

Q.1) "It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong." – Jeremy Bentham. What do you understand by the above quote? Bring out its significance in the context of public policy making. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Jeremy Bentham, the founder of **classical utilitarianism**, proposed a **teleological** moral framework that evaluates actions based on their outcomes, specifically in terms of the happiness or welfare they generate for the majority.

Body

"Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do." - Jeremy Bentham.

Explanation of the Quote

The quote means that moral rightness depends solely on the **utility** or benefit an action provides to the **largest number** of people. It shifts the moral compass from individual virtue to consequential outcomes, emphasizing measurable well-being over abstract ideals.

Significance in Policy Making

- 1. Guides Welfare-Oriented Decisions:** Policies prioritizing public health, education, and social security directly follow this utilitarian principle.
Example: The **National Food Security Act** aims to ensure nutrition for over two-thirds of India's population.
- 2. Democratic Legitimacy:** In a democracy, prioritizing the majority's welfare provides ethical and political validation to governance.
- 3. Resource Allocation Efficiency:** Encourages distribution of limited resources to benefit the largest number.
Example: Prioritizing rural electrification projects over non-essential urban luxuries.
- 4. Moral Grounding for Compromise:** Offers a reasoned method to resolve policy dilemmas by maximizing collective happiness.
Example: **COVID-19 lockdowns** prioritized saving lives over short-term economic interests.
- 5. Evaluative Tool for Public Servants:** Guides bureaucrats to assess policy impact in terms of societal benefit.

Limitations / Counter-Arguments

- 1. May undermine minority rights :** Prioritizing majority welfare can suppress or neglect marginalized communities.
Example: Displacement of tribal communities for dam projects in the name of larger energy benefits.
- 2. Ethical dilution in implementation:** Overemphasis on aggregate outcomes may compromise justice and human dignity.
Example: Quota reductions for efficiency may marginalize historically disadvantaged groups.

3. **Predictive uncertainty:** Consequentialist decisions rely on outcomes that are not always foreseeable.

Example: A large infrastructure project might appear beneficial but create unforeseen environmental damage.

4. **Ignores moral duty: Deontological ethics** like **Kant's** emphasize doing what is right irrespective of the outcome.

Example: Mass surveillance may ensure safety but violate citizens' rights.

Conclusion

Bentham's teleological utilitarianism provides a **practical, outcome-based lens** for policy-making. However, ethical governance demands that this approach be balanced with **constitutional safeguards**—such as justice, inclusivity, and respect for individual rights—to ensure holistic welfare in a pluralistic society.

Q.2) "The unexamined life is not worth living." – Socrates. What do you understand by this quote? Discuss its relevance in the context of self-awareness and ethical conduct in public life. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Socrates believed that **self-questioning** is key to a meaningful life. In public life, this means constantly checking one's values and actions to ensure ethical governance and personal integrity.

Body

Explanation of the Quote: The quote implies that a life lived without questioning one's motives, values, and choices lacks depth and integrity. Socrates believed wisdom begins with admitting ignorance and striving to understand one's role and actions through critical reasoning and dialogue.

Example: During his trial in **399 BCE**, **Socrates** refused to abandon his commitment to truth, even when it meant facing death—demonstrating his belief in living an examined life.

Significance of Self-Awareness and Ethical Conduct in Public Life

1. **Preventing ethical erosion:** Civil servants must regularly evaluate their decisions to avoid moral compromise.
Example: **Justice H.R. Khanna's** dissent during the Emergency (1975) upheld constitutional morality despite political pressure.
2. **Aligning actions with public service values:** Leaders who introspect remain connected to the ideals of service and justice.
Example: **Gandhiji's** daily self-reflection ("My life is my message") kept him committed to truth and non-violence.
3. **Building moral courage:** Ethical resilience stems from inner clarity developed through self-examination.

4. **Challenging unjust systems:** Critical self-reflection helps resist unethical but normalized practices.
Example: **Bhishma and Drona's silence** in the Mahabharata—their unexamined loyalty perpetuated injustice.
5. **Fostering institutional integrity:** Reflective officers set precedents that strengthen ethical culture.

However, while self-examination is crucial, excessive reflection can also create challenges in public administration.

1. **Delayed decision-making:** Excessive introspection can hinder swift action in crises.
Example: Over-analysis may delay disaster relief due to bureaucratic hesitation.
2. **Idealism vs. practical governance:** Ground realities often require pragmatic compromises.
Example: **Kautilya's Arthashastra** justifies tough choices (e.g., surveillance) for state security.

Conclusion

Socrates' message is timeless. Public servants must reflect on their actions to stay ethical and just. As **Carl Jung** said, "**Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart.**"

Q.3) Discuss the relevance of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophical and ethical vision in addressing the moral and cultural challenges of contemporary society. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore, Nobel laureate poet, philosopher, and reformer, envisioned a world where **freedom, beauty, and truth** guided humanity. His timeless ideals offer ethical direction in today's fragmented and morally disoriented world.

Body

Tagore's Philosophical and Ethical Vision

1. **Universal Humanism:** Tagore believed in the essential unity of mankind, urging us to "**leave out the walls that divide**" and embrace shared humanity.
2. **Holistic Education:** He advocated nurturing the intellect, soul, and creativity. "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence."
3. **Spiritual Freedom:** Tagore valued inner growth over blind tradition, believing that joy and self-awareness were keys to true liberation and personal fulfillment.
4. **Harmony with Nature:** He considered nature sacred, offering peace and emotional balance. Respecting it helps ground us in humility and gratitude.
5. **Cultural Synthesis:** He supported blending Indian traditions with global ideas, encouraging open exchange rather than cultural isolation.

6. **Art as Ethical Expression:** He saw art as a path to emotional maturity and empathy, helping societies become more just and humane.

Modern Relevance in Cultural and Moral Context

1. **Promoting Religious Tolerance:** In times of rising division, his inclusive spirituality encourages harmony.
Example: Interfaith platforms like the **India Love Project** foster mutual respect in polarized spaces.
2. **Human-Centric Nationalism:** He warned against aggressive nationalism and stood for compassion-led patriotism.
Example: Initiatives promoting **civic responsibility** and constitutional values among youth echo this inclusive spirit.
3. **Ecological Consciousness:** His reverence for nature aligns with current **ecological ethics**.
Example: **Save Mollem campaign** shows rising public concern for environmental justice.
4. **Freedom in Education:** His ideas support learner-driven, **value-based systems** which addresses today's Rote learning issue.
Example: **NEP 2020's flexible approach** mirrors his vision for holistic education.
5. **Art and Culture as Healing Tools:** He believed in art's power to unite and heal society.
Example: Initiatives like **Artists Unite** promote empathy through cultural expression.

Conclusion

Tagore's vision is not merely idealistic—it is deeply practical for rebuilding fractured societies. His dream, "**Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,**" remains a moral compass for the world.

Q.4) Administrative discretion is necessary for effective governance, but it can also lead to ethical lapses. Discuss the ethical concerns associated with excessive discretion in public administration with suitable examples. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Administrative discretion refers to the authority granted to public officials to **make decisions** within the bounds of law **based on their judgment**. It ensures flexibility, but without checks, it risks misuse. Balancing discretion with accountability is key to ethical and effective public administration.

Body

Why Administrative Discretion is Necessary

In a diverse and rapidly changing democracy like India, administrative discretion helps bridge the gap between rigid rules and practical governance realities.

1. **Addressing Complex and Dynamic Situations:** Officials must respond to emergencies or policy gaps where rigid rules may not apply.

Example: During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, district magistrates used discretion to enforce lockdowns suited to local conditions.

2. **Efficient Implementation of Welfare Policies:** Discretion allows tailoring schemes to individual or regional needs.

Example: Local officers prioritizing flood relief distribution based on on-ground assessments rather than pre-set rules.

3. **Innovative and Responsive Governance:** It empowers officers to innovate and adapt based on context.

Example: A collector in **Dantewada** started "**Cafe Azadi**" to rehabilitate surrendered Naxals, using discretionary funds creatively.

How Excessive Discretion Can Lead to Ethical Lapses

However, when discretion is exercised without sufficient checks and transparency, it can lead to unethical conduct and institutional erosion.

1. **Favoritism and Rent-Seeking:** Lack of oversight allows for unfair advantages to select individuals or groups.

Example: Discretionary allocation of **mining leases in Karnataka** led to a major scam and loss of public trust.

2. **Discrimination and Bias:** Subjective judgment may be influenced by caste, gender, or political leanings.

Example: A recent case in a northern state where ration card approvals were disproportionately denied to minority applicants.

3. **Bypassing Due Process:** Excessive discretion may override legal norms, compromising justice.

Example: Arbitrary demolitions of street vendors' stalls without notice or rehabilitation in urban localities.

As emphasized by 2nd ARC, unfettered discretion in the hands of officials leads to an erosion of fairness, predictability, and transparency.

4. **Reduced Transparency and Accountability:** Unregulated discretion weakens citizens' ability to question decisions.

Example: Discretionary transfers of teachers in rural areas without merit led to unequal education access and demotivation.

5. **Undermining Institutional Fairness:** Inconsistent application of rules fosters public distrust and demoralizes honest officers.

Example: A whistleblower IAS officer in Haryana faced punitive transfers after exposing irregularities, highlighting discretionary misuse.

Solutions to Regulate Discretion Ethically

Addressing these concerns requires a multi-pronged approach that balances necessary autonomy with institutional safeguards.

1. **Clear Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** Framing detailed rules can reduce subjectivity while retaining flexibility.

Example: Digital dashboards for scheme implementation with real-time checks can guide discretion and ensure uniformity.

2. **Strengthening Oversight Mechanisms:** Empower institutions like Lokayuktas, vigilance bodies, and internal audits to review discretionary decisions.

Example: **Rajasthan's "Public Hearing Day"** holds officers publicly accountable for local-

level decisions.

The 2nd ARC recommends institutionalizing internal oversight and grievance redressal for enhanced accountability.

- 3. Ethical Training and Citizen-Centric Culture:** Promoting values of integrity and empathy in bureaucracy can curb misuse.

Example: The "**Mission Karmayogi**" reform aims to instill ethical reasoning and citizen focus among civil servants.

Conclusion

Administrative discretion must be exercised with **fairness, clarity, and integrity**. When grounded in ethical principles and institutional checks, it becomes a powerful instrument for good governance in a democracy.

Q.5) In recent times, the rise of digital surveillance and data misuse poses serious ethical challenges. How should public institutions balance national security, privacy rights, and transparency in this context? (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Digital surveillance involves monitoring digital data for governance or security. As per **Freedom House (2023)**, over **70% of internet users** are under regimes using **advanced surveillance**, raising critical concerns about privacy and overreach.

Body

Ethical Dilemmas in Digital Surveillance and Data Misuse

Public institutions today face the difficult task of maintaining security without undermining democratic values and individual rights.

- 1. Conflict Between Security and Privacy:** National security measures may infringe upon individual privacy and freedoms.
Example: The **Pegasus case** showed surveillance of activists and journalists without clear legal backing.
- 2. Lack of Informed Consent:** Citizens often don't know how their data is gathered or used, breaching autonomy.
Example: Many **pandemic-era apps** collected sensitive data with vague privacy policies.
- 3. Opacity and Trust Deficit:** Hidden surveillance programs reduce public confidence in institutions.
Example: **Facial recognition** used in public areas without public or legislative debate.
- 4. Exclusion and Discrimination:** Surveillance tools can reinforce bias, targeting specific communities unfairly.
Example: **Predictive policing systems** have been shown to disproportionately affect minorities.

5. **Weak Data Protection Frameworks:** Absence of clear legal safeguards allows potential data misuse.

The **2nd ARC** underlines the need for ethical guardrails in adopting digital technologies.

Balancing Security, Privacy, and Transparency

A calibrated approach rooted in democratic accountability and ethical reasoning is the need of the hour.

1. **Legal Safeguards and Oversight Mechanisms:** Surveillance must have legal basis, judicial approval, and independent checks.

Example: The **2023 Digital Personal Data Protection Act** outlines limits on state access.

2. **Institutional Transparency and Public Disclosures:** Agencies should release regular updates on surveillance practices.

Example: **US intelligence agencies** issue public annual surveillance reports as a transparency measure.

3. **Privacy by Design and Ethical Tech Use:** Digital platforms must minimize data use and protect user identities.

Example: **CoWIN** used encryption and access controls during the vaccine campaign.

4. **Digital Literacy and Public Awareness:** Citizens should understand how their data is collected and protected.

Example: **"Digital India"** can include data ethics in its outreach and training.

5. **Independent Regulators and Accountability:** Strong, autonomous data protection bodies can check misuse.

Example: A **GDPR-style data authority** in India would enforce accountability and deterrence.

Conclusion

As **Christian Lous Lange** warned, **"Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master."**

This dichotomy lies at the heart of debates on digital surveillance, demanding balance, accountability, and a rights-based approach.