

HOW TO HANDLE YOUR BIO-DATA IN CIVIL SERVICES INTERVIEW

By Manoj K. Jha

Bio data provides first-hand knowledge about you to the members of the interview board. You have to own everything what you have written as the description of yourself- your place of birth, place of residence, place and company where you work/worked, your education, specializations, achievements, hobbies, preferences of services and states, choice of optional paper, etc. along with some details about your parents. That is why half or even more of your interview pertain to your bio-data. Your bio-data offers the interview board clues about suitable questions for you.

An interview board starts the interview with your bio-data to give you time to adjust and put yourself at ease before a grilling session picks up. It is done to normalize you.

Nevertheless, you cannot be casual about your bio-data because the Civil Services interview is a test of your personality and not your bookish or theoretical knowledge alone. Personality is about your practical knowledge and understanding plus several other attributes such as presence of mind and good analytical skill, values like honesty and integrity, firm conviction with flexibility to accommodate logical arguments, alternate views, differences, accepting mistakes and ignorance wherever required, manners and etiquettes, sense of humour and above all good communication skill.

To get an idea, have a look at some of the questions asked by the board members based on candidate's bio-data in previous years:

Hobby as Music

- You have written listening to music as one of your hobbies. What kind of music do you like? Do you like classical music?
- When exactly do you listen music - when you are sad or happy?
- How do you feel while listening to the music?

Hobby as Painting

- So, you paint. What medium do you use?
- So, what is unique about water colours?
- What is that one thing about water colours which attracted you?
- Is patience required to let the paint dry.

Hobby as Reading

- Have you read Bapu's "My experiments with the truth"? (Reading Books was mentioned as hobby)
- Bapu in South Africa used to travel first class but when in India he started travelling in third class. Sarojini Naidu on this said that it takes alot to keep Bapu poor. Comment.

- Why do you think he used to do that?
- Bapu used to use charkha, why?
- Bapu was called an effective communicator; can you explain the reasons for that?

Why do you want to become an IAS officer?

- You are an engineer. Then you took up marketing and have been working for long, why IAS now? What motivated you?
- That is fine but what will you do if you get into an allied service like the IRS, IFS, IPS, etc?
- What are the constraints in which an administrator functions today?

Important clues for handling bio-data:

1. Name- Meaning, any other significance.
2. Place of birth/residence and work/ home state - Some knowledge about history and culture, geography, economy, mainly the most important aspects.
3. Education and Profession-
 - (a) Why leaving your professional area to join Civil Servicers?
 - (b) How will your professional experience help in Civil Services?
 - (c) Civil Services is the domain of generalist, why to select a specialist like you?
 - (d) Higher qualification is more useful for teaching and research and development, coming to Civil Services is a kind of internal brain drain. What is your comment?
4. Hobbies and extra-curricular activities- The less you mention while filling your application form, better it is. You should be honest and focused in mentioning hobbies and area of interest. However, it is now done. Your DAF is already with UPSC. So, you need to have a fairly good level of basic knowledge in the areas which you have mentioned in your application, such as yoga and pranayam, sports, music, poems, singing, playing an instrument, cooking, social work, star watching/gazing, astronomy, numerology, palmistry, vastu, painting, films or whatsoever.
5. Knowledge about details mentioned related to your parents profession/occupation, etc.
6. Be ready to defend your choice of services and states logically.
7. Optionals-Why it differs from your core educational subject, most basic tenets and thinkers of your subject, contemporary issues related to that, if any.
8. Your personal opinion on contemporary issues related to your state, district, optional, services preferred, etc.
9. Category- If you are a woman, if you belong to minority, if you belong to SCs/STs/OBCs community, you must have good understanding about socio-economic problems related to your community.
10. All glaring points of bio-data/U-turns must be logically explained if needed.