

IAS WITH DR RAVI

# THE ESSAY DECODER

*A 14-week UPSC Essay programme*

**In UPSC Essay 2025 and 2026, all sixteen topics  
were philosophical quotes.**

Ten years of these quotes fall into twelve recurring themes.  
This programme prepares all twelve.

**42 classes · 12 themes · 14 September · Mon / Wed / Fri**

*Programme Prospectus*

Dr C. Ravi Kumar Reddy · MBBS · 3× UPSC Interview Appearances  
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## SECTION 01

# What This Programme Is About

On 21 August 2026, the UPSC Essay paper carried eight topics. Every one of them was a philosophical quote. The year before, on 22 August 2025, exactly the same thing happened. Across two consecutive papers, sixteen topics, not one was a policy or governance question, including all eight in Section B, which for years had carried governance, socio-economic and developmental themes. There is nowhere left to hide.

### UPSC ESSAY 2026 — THE ACTUAL PAPER, 21 AUGUST 2026

#### Section A

*"Oxymorons reflect the ironies of life."*

*"A grateful mind is very beautiful."*

*"A thorn is a changed bud."*

*"When two elephants fight, it is the grass that gets trampled."*

#### Section B

*"Nature is the symbol of the spirit."*

*"A well-educated mind will always have more questions than answers."*

*"Shelving hard decisions is the least ethical course."*

*"A good leader is one who follows the followers."*

The year before, the paper had done the same thing.

### UPSC ESSAY 2025 — THE ACTUAL PAPER, 22 AUGUST 2025

*"Truth knows no color."*

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

*"Thought finds a world and creates one also."*

*"Best lessons are learnt through bitter experiences."*

*"Muddy water is best cleared by leaving it alone."*

*"The years teach much which the days never know."*

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

*"Contentment is natural wealth; luxury is artificial poverty."*

Four from Section A. Four from Section B. Not one policy topic.

This is not a new pattern but it is the completion of one. Since 2020 the paper has moved steadily away from topics that reward current-affairs preparation and towards quotes that reward the ability to think. A candidate who has read every newspaper for two years can still open the paper and find nothing they have prepared for.

**The Essay Decoder exists because that shift changes what preparation has to look like.**

You cannot prepare a quote. There is an infinite supply of them, and UPSC will never repeat one. But quotes are not infinite in what they are about. Ten years of philosophical quotes, examined question by question, fall into twelve recurring themes. Prepare the twelve themes and you have prepared for a quote that has not yet been written.

That is the whole idea. Everything in this programme follows from it.

## What makes the essay paper different

The Essay carries 250 marks as much as any General Studies paper, and more than most optionals carry per paper. It is also the paper candidates prepare least, because there is no syllabus to finish and no obvious way to measure progress. Two candidates with identical GS scores routinely finish forty marks apart on the Essay, and that gap decides selections.

The reason is that the Essay does not test knowledge. It tests whether you can take a single abstract line, decide what it means, build an argument, honestly confront the strongest objection to your own position, and hold all of that together in 1,200 words written by hand in ninety minutes. That is a skill. Skills are not built by reading. They are built by producing work and having it corrected.

### THE PRINCIPLE BEHIND THE DESIGN

Most essay preparation gives students **content**. What candidates actually lack is **judgement**, the ability to look at their own script and know whether it is any good. You cannot see your own gaps, if you could, you would not have them. Every element of this programme is built to supply judgement: work produced under a clock, corrected aloud in the room, evaluated on five heads, and reviewed with you personally.

## Who this programme is for

Candidates preparing for UPSC Mains who want the Essay treated as a serious paper rather than an afterthought. It suits first-attempt candidates building the skill from the beginning, and equally suits repeaters who have written the Essay before and cannot understand why the score does not move. No prior essay training is assumed. The programme is conducted in English.

## SECTION 02

# What The Course Offers

Fourteen weeks. Forty-two classes. Twelve themes, prepared completely.

## The weekly rhythm

Every week follows the same three-class shape. You always know what is coming, which means attention goes to the work rather than to the format.

|     | CLASS            | WHAT HAPPENS                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MON | Teaching         | The theme's core philosophical tension, taught in plain language. Every past question on this theme decoded live including the messy first two minutes of deciding what a quote actually means.   |
| WED | Workshop         | Ninety minutes of production. One question on the board, and you write five different introductions to it, place quotes and examples into a paragraph plan, and write five different conclusions. |
| FRI | Test on the spot | Written in the room, under clock, by hand. Collected. Evaluated and returned to you in one week.                                                                                                  |

*Taught Monday. Practised Wednesday. Tested Friday. One theme closed completely, every week.*

## The writing ladder

Nobody is asked to write a full essay in Week 1. The demand rises deliberately, so that by the time a full essay under a ninety-minute clock arrives, you have already built every component of it separately.

| WEEKS   | WHAT YOU WRITE                                                                         |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 - 2   | Introductions and skeletons. Components only.                                          |
| 3 - 4   | Body paragraphs, each containing a genuine counter-view.                               |
| 5 - 7   | Body paragraphs, each containing a genuine counter-view, mastering complete skeletons. |
| 8       | Your first full essay, untimed.                                                        |
| 9 - 12  | Full essays, twelve hundred words, ninety minutes, handwritten.                        |
| 13 - 14 | Two-theme essays, then two complete papers under exam conditions.                      |

## Evaluation and one-to-one review

Every script you write on a Friday is evaluated and returned, and scripts are assessed against five heads:

- **Relevance to the topic** — whether the essay answers the quote actually set
- **Content depth** — the quality and range of what is brought to bear
- **Analytical ability and balance** — whether the strongest objection is faced honestly

- **Structure and conciseness** — whether the argument moves or merely accumulates
- **Language** — clarity, control, and freedom from padding

You receive an assessment on each head, your two strongest and two weakest moments quoted from your own sentences, and a routing line telling you exactly which theme guide and section to return to. Then you sit with Dr Ravi and go through the script itself.

## **The twelve theme guides**

Every enrolled student receives all twelve Essay Decoder theme guides. Each is a complete preparation document for one theme, containing:

- Every philosophical question set on that theme, 2016 – 2026, with its core tension identified
- Ten philosophers, five Indian and five Western, with the specific idea that applies, not just the name
- A quote bank of twenty quotes, each with a note on where in an essay it should be deployed
- An example bank of twenty examples, Indian and global, each with its implication written out
- Current data in tabular form, for use as evidence supporting a philosophical point
- Five fully written introductions and five fully written conclusions, complete, not templates with blanks
- One complete model essay, annotated paragraph by paragraph to show what each move is doing
- A self-evaluation checklist and practice questions

### **Also included**

- Cross-theme integration week, for questions that sit across two themes, which the real paper regularly sets
- Two complete papers written under exam conditions in the final week
- Attendance online or offline at the Hyderabad centre, with the same material and the same evaluation either way
- Telegram community access and ongoing support through the programme

## SECTION 03

# The Twelve Themes

Every philosophical quote UPSC has set between 2016 and 2026 belongs to one of these twelve. Each is taught for a full week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, in the order below.

## 01 Knowledge & Wisdom

*The single most frequently tested theme in the paper.*

Not education policy or literacy. The question underneath every quote here is the difference between knowing something and truly understanding it — and why that difference matters for anyone who will hold administrative responsibility.

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## 02 Action & Purpose

*Second most frequently tested.*

Not motivation or hard work. The relationship between action and meaning: what makes human action genuinely purposeful, and what separates a life lived with direction from one merely filled with activity.

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## 03 Individual & Collective

Not the policy debate between individual rights and state power. The nature of the social bond itself — whether the individual is prior to the community or the community prior to the individual, and whether the two can ever be genuinely aligned.

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## 04 Power & Responsibility

*Authority, leadership, and the ethics of influence.*

Not political science or administrative theory. Whether the possession of power creates moral obligation, what happens to character when power goes unchecked, and what disciplines are required to hold it responsibly.

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## 05 Simplicity & Complexity

Not minimalism or simple living. The relationship between the surface of things and their underlying structure — what appears complex but is elegantly simple once understood, and what appears simple but conceals extraordinary depth.

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## 06 Change & Continuity

*Transformation, time, and the preservation of what matters.*

Not a catalogue of social transformations. The philosophical relationship between change and permanence: what endures through all change, the role of the past in shaping the present, and the wisdom of knowing what to keep.

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## 07 Freedom & Choice

*Liberty, responsibility, and genuine freedom.*

Not civil liberties in a narrow sense. Whether freedom is the absence of constraint or the capacity for self-determination — and the obligation that the capacity to choose creates.

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## 08 Suffering & Growth

*Adversity, resilience, and the transformation of pain into wisdom.*

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Not the glorification of suffering. Not all suffering produces growth and not all growth requires suffering — so the question is what conditions allow a person to move through adversity to genuine understanding.

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## **09**   **Consciousness & Truth**

Not honesty or factual accuracy. The nature of truth itself and the relationship between perception and reality — how we know what we know, and whether our perception of the world can be trusted.

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## **10**   **Happiness & Fulfilment**

*Well-being, meaning, and the pursuit of the good life.*

Not positive thinking. The relationship between what human beings desire and what genuinely fulfils them — whether happiness is the satisfaction of desire, the experience of pleasure, or something else entirely.

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## **11**   **Communication & Understanding**

*Dialogue, interpretation, and genuine human connection.*

Not communication skills or media literacy. The gap between what we mean to express and what another person actually understands — and the difference between a real meeting of minds and the exchange of words that substitutes for it.

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## **12**   **Nature & Interconnectedness**

*Ecology, interdependence, and the human relationship with the natural world.*

Not environmental policy in a scientific sense. Whether human beings are part of nature or apart from it, and what obligations follow from the answer.

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## SECTION 04

# The Full Schedule

Monday, Wednesday and Friday, beginning 14 September 2026 and concluding 18 December 2026.

| WK | DATES               | THEME                         |
|----|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Sep 14 · 16 · 18    | Knowledge & Wisdom            |
| 2  | Sep 21 · 23 · 25    | Action & Purpose              |
| 3  | Sep 28 · 30 · Oct 2 | Individual & Collective       |
| 4  | Oct 5 · 7 · 9       | Power & Responsibility        |
| 5  | Oct 12 · 14 · 16    | Simplicity & Complexity       |
| 6  | Oct 19 · 21 · 23    | Change & Continuity           |
| 7  | Oct 26 · 28 · 30    | Freedom & Choice              |
| 8  | Nov 2 · 4 · 6       | Suffering & Growth            |
| 9  | Nov 9 · 11 · 13     | Consciousness & Truth         |
| 10 | Nov 16 · 18 · 20    | Happiness & Fulfilment        |
| 11 | Nov 23 · 25 · 27    | Communication & Understanding |
| 12 | Nov 30 · Dec 2 · 4  | Nature & Interconnectedness   |
| 13 | Dec 7 · 9 · 11      | Cross-theme integration       |
| 14 | Dec 14 · 16 · 18    | Full paper simulation         |

Class timings confirmed before the programme begins. Any class affected by a holiday is rescheduled, not dropped — all forty-two are delivered.

## Fees

Programme fee

~~₹9,999 + GST~~

**First 20 students — 25% off**

**₹7,499 + GST**

Fee covers all 42 classes, all twelve theme guides, evaluation of every script, and one-to-one review sessions. Available online and offline.

## How to enrol

Write or call on WhatsApp at **91000 06330**, or visit **iaswithdr ravi.com**. Offline classes are held near Pillar No. 35, RTC X Roads, Hyderabad 500020. Online students attend the same live classes and receive the same evaluation and one-to-one review.

## Dr C. Ravi Kumar Reddy

MBBS · Three-time UPSC interview appearance · Founder, IAS with Dr Ravi

