

Interview date: 27-03-17,
Afternoon session
Interview board: Arvind Saxena
Background: Graduate in Geological sciences from IISER Kolkata
Employment and work-ex (if applicable): joined and left PhD in US
Domicile: Jaipur, Rajasthan
Hobbies: Rajasthani folk and Bollywood dancing

Chairperson:

- What is integrated BS-MS?
 - Sir it's a five yr integrated course in basic sciences. Sililar to BSc-MSc but different in name
- So you were in Brown? (I said no, I got a call from there but joined Rice university)
 - No Sir. I got a call from Brown but I decided to join Rice University
- Did you actually do your course or did not join it?
 - No sir, I went there. Completed a semester and then decided to withdraw
- Why did you leave your PhD?
 - Sir, because I wanted to appear in civil services
- That means you had it in your mind even before joining it?
 - Yes sir but I was not sure. Only when I went there and started working on my project did I realize that this is not what I want to do for the rest of my life. I had to taken a decision and hence decided to withdraw
- What was your thesis project on?
 - Sir, in US your project is usually not decided in first two years and you have to attend course work but I was told to work on finding the reason behind chemical composition and the depth of origin of Hawaiian volcanoes.
- What would you do as DM?
 - Sir I would like to ensure that people have good governance, there is a sense of relief in their daily lives. I would also like to focus on health and education
- Why IFS your second choice?
 - Sir I want to be an IAS officer. I don't have any priority for other services.
- That means If you get IFS, will you leave it and prepare for civil services again or join IFS?
 - Sir..... I don't deny joining it. I'll join it. (I was thoughtful and slow in answering this.. Did not expect it at all)
- Do you think, foreign officers are as important today as they wre20-25 years ago?
 - Yes sir.. I think they are as important or even more important now. Need collaboration on international terrorism, climate change etc which know no boundaries..To secure India's interests in Indian ocean region, we need the support of all littoral countries.. And definitely trade and energy interests
- In this digital age where you issue e-visas, do video conferencing, do you think we still need officers?
 - Yes sir definitely. These are tools which can help you. We still need people to come up with solutions to problems, give ideas.
- He gave me some statistics of around 300 people killed in terrorist attcak vs some lakh in road accidents and then asked..Don't you think India is shouting to much terror-terror when so many people are dying in road accidents (I mentioned cooperation on international terrorism etc for my relevance of IFS question)?

- Sir, Indian govt has not neglected road accidents . It is continuously taking measures to leseen this number however terrorism is not something with which we can compromise. We are loosing our complete generation to it. Securing the sovereignty and integrity is a must if we want to secure the interest of our citizens and for that we need international cooperation
- Why does India need cooperation on terrorism?
 - Sir because we all know that there is this one country which has turned into a breeding ground for terrorists. The whole world knows it and has the capacity to reign it if they want to. Therefore INDIA needs to build up international support in its favour so that we can deal with it
- Do you know Panchayati Raj were started in Rajasthan ?
 - Yes sir
 - Which was the year in which it was started?
 - Sorry sir, can't remember

Member 1:

- What is the literacy situation in Rajasthan?
 - Mentioned it all.. I knew the statistics
- What is diplomacy?
 - Diplomacy is the art of securing your interests through negotiations and by way of talking
- What are the qualities that diplomat should have besides communication?
 - I said that a diplomat should be able to put his/her points assertively without being cowed down (he said that they are communication skills). I again said something and then said don't know :(
- How would you communicate to people the importance of Swacch Bharat?
 - I would want to make sure that people feel disgusted about uncleanliness and open defecation etc. therefore I would rope in NGOs which can take the message to every home. I particurly want to show the people through demonstration if possible that how a fly sits on open feces and then on food and how bad it is for your health. Also we need to focus on school going children. If we can inculcate these values into them, I think our job is done
- Have you ever been to village?
 - No sir..
- Never ever?
 - No sir
- Do you know if there are taps in school so that they can clean their hands before eating their mid day meal?
 - Sir I have not been to any govt school. Therefore I cannot say anything on it
- Do you read anything ? Some books?
 - No sir.. I don't read books..
- Anything?
 - Sir I read articles on net or blogs .. Nothing more
- What do you do in your free time then?
 - Sir I don't get much free time.. I study, go for a walk and dance ...

Member 2:

- When were IISER'S established?
 - Sir in 2006
- Why were they founded?

- They were founded to provide high quality undergraduate education in basic sciences. We have Bsc courses in universities also but the quality was not there. So IISERs were established on the line of IITs
- Why IISERs when we already have IISc? It also provides basic science education
 - Sir, IISc did not have any undergraduate course earlier. It started recently. Also its intake is around 100 compared to 700 for IISERs
- But Why do we need to study basic sciences?
 - Sir because whatever achievements we doing like in ISRO or making vaccines, there are people who are working in basic sciences and developing the concepts. Rest only apply the work done in these fields
- You want to be an IAS officer. What will be the thing on which you will focus on if say you are made the health secretary?
 - Sir, the basic thing I will focus on is strengthen the Primary health centers. I say so because if we are able to ensure this, we can address more than 90% issues of health like malnutrition, dysentery, fever etc. Also the load on tertiary will come down. We can strengthen them by ensuring provision of basic facilities, availability of free medicines and presence of doctors
- Should govt provide free medicines? How can we do it
 - Yes sir.. Because India is a welfare state and this is the minimum we should do. Rajasthan govt is already doing it
- Do you know about medicines which are cheap?
 - YES SIR, GENERICS
- Why generics are cheap?
 - Explained the API and that no costs are incurred in research and tests

Member 3:

- What is the status of women in India ?
 - Ma'am I would say that the status of women is improving in India. Like if we compare to a traditional Indian society, I think women are more empowered now
- But I mean status compared to something? How would you measure status?
 - Ma'am status means women don't have equal status compared to men.. There are inequalities in literacy rate, in labour force participation in nutrition status. There are inequalities of opportunities
- And many other questions on this which I cannot recall?
- What is Finance Commission? What does it do?
 - A constitutional body under article 280 which deals with financial matters like distribution of taxes between centre and states
- Which was the last commission
 - The 14th finance commission
- and how was it different? (I couldn't recollect it totally)
 - I mentioned that 14th finance commission took into account parameter of tree cover, migration while deciding distribution
- Wrt local bodies
 - It increased untied funds to local bodies and also added performance incentive

Member 4:

- How old is earth?
- Different stages of earth evolution?
- Do you know about anthropocene? What is it? Do you agree with this theory and why?

- What to do to reverse it?
- What is COP21?
- Where was the conference held?
- How is it different from previous commitments?
- Can earth fight back? (he mentioned the name of this theory and asked me on it)
 - Related to subject so could answer all of them
- So you do folk dance.. Do you listen to music?
 - Sir I listen to music on which I can dance to :P
- What is the music on which north Indian dances are based?
 - Hindustani classical music
- Name some thumri singers
 - Girija devi ji is the only one I know of
- Name a famous Rajasthani classical singer.. Very very famous
 - Sir I know only of Jagjit singh who is very famous but not famous for classical
- He said Pt Jasraj and got very excited about him
 - I smiled.. (Came back and checked to find out that Pt Jasraj is not from Rajasthan)

I don't remember all the questions. They didn't ask me anything on geography, current affairs or even my hobby per se. The questions asked were very general . When I came out I was very happy but now its always like I could have said this or that...I am getting increasingly worried...

Best part was I didn't fumble, was not nervous and there was no awkward movement. The board was way too cordial than I expected except the lady member who was busy staring up and down..