Culture shift: On the U.S.'s UNESCO re-entry

UNESCO must get strict with nations exiting and re-entering on **frivolous grounds**

The United States said earlier this week that it was rejoining the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 2017, the Trump administration **withdrew** from the organisation after the Obama administration **ceased** funding, in 2011. The **reason** for the U.S'.s return **is** **ostensibly** 'China', with senior U.S. administration officials **stating** that the U.S.'s absence had helped China gain "more **influence**" in setting the rules around **artificial intelligence** and the **ensuing** technological shifts. **For a change**, this is the first time that 'China' has been **proffered** as a reason for the U.S.'s re-entry into, rather than its exit of, a **multi-lateral treaty**. During the pandemic, in 2020, President Trump announced the U.S.'s **withdrawal** from **funding** the World Health Organization — the year too when he moved to withdraw the U.S. from the **Paris Agreement**. This followed from the Trumpist world view that the U.S. was being **shortchanged** by major **polluters** such as China and India. In the case of WHO, the case was over its 'inadequate' response time to the **gravity** of the pandemic originating in China. **Following** political change, President Joseph Biden has now **brought the U.S. back into the fold of** funding WHO as well as rejoining the climate treaty.

Unlike the 'America First' policies that **propelled** the Trump administration's exits, the U.S.'s UNESCO re-entry **has little to do with** why it exited it **in the first place**, which was, as it was believed, "an **anti**-Israel **bias**". **The U.S.**, **then and now**, **remains** Israel's **staunchest ally** and **does** not recognise Palestine. It is not unreasonable to **infer** that the re-entry is a sign of America's growing **paranoia** about China. It is also appropriate to **recall** that the Reagan administration withdrew from UNESCO in 1984 for, **among other things**, "**advancing** Soviet interests". Developments in AI are slightly different from historical technological developments. Here, product **patents** and their **enforcement** have helped countries such as the U.S. maintain their **edge**, but with AI, China, along with a rising **repertoire** of patents and research publications, has the advantages of a much larger population and a more powerful **surveillance state**. This **feeds into** a cycle of generating greater **troves** of data that in turn feed and improve **machine learning systems** that make its AI far more **formidable**. Unlike other technologies, no country can have a **sustained**, natural edge in AI indefinitely. America might bring in atleast $600 million in **outstanding dues** to the UNESCO but **it is high time** — and countries such as India would do well to **point this out** — that the organisation gets stricter on countries exiting and entering on frivolous grounds, **alongside** framing policies and research that **accommodate** the **tussles** of a **hyper-connected** world.   **[Practice Exercise]**

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

1. **Shift** (noun) – Change, move, swing, modification, alteration परिवर्तन

2. **UNESCO** (noun) – UNESCO stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that promotes international collaboration in education, science, culture, and communication.

3. **Frivolous** (adjective) – Trivial, petty, insignificant, unnecessary, non-serious तुच्छ

4. **Ground** (noun) – Base, reason, rationale, cause आधार

5. **Withdraw** (verb) –Leave, retract, pull out, remove, retreat, depart से अलग हो जाना

6. **Cease** (verb) – Stop, end, terminate, halt, discontinue रोकना

7. **Ostensibly** (adverb) – Apparently, seemingly, supposedly, outwardly, superficially प्रकट रूप से

8. **State** (verb) – Declare, announce, proclaim, express, articulate कहना

9. **Influence** (noun) – power, authority, leverage, sway, weightage, domination प्रभाव

10. **Artificial intelligence** (noun) – Artificial intelligence, or AI, refers to the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. These processes include learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language understanding.

11. **Ensuing** (adjective) – Subsequent, following, succeeding, upcoming, consequent आनेवाला

12. **For a change** (phrase) – For something different, as a break from routine, as a novelty, for a variety परिवर्तन के लिए

13. **Proffer** (verb) – Offer, propose, present, extend, suggest प्रस्ताव करना

14. **Multi-lateral** (adjective) – involving many different countries. बहुपक्षीय

15. **Treaty** (noun) – Agreement, pact, contract, deal, arrangement संधि

16. **Withdrawal** (noun) – departure, pull-out, exit, disengagement. निकासी

17. **Fund** (verb) – provide with money for a particular purpose. धन प्रदान करना

18. **Paris Agreement** (noun) – The Paris Agreement is an international treaty negotiated by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), aiming to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

19. **Shortchange** (verb) – Cheat, defraud, deceive, swindle, trick ठगना, धोखा देना

20. **Polluter** (noun) – a person or thing responsible for contaminating the environment with harmful or poisonous substances. प्रदूषण फैलाने वाला

21. **Gravity** (noun) – Seriousness, severity, magnitude, weightiness, importance गंभीरता

22. **Following** (preposition) – After, subsequent to, succeeding, post के बाद

23. **Bring back into the fold of** (phrase) – to bring someone (back) into a group of people who share common beliefs फिर से सम्मिलित करना

24. **Unlike** (preposition) – Contrary to, different from, dissimilar to, disparate from से भिन्न

25. **Propel** (verb) – Drive, push, impel, prompt, spur प्रेरित करना

26. **Have little to do with** (phrase) – Be unrelated to, be unconnected with, not concern with, have no bearing on का कम सम्बन्ध होना

27. **In the first place** (phrase) – Originally, initially, to begin with, from the start, at the outset सब से पहले

28. **Anti**– (prefix) – Against, opposing, counter, resisting, combating विरोधी

29. **Bias** (noun) – Prejudice, partiality, unfairness, one-sidedness, inequality पक्षपात

30. **Then and now** (phrase) – Over the years, with time, in the past and present तब और अब

31. **Staunchest** (adjective) – Most loyal, most committed, most faithful, firm, steadfast कट्टर

32. **Ally** (noun) – Partner, collaborator, supporter, friend सहयोगी

33. **Infer** (verb) – Conclude, deduce, gather, understand अनुमान लगाना

34. **Paranoia** (noun) – Suspicion, distrust, fear, anxiety, apprehension संदेह/ वहम

35. **Recall** (verb) – Remember, recollect, reminisce, bring to mind याद करना

36. **Among other things** (phrase) – Besides, in addition to, apart from, other than अन्य चीज़ों के अलावा

37. **Advance** (verb) – Promote, develop, improve, enhance, boost बढ़ाना

38. **Patent** (noun) – Licence, copyright, trademark, permit पेटेंट

39. **Enforcement** (noun) – Implementation, execution, application, administration प्रवर्तन

40. **Edge** (noun) – Advantage, upper hand, lead, dominance बढ़त

41. **Repertoire** (noun) – Collection, range, array, assortment संग्रह

42. **Surveillance state** (noun) – A surveillance state refers to a country or government that extensively monitors and retains information about its citizens, often via pervasive technology. निगरानी राज्य

43. **Feed** (into) (verb) – Contribute to, add to, lead to, result in योगदान देना

44. **Trove** (noun) – Store, stockpile, collection, treasure खजाना

45. **Machine learning system** (noun) – Machine learning system is a type of AI that allows a system to learn from data rather than through explicit programming. It can improve its performance or adapt to new circumstances. मशीन सीखने की प्रणाली

46. **Formidable** (adjective) – Impressive, powerful, strong, forceful प्रभावशाली, दुर्जेय

47. **Sustained** (adjective) – Continuous, constant, steady, ongoing निरंतर

48. **Outstanding** (adjective) – Unpaid, due, owed, owing बक़ाया

49. **Dues** (noun) – Obligation, payment, fee, charge बकाया राशि

50. **It is high time** (phrase) – It is the right time, it is about time, it is overdue उचित समय है

51. **Point out** (phrasal verb) – Indicate, show, denote, highlight इशारा करना

52. **Alongside** (preposition) – With, alongside, in company with, together with, in conjunction with साथ में

53. **Accommodate** (verb) – Adjust, adapt, cater, fit, reconcile समायोजित करना

54. **Tussle** (noun) – Struggle, conflict, fight, battle, clash संघर्ष

55. **Hyper-connected** (adjective) – characterized by the widespread or habitual use of devices that have internet connectivity. अत्यधिक जोड़े हुए

Summary of the Editorial

1. The United States has announced it is rejoining the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) after leaving it under the Trump administration in 2017.

2. The original withdrawal occurred due to a perceived "anti-Israel bias", but the reason cited for rejoining is to counter China's growing influence, particularly around artificial intelligence (AI) policies.

3. This is the first instance where the U.S. has reentered a multi-lateral treaty citing China as the reason, as the previous administration often cited China as a reason for exiting such agreements.

4. The Trump administration also pulled funding from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020, accusing it of a slow response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and began the process of withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, alleging unfairness towards the U.S.

5. These actions were a reflection of the Trump administration's "America First" policies.

6. However, under the Biden administration, the U.S. has since returned to funding the WHO and has rejoined the Paris Agreement.

7. Unlike the initial reasons for leaving UNESCO, the U.S.'s return does not directly relate to the issues of perceived bias towards Israel.

8. The editorial suggests the U.S. return to UNESCO is driven by concerns over China's growing influence and dominance in the AI sector.

9. It's noted that the U.S. withdrew from UNESCO in 1984 due to the organization allegedly "advancing Soviet interests", showing a historical pattern of withdrawal and reentry based on geopolitical tensions.

10. In the current context, China's rise in AI is attributed to a larger population, stronger surveillance state, and increased number of patents and research publications.

11. AI differs from historical technological advancements where patents and enforcement gave countries like the U.S. a sustained edge; in AI, the advantage is transient.

12. This scenario leads to China generating larger data troves that feed and enhance its AI capabilities.

13. The U.S.'s return to UNESCO might result in a significant financial contribution, as it owes at least $600 million in outstanding dues.

14. The editorial argues that UNESCO needs to establish stricter rules to prevent nations from exiting and reentering based on whims or political tides.

15. The editorial suggests countries like India should push for these changes and for the creation of policies and research to address the challenges of a highly interconnected world.

Practice Exercise: SSC Pattern Based

1. **What were the motivations behind the U.S. rejoining UNESCO as indicated in the passage**?
   A. The U.S. felt it was being shortchanged by other countries in terms of funding UNESCO.
   B. The U.S. aims to increase its influence over the regulations concerning artificial intelligence and technological shifts, which were perceived to be increasingly influenced by China during the U.S.'s absence.
   C. The U.S. was eager to repair its international image after the controversial withdrawal in 2017.
   D. The U.S. desired to promote worldwide education, science, and culture again through direct engagement.

2. **Based on the passage, how has the U.S.'s participation in multilateral treaties changed between the Trump and Biden administrations**?   **[Editorial page]**
   A. The Trump administration preferred to withdraw from multilateral treaties, while the Biden administration seems more inclined to rejoin or fund them.
   B. Both the Trump and Biden administrations showed consistent support for multilateral treaties such as WHO and the Paris Agreement.
   C. The Trump administration was eager to join multilateral treaties, contrary to the approach taken by the Biden administration.
   D. Both the Trump and Biden administrations showed a similar trend of withdrawing from multilateral treaties.

3. **What could be inferred as a likely reason for the U.S.'s re-entry into UNESCO, according to the passage**?
   A. The U.S.'s re-entry is a gesture to strengthen its ties with Israel.
   B. The U.S.'s re-entry is motivated by its growing concerns about China's advancements in AI.
   C. The U.S.'s re-entry is due to its regret over its previous exit based on "an anti-Israel bias."
   D. The U.S.'s re-entry is a step to ensure stricter rules on countries exiting and entering on frivolous grounds.

4. **Based on the passage, which of the following statements best describes the difference between AI and other technological developments**?
   A. Unlike other technologies, AI is not impacted by product patents and their enforcement.
   B. Unlike other technologies, AI can be improved and made more formidable by larger populations and powerful surveillance states.
   C. Unlike other technologies, AI cannot help any country maintain a sustained, natural edge indefinitely.
   D. Unlike other technologies, AI does not require large troves of data to improve its machine learning systems.

5. **What is the tone of the passage?**
   A. Sardonic

B. Criticizing

C. Optimistic

D. Neutral

Comprehension

A key to the success of any welfare programme is the _____1_____ in its implementation. In the 17 years since the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has been implemented, studies have asserted its net positive impact in the rural areas. From reducing penury through providing off-season employment, and _____2_____ improving household consumption among the invariably poor citizens who avail the scheme, to acting as insurance during monsoon deficient seasons, besides allowing for greater food security through increased productivity helped by the works generated, the scheme continues to be a robust welfare tool. This was even clearer during the pandemic, when thousands of migrant workers who left urban areas due to the lockdowns took up work under the MGNREGS in rural areas where demand for the _____3_____ but _____4_____ work peaked. There is of course the case that the scheme has still not transcended into creating more useful assets beyond roads and irrigation canals and requires broadbasing and better implementation. But it must be said that the Union government's treatment of the scheme has graduated from a case of _____5_____ acceptance of its need because of its popular impact to treating it as a fiscal burden

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate combinations of words

6. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 1**.
   A. Moderation
   B. Introspection
   C. Conviction
   D. Enumeration

7. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 2**.
   A. Perhaps
   B. Thereby
   C. Often
   D. Altogether

8. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 3**.
   A. Menial
   B. Moral
   C. Ethical
   D. Potential

9. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 4**.
   A. Populous
   B. Arduous
   C. Ambitious
   D. Precarious

10. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 5**.
    A. Warm
    B. Impression
    C. Negligible
    D. Lukewarm

11. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. Reports that the Rajasthan government is contemplating amendments to the Right To Education (RTE) rules to introduce three public exams bet-ween classes I and VIII are a matter of concern.
    Q. In fact, the RTE Act had affirmed the mandatory promotion of students till class VIII.
    R. The move flies in the face of attempts to reduce stress on students, much of which is attributed to exams and the fear of failing in them
    S. Having public exams before this stage neither fulfils any desirable objective nor conforms to modern pedagogy.
    A. SPQR   B.QRPS   C.SQPR   D.PRQS

12. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. It's okay to allow people to perhaps "use" your goodwill, resources, time and abilities as long as you experience it as sharing and not an intrusion or demand that affects you negatively.
    Q. Boundaries are essential but so damn difficult to put into place because it means saying "no" and that requires courage, firmness and self-love.
    R. Giving and sharing always feels good, but so often we "overdo" it to please others or do so at the cost of ourselves.
    S. We are aware that people will take advantage of kindness, niceness and meekness.
    A. SPRQ   B.QPSR   C.QSRP   D.SPQR

13. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. It became an official demand of the Indian National Congress in 1935 and was officially adopted in the Lucknow session in April 1936 presided by Jawaharlal Nehru, who also drafted the Objectives Resolution.
    Q. The proceedings of the Constituent Assembly show the richness of ideas that characterised it.
    R. The Constitution of India was drafted by the Constituent Assembly.
    S. The idea was initially proposed in December 1934 by M.N. Roy, a pioneer of the Communist movement in India and an advocate of radical democracy.
    A. SRPQ   B.RSPQ   C.RQPS   D.SPRQ

14. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. This can be particularly challenging in the case of emerging technologies,
    Q. where change is rapid and constant
    R. Rulemaking is an arduous task
    S. Oftentimes, the words in a gazette take a form of their own in the real world, diverging from the intent
    A. RSPQ   B.SRQP   C.QSRP   D.PQSR

15. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**

   P. Now, the temple, which was built by Rajendra Chola I and expanded by Kulottunga Chola and Vikrama Chola, is emerging anew from destruction, thanks to a detailed project report prepared by

   Q. The temple tower was overgrown with vegetation, the outer wall was damaged, and the Durgai Amman shrine was derelict, with its roof collapsed

   R. IIT Madras and commissioned by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department for its restoration, and to the copious financial assistance from a Coimbatore-based donor, who wishes not to be named

   S. Even two years ago, the 12th Century Apatsahayeswarar Temple at Tukkachchi near Kumbakonam resembled the abandoned Angkor Wat in Cambodia

   A. PQRS   B.QRPS   C.SQPR   D.PQSR

Directions: Find out the error, if any –

16. The software takes (A)/ only one seconds (B)/ to generate tables and (C)/ graphs out of raw data. (D)

17. There was a huge (A)/ crowd as the famous actor (B)/ was invited to inauguration the function. (C)/ No Error. (D)

18. In appreciation of (A)/ their hard work, the (B)/ company gave mementos to all its employees. (C)/ No Error. (D)

Directions: In the following questions, out of the four alternatives, choose the one which can be substituted for the given words/sentence.

19. **A wealthy , powerful person in business or industry**

   A. Rebut
   B. Impiety
   C. Obsequies
   D. Tycoon

20. **One who is a habitual drunker**

   A. Patrimony
   B. Toper
   C. Memories
   D. Rhetoric

Answers

1. B   2.A   3.B   4. C   5. B   6. C   7. B   8.A   9.B   10.D   11.D
12. A   13.B   14.A   15.C   16.B   17.C   18.D   19.D   20.B   **Practice Exercise]**

Explanations

1. B) The passage cites senior U.S. administration officials stating that the return to UNESCO is due to the perceived increased influence of China over the rules concerning artificial intelligence and other technological changes, in the absence of the U.S.

2. A) According to the passage, the Trump administration withdrew from or ceased funding for UNESCO, WHO, and the Paris Agreement. On the contrary, the Biden administration has taken steps to rejoin or fund these entities, indicating a shift in U.S. policy regarding multilateral treaties.

3. B) Option B is correct. The passage suggests that the U.S.'s re-entry into UNESCO may be driven by its growing concerns about China's advancements in AI, rather than any issues related to Israel. While the other options are mentioned in the passage, they are not inferred as the main reason for the U.S.'s re-entry.

4. C) Option C is correct. The passage explains that no country can have a sustained, natural edge in AI indefinitely, which sets it apart from other technological developments. While Option B is also mentioned in the passage, it does not capture the full breadth of the difference between AI and other technologies as stated in the passage. Options A and D are not supported by the passage.

5. B) The tone of the passage is criticizing. The author criticizes the U.S.'s policy of entering and exiting international organizations like UNESCO based on strategic interests or other reasons. Furthermore, the author criticizes UNESCO for not being stricter with nations that do so and suggests that it needs to adapt to the changing realities of a hyper-connected world.

6. **Conviction** (noun) – a very strong opinion or belief प्रबल मत या आस्था

   - **Moderation** (noun) – temperance, restraint, balance, control, abstinence संयम

   - **Introspection** (noun) – Self-examination, self-analysis, self-scrutiny, self-observation आत्मनिरीक्षण

   - **Enumeration** (noun) – counting, tallying, listing, cataloguing गणना

7. **Thereby** (adverb) – thus, therefore, in this way, consequently, hence जिसके चलते

   - **Perhaps** (adverb) – Maybe, Possibly, Conceivably, Potentially, Perchance शायद

   - **Often** (adverb) – frequently, regularly, repeatedly, habitually अक्सर

   - **Altogether** (adverb) – Completely, entirely, totally, wholly, fully पूरी तरह से

8. **Menial** (adjective) – Unskilled, tedious, basic, lowly अकुशल

   - **Moral** (adjective) – Ethical, righteous, principled, virtuous नैतिक

   - **Ethical** (adjective) – Moral, upright, honorable, responsible नीतिपरक

   - **Potential** (adjective) – Possible, likely, prospective, latent संभावित

9. **Arduous** (adjective) – Difficult, hard, laborious, demanding, strenuous, onerous कठिन

    *   **Populous** (adjective) – Crowded, densely populated, heavily populated, teeming बहुजन

    *   **Ambitious** (adjective) – Aspiring, bold, audacious, enterprising, determined महत्वाकांक्षी

    *   **Precarious** (adjective) – Uncertain, unstable, insecure, risky, perilous अनिश्चित

10. **Lukewarm** (adjective) – not showing much interest; not keen उदासीन

    *   **Warm** (adjective) – friendly, cordial, genial, affectionate, welcoming गर्मजोशी

    *   **Negligible** (adjective) – insignificant, trivial, minimal, minor, unimportant नगण्य

    *   **Impression** (noun) – perception, view, opinion, belief, feeling छाप

11. **PRQS**

    Reports that the Rajasthan government is contemplating amendments to the Right To Education (RTE) rules to introduce three public exams bet-ween classes I and VIII are a matter of concern. The move flies in the face of attempts to reduce stress on students, much of which is attributed to exams and the fear of failing in them. In fact, the RTE Act had affirmed the mandatory promotion of students till class VIII. Having public exams before this stage neither fulfils any desirable objective nor conforms to modern pedagogy.

12. **SPRQ**

    We are aware that people will take advantage of kindness, niceness and meekness. It's okay to allow people to perhaps "use" your goodwill, resources, time and abilities as long as you experience it as sharing and not an intrusion or demand that affects you negatively. Giving and sharing always feels good, but so often we "overdo" it to please others or do so at the cost of ourselves. Boundaries are essential but so damn difficult to put into place because it means saying "no" and that requires courage, firmness and self-love.

13. **RSPQ**

    The Constitution of India was drafted by the Constituent Assembly. The idea was initially proposed in December 1934 by M.N. Roy, a pioneer of the Communist movement in India and an advocate of radical democracy. It became an official demand of the Indian National Congress in 1935 and was officially adopted in the Lucknow session in April 1936 presided by Jawaharlal Nehru, who also drafted the Objectives Resolution. The proceedings of the Constituent Assembly show the richness of ideas that characterised it.
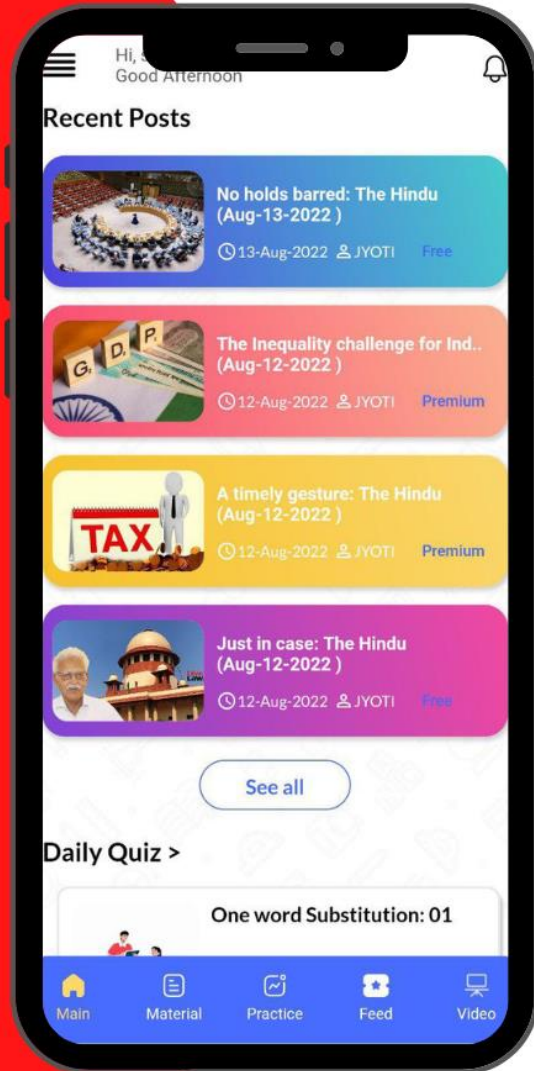
14. **RSPQ**

    Rulemaking is an arduous task. Oftentimes, the words in a gazette take a form of their own in the real world, diverging from the intent. This can be particularly challenging in the case of emerging technologies, where change is rapid and constant.

15. **SQPR**

    Even two years ago, the 12th Century Apatsahayeswarar Temple at Tukkachchi near Kumbakonam resembled the abandoned Angkor Wat in Cambodia. The temple tower was overgrown with vegetation, the outer wall was damaged, and the Durgai Amman shrine was

derelict, with its roof collapsed. Now, the temple, which was built by Rajendra Chola I and expanded by Kulottunga Chola and Vikrama Chola, is emerging anew from destruction, thanks to a detailed project report prepared by IIT Madras and commissioned by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department for its restoration, and to the copious financial assistance from a Coimbatore-based donor, who wishes not to be named.

16. (B) 'seconds' के बदले 'second' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि 'one' के साथ केवल Singular Countable Noun का प्रयोग होता है।

17. (C) 'inauguration' के बदले 'inaugurate' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि 'inauguration' (उद्घाटन) एक Noun है जबकि 'inaugurate' (उद्घाटन करना) एक Verb है, और Part (C) में 'to' का प्रयोग है जो अपने बाद V1 लेता है। अर्थात् 'to inaugurate' का प्रयोग होगा।

18. (D) No Error.

19. **Rebut** – Opposing arguments खण्डन करना

   - **Impiety** – Lack of respect or religious reverence नास्तिकता
   - **Obsequies** – Funeral rites अंतिम संस्कार
   - **Tycoon** – A wealthy , powerful person in business or industry व्यवसाय-प्रमुख

20. **Patrimony** – Property inherited from one`s father or ancestor विरासत

   - **Sot/Toper** – One who is a habitual drunker पियक्कड़
   - **Memories** – Memorable recollection of the experience of one's life यादें
   - **Rhetoric** – The art of elegant speech of writing लफ्फाजी