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UPSC CSE Topper Rajeshwari Suve M Shares Her Winning Strategy

Rajeshwari Suve M from Madurai, Tamil Nadu, has emerged as one of the top achievers in the Civil Services Examination 2025 by securing All India Rank 2. What makes her achievement particularly remarkable is that she accomplished this feat while serving a full-time job of Deputy Collector in Tamil Nadu.

Her journey to success was far from smooth. After completing her engineering degree in Chennai in 2018, Rajeshwari appeared for the UPSC Civil Services Examination four consecutive times without success. Instead of letting these setbacks discourage her, she treated each attempt as a learning opportunity. With perseverance, disciplined preparation, and a refined strategy, she finally achieved one of the highest ranks in the country in her fifth attempt.

In an exclusive interaction with Senior Journalist Chandan Kumar Chaudhary for Employment News, Rajeshwari shared insights from her journey and offered valuable advice for aspirants preparing for one of India's most challenging examinations.

Q. When did you first decide to pursue a career in the Civil Services? Was there a particular moment that turned this idea into a firm goal?

A: The idea of joining the Civil Services took shape during the final year of my graduation. My parents were the first to encourage me to consider this path. When I began exploring the syllabus and understanding the vast diversity of subjects it covered, I realised that the examination offered a unique opportunity to gain a holistic understanding of society. More importantly, I was drawn to the scope for meaningful contribution to society through public service. Gradually, what started as a suggestion from my parents transformed into a clear and determined goal.

Q. Could you tell us about your family background and educational journey?

A: I am a native of Madurai, Tamil Nadu. My father, Mr. Murugadoss, is a businessman, and my mother, Mrs. Nagarani, is an Associate Professor. My brother, Kumaraselvan, is a doctor. I completed my schooling at SBOA Matriculation Higher Secondary School, and later pursued my engineering degree from Vel Tech Multi Tech Engineering College in Chennai.

Q. How did you structure your preparation at the macro level across Prelims, Mains and the Interview stage?

A: My preparation strategy was divided clearly across the three stages of the examination. For the Preliminary Examination, I relied primarily on NCERT textbooks, previous year questions (PYQs) and regular practice through test series. For the Mains Examination, the focus shifted towards answer-writing practice, value addition to answers, and strengthening my optional subject. I also ensured regular writing practice by attempting one essay every week and solving one or two Ethics case studies daily. Equally important was revision. After every test, I carefully analysed feedback and revised my preparation plan accordingly.

Q. Were there any particularly interesting questions during your personality test?

A: Yes, the Board asked several questions related to my experience as a Deputy Collector in Dindigul during my training period. They were keen to understand the lessons I had learned from working in administration. Another question revolved around the areas of governance that I would find most interesting if I joined the All India Services. These questions allowed me to reflect on my field experience and connect it with broader administrative responsibilities.



Rajeshwari Suve M
All India Rank 2, UPSC CSE 2025

Q. What were the core resources you relied upon, and how did you avoid the problem of resource overload?

A: I tried to keep my resources limited and focused throughout my preparation. For the Preliminary Examination, I relied mainly on NCERT textbooks, previous years' question papers, and regular practice through test series to strengthen both conceptual clarity and exam temperament. For the Ethics paper and my optional subject, Sociology, I referred to standard study materials and notes that helped me build conceptual understanding and organise my answers effectively. Alongside this, daily newspaper reading formed an important part of my routine to stay updated on current affairs and develop analytical perspectives. The key to avoiding resource overload was to stick to a few reliable sources and revise them multiple times, rather than constantly adding new material. Regular revision and consistent practice helped me consolidate my preparation more effectively.

Q. What techniques helped you improve accuracy in Prelims MCQs and handle the unpredictability of CSAT?

A: Maintaining a calm and composed approach during the examination was very important. I worked on logical guessing techniques, time management, and continuous practice. A key part of my preparation involved analysing previous year questions to understand patterns and question framing. I also regularly evaluated my strengths and weaknesses so that I could improve areas where my accuracy was lower.

Q. How did you structure your answers for the Mains Examination?

A: My approach to answer writing was quite systematic. First, I tried to clearly understand the demand of the question. The answer usually began with a brief introduction, followed by a structured body with clear headings and subheadings. Wherever appropriate, I included diagrams, examples, or relevant facts to enrich the answer. Finally, I concluded with a solution-oriented or forward-looking perspective. With consistent practice, I was able to complete 250-word answers within seven to eight minutes.

Q. What was your strategy for Ethics and Essay papers?

A: For Ethics and Essays, I maintained notes of real-life examples, inspirational stories, and case studies collected

from online sources and newspapers. Whenever relevant, I used these examples to make my answers more authentic and relatable. The key was to place them appropriately so that they strengthened the argument rather than appearing forced.

Q. How did you remain composed and articulate balanced opinions during the interview, especially on sensitive issues?

A: My approach was to analyse issues carefully and reason through them logically. Rather than taking extreme positions, I tried to present a balanced and well-considered perspective by weighing different viewpoints before arriving at a conclusion. This helped me stay calm and articulate nuanced opinions during the interaction with the Board.

Q. What habits helped you stay motivated and avoid burnout during the long preparation journey?

A: Maintaining a healthy routine played an important role in sustaining motivation. I followed a regular sleep cycle of around seven hours and practised yoga and meditation for about half an hour every morning.

Equally important was staying connected with positive and supportive people—family members, friends, and well-wishers—who helped me remain motivated during difficult phases.



Q. Looking back, which practice proved to be the most game-changing in your preparation?

A: One practice that made a significant difference was focusing on previous year questions (PYQs) right from the early stages of preparation. They helped me understand the nature of the examination, the pattern of questions, and the depth of preparation required. Another misconception I would like to address is the belief that one must move to Delhi or join a particular institute to clear the UPSC Examination. With the availability of quality resources and disciplined preparation, success can be achieved from anywhere.

Q. Finally, what advice would you like to give to aspirants preparing for the Civil Services Examination?

A: My advice to aspirants would be to adopt a focused, PYQ-driven and feedback-oriented preparation strategy. Regularly analysing mistakes and learning from them is crucial for steady improvement. The Civil Services Examination is as much a test of patience and discipline as it is of knowledge. Therefore, stay consistent, trust the process, and keep refining your approach—because in the long run, perseverance and clarity of strategy make all the difference.

(The interviewer is Editor of New India Samachar)

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