be accountable to it with regards to expenditure

However, there is also argument against this

NGOs while pushing the cause of the people might rub the govt of the day in the wrong way. To prevent undue obstacles in its course, the ngos need to have some autonomy and discretion which will come at the cost of transparency.

They work selflessly for others and this should be recognized by giving them leeway and opportunity to work on their own terms

M3: We are not prepared for dealing with natural calamities. If an earthquake comes to Delhi, there will be large scale damage. Are we prepared for it? Are our hospitals prepared?

A: Some regions of India have learnt how to manage disasters quite well, for instance Orissa. In Delhi, yes, an earthquake would cause large scale damage. But it is correctly said that earthquakes don't kill people, buildings

do. Housing needs to be made earthquake proof. So do hospitals. They need to be updated and upgraded to tackle such calamities

M3: Are hospitals prepared?

A: From personal experience, no sir. Even during an “off period” we are running on full capacity.

M3: Do you know what Triage is?

A: Yes, Sir

M3: Do you have triage drills?

A; No , Sir

M3: Does your hospital perform triage?

A: Yes, sir. In case we suddenly see a large number of patients come in for example in a road traffic accident, we do perform triage.

M3: How will your hospital deal with a large calamity?

A: We will perform triage and try to accommodate as many patients as possible. Refer the ones we cannot take in. Give first aid to those in need.

M3: To improve capacity? In New York, when the WTC fell, the hospitals nearby discharged patients to make room for the trauma patients. Did you know this case study?

A: No sir, I did not know. Thank you.

M4: In Saudi Arabia, there is a lot of safety. Low crime. Whereas Delhi is very unsafe for women. Where would you feel more comfortable?

A: Sir, if I were to walk the streets of Delhi at 11 in night, I would definitely be concerned for my safety. In Saudi Arabia, the concern won't arise because I am not allowed to walk the streets!

(Everyone has a laugh)

M4: Why do you think this is so?

A: For two reasons, the serious curtailment on freedoms limits interactions and secondly, archaic punishments. Also, with regards to violence against women, there is severe under reporting because the women do not find the voice to submit complaints

C: If you were given an option between having all the niceties of life with no freedom and having a subsistence sort of living with freedom , which would you choose?

A: Without a doubt sir, the situation which provides me personal liberty. For the other situation is akin to being a caged animal.

C: Why is personal liberty so important to you?

A: It is the prime requirement for humans to lead a fulfilling life. It provides creative space. Allows for personal expansion and development

C: And.. and...

A: This creative space will find expression in the form of inventions and discoveries which will help improve humanity

C: Yes. Personal liberty is very important for society.

You interview is over

A: Thank you very much.

(big smile, look at everyone, get up, push my chair in and I walk out)
