

Q.1) Conscience acts as an inner moral compass, often clashing with external authority or rules. How can public servants balance personal conscience with institutional duties? (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Conscience refers to an individual's inner sense of right and wrong. In public service, it may conflict with official orders or institutional expectations, leading to ethical dilemmas that require careful navigation.

"Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe... the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." – Immanuel Kant

Body

Conscience as a Moral Compass in Public Service

Navigating between personal morality and official obligation is one of the most difficult tasks for a public servant. The following points explain why conscience is central and how it can support ethical governance.

- 1. Foundation of Ethical Judgment:** Conscience helps officials evaluate the morality of their actions.
Example: Whistleblower **Ashok Khemka's** repeated transfers were driven by his refusal to approve questionable land deals.
- 2. Prevention of Blind Obedience:** It guards against unethical compliance with flawed authority.
Example: Officers refusing to follow unlawful lockdown orders during **COVID** showed moral courage.
- 3. Upholding Public Trust:** Actions aligned with conscience often foster long-term credibility.
Example: Indian Forest Officer **Sanjiv Chaturvedi** upheld transparency, earning public respect despite institutional pushback.

Challenges in Reconciling the Two

The clash between internal values and external demands creates a zone of ethical complexity. These tensions are more pronounced when institutions fail to encourage ethical behavior.

- 1. Conflict with Hierarchy:** Institutional obedience may suppress personal values.
Example: Honest officers **face penalties** for not following political directives.
- 2. Ambiguity in Laws or Rules:** Conscience may offer clarity where rules are vague.
Example: Decisions on **evictions in slums** often require humane judgment beyond legal strictness.
- 3. Fear of Repercussions:** Acting on conscience can invite transfers, suspensions, or harassment.
Example: **RTI activists** and ethical officers often face systemic retaliation.

Harmonizing Conscience with Duty

Balancing conscience and duty requires a multi-level approach—structural reform, cultural change, and individual action.

1. Structural Reforms

- **Ethical Frameworks:** Legally mandate conscience clauses (e.g., **UK's Civil Service Code** allows refusal of unlawful orders).
- **Whistleblower Safeguards:** Strengthen the **Whistle Blowers Protection Act 2014** with witness protection to encourage honest reporting.

2. Institutional Culture Shift

- **Dissent Channels:** Create anonymous reporting platforms (like **Singapore's PS21 initiative**) for safer whistleblowing.
- **Training:** **LBSNAA's ethics modules** should include real-time case simulations on moral dilemmas.

3. Individual Strategies

- **Conscientious Objection:** Seek legal recourse against unethical orders (Example: SC's ruling protecting civil servants' right to dissent in **Prakash Singh Case**).
- **Coalition Building:** Build alliances with NGOs or media to mitigate institutional pressure (Example: **Anna Hazare's** anti-corruption movement).

Conclusion

Public servants often walk the **tightrope** between **duty and conscience**. Enabling ethical governance requires structural safeguards, supportive culture, and courageous individuals who uphold the moral law within them.

Q.2) Citizen's Charters are tools of participatory governance, yet often fail in their intended purpose. Critically examine their role in promoting accountability and ethical governance. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

The Citizen's Charter movement, inspired by the **UK** in the early **1990s**, was introduced in India to promote responsive and citizen-centric governance. The **2nd ARC** defines it as a **voluntary declaration by service providers to uphold quality, timelines, and transparency**, thus fostering trust and ethical accountability.

Body

Principles of the Citizen's Charter (DARPG).



Role in Participatory Governance and Ethical Accountability

Citizen's Charters empower citizens and institutionalize transparency by setting service expectations.

1. **Defines Service Standards:** Citizens gain clarity on timelines and entitlements, ensuring predictability.
Example: **Passport Seva Kendra** commits to passport delivery within defined timelines.
2. **Enables Informed Participation:** By disseminating service information, it reduces dependence on intermediaries.
3. **Fixes Accountability Chains:** Naming responsible officers for each service ensures answerability.
Example: **Delhi Jal Board** assigns officers for tanker delivery with escalation contact.
4. **Promotes Citizen Empowerment:** Encourages citizens to demand timely and quality services.
5. **Fosters Ethical Climate:** Ensures moral commitment from public officials to serve citizens efficiently.
Example: **Bengaluru One centres** streamline citizen services with courteous, standardized delivery.

Limitations and Implementation Gaps

Despite its ideals, Citizen's Charters often underperform due to systemic and structural deficiencies.

1. **Poor Design and Content:** Many charters lack clarity, essential information, and measurable standards.
2. **Lack of Public Awareness:** Citizens are often unaware of the commitments made in the charters.
3. **Inadequate Groundwork:** Agencies fail to reform internal processes to meet the promises made in the charter.
Example: A **CAG report on Karnataka** noted delays due to mismatch between charter timelines and real capacities.
4. **Resistance to Change:** Organizational inertia and vested interests can hinder meaningful implementation.
5. **Neglect of Marginalized Groups:** Charters often overlook the specific needs of senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.
Example: A study on **health charters in Tamil Nadu** found no mention of disability-access provisions.
6. **Rarely Updated:** Many charters remain outdated, diminishing their relevance and effectiveness.
Example: Several **central ministries had not revised** their charters for over a decade, as per **DARPG review**.

Way Forward for Strengthening Impact

Bridging the design-implementation gap is essential to revive the Charter's transformative potential.

1. **Outcome-Oriented Design:** Charters must specify timelines, penalties, and citizen entitlements.
Example: **Maharashtra's RTS Act** imposes penalties on officials for service delays.

2. **Citizen Co-Creation:** Draft charters with ground-level consultations to ensure practicality, as recommended by the **2nd ARC**.
3. **Awareness and Grievance Integration:** Promote visibility and embed charters in complaint systems.
Example: **Sevottam model** integrates service standards with grievance tracking dashboards.
4. **Periodic Evaluation and Audit:** Regular third-party assessments to identify gaps and improvements.
International Practice: **The UK's "Service First" framework** ties charter compliance to regular performance audits and citizen satisfaction surveys.
5. **Institutional Accountability:** Link charter outcomes to performance appraisal of civil servants.
Example: **Himachal Pradesh** introduced performance-linked incentives for prompt delivery under Public Services Act.

Conclusion

While Citizen's Charters aim to institutionalize ethical and **participatory governance**, their impact remains limited. The **Sevottam model** addresses these gaps by embedding accountability, responsiveness, and continuous improvement into public service delivery.

Q.3) Powerful nations often justify their interventions as 'humanitarian'. Critically analyse the ethical dilemmas such actions pose in the context of global funding and aid. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Humanitarianism, in principle, seeks to **alleviate suffering** and uphold dignity. However, when powerful nations invoke it to justify interventions, ethical ambiguities arise—especially where global aid and funding mechanisms intersect with strategic interests.

Body

Ethical Potential of Humanitarian Interventions

When genuinely motivated, such interventions can offer relief, promote human rights, and build institutions.

However, their ethical promise is meaningful only when free of political self-interest.

1. **Saving Lives and Preventing Atrocities:** Conscience helps officials evaluate the morality of their actions.
Example: **NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999** helped prevent further ethnic cleansing.
2. **Mobilizing Resources for Reconstruction:** Donor nations fund post-conflict rebuilding.
Example: The **U.S. and EU** aid to **post-earthquake Haiti** aimed at infrastructural recovery.
3. **Creating Normative Pressure:** Deterrence against rogue regimes violating human rights.
Example: International sanctions on **apartheid-era South Africa** pressured for democratic reforms.

4. **Global Solidarity:** Promotes shared responsibility for human welfare.
5. **Catalyst for Local Empowerment:** Can support grassroots institutions and NGOs.

Ethical Dilemmas and Criticisms

Despite good intentions, interventions often reflect strategic priorities more than humanitarian need. This gives rise to serious concerns about bias, manipulation, and harm.

1. **Hidden Geopolitical Agendas:** Aid may serve national interest under moral disguise.
Example: **Iraq invasion (2003)** justified on humanitarian grounds but led to prolonged instability.
2. **Aid Conditionalities and Loss of Sovereignty:** Funding tied to political/economic compliance.
Example: **IMF bailouts** often enforce austerity harmful to social sectors.
3. **Selective Humanitarianism:** Interventions in oil-rich states over poorer crisis zones.
Example: Western silence during the **Rwandan Genocide** contrasts with Libya's swift military response.
4. **Undermining Local Agency:** External actors bypass national institutions.
5. **Donor Fatigue and Short-Termism:** Projects often abandoned before impact matures.
6. **Ethical Dilution of Altruism:** When aid becomes a tool of soft power rather than compassion.

These flaws distort humanitarianism into a fragmented, interest-driven enterprise, raising questions about its ethical coherence.

Ethical Solutions

Humanitarianism must move beyond rhetoric to become an ethically consistent and inclusive practice.

1. **Multilateral Channels:** Route interventions through the UN and global coalitions to ensure legitimacy.
2. **Transparent Aid Practices:** Audit funding flows and enforce international standards like **OECD–Development Assistance Committee (DAC)**.
3. **Local Empowerment First:** Prioritize grassroots institutions over external contractors in aid deployment.
4. **Codified Ethics of Intervention:** Define and respect norms like the Responsibility to Protect (**R2P**)—a UN doctrine to prevent mass atrocities.
5. **Equitable Global Governance:** Reform global institutions to reflect Global South representation and priorities.

Conclusion

Humanitarianism, when selectively practiced, corrodes moral legitimacy. A world guided by **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** must reimagine humanitarian aid **not as charity**, but as an **ethical global duty** rooted in justice, dignity, and mutual respect.

Q.4) "Commerce without morality" is one of Gandhi's Seven Social Sins. In this context, examine the ethical issues in corporate governance and suggest measures to ensure ethical business practices. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Gandhiji's warning against "commerce without morality" underscores the perils of profit-driven conduct that neglects ethics. Corporate governance today faces increasing scrutiny for unethical practices that erode public trust and damage the economy.

Body

Ethical Issues in Corporate Governance

Corporate governance refers to the framework of rules, practices, and processes by which companies are directed and controlled. However, ethical lapses continue to persist.

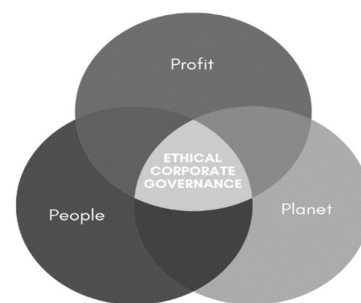
- 1. Conflict of Interest:** Board members or executives exploit positions for personal gain.
Example: The IL&FS crisis revealed board-level negligence and conflict of interest in lending decisions.
- 2. Lack of Transparency:** Concealing financial or operational information from stakeholders.
Example: **The GoMechanic accounting fraud (2023)** exposed inflated revenues and manipulated investor data.
- 3. Neglect of Stakeholder Interests:** Prioritizing shareholder value over employee welfare, environment, or society.
Example: **Amazon's** reported poor warehouse working conditions despite record profits.
- 4. Crony Capitalism:** Businesses securing unfair advantages through political connections.
- 5. Short-termism:** Excessive focus on quarterly profits at the cost of long-term ethical vision.

To address these, governance must move beyond legal compliance to ethical responsibility.

Measures for Ethical Corporate Governance

Strong ethical governance helps balance profit with integrity and long-term sustainability

- 1. Board Accountability:** Independent and diverse boards ensure unbiased oversight and ethical supervision.
Example: **SEBI** mandates independent directors to curb promoter dominance.
- 2. Mandatory Ethical Codes:** Enforce clear codes of conduct and conflict-of-interest policies.
Example: **Tata Group's ethical charter** is a benchmark in corporate ethics.
- 3. Transparent Reporting Systems:** Adopt real-time ESG and CSR disclosures to enable scrutiny.
Example: **Infosys' sustainability reports** include social, environmental, and governance metrics.



Trinity of Ethical Corporate Governance

4. **Whistleblower Protection:** Secure channels for internal reporting of unethical behavior without retaliation.
5. **Stakeholder-Centric Policies:** Broaden governance objectives to include employees, consumers, and communities.
6. **Regular Ethics Audits:** Institutionalize periodic reviews of ethical conduct and compliance.

Conclusion

Corporate governance must reflect Gandhi's ideals in today's boardrooms. **Narayana Murthy's vision of compassionate capitalism** offers a path where ethical business becomes both a duty and a competitive advantage.

Q.5) The increasing role of Artificial Intelligence in governance poses new ethical dilemmas. Discuss the challenges of ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability in AI-driven public decision-making. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly deployed in public governance for tasks like predictive policing, welfare delivery, and regulatory enforcement. While it enhances efficiency, it raises critical ethical questions around transparency, fairness, and accountability.

Body

Ethical Challenges in AI-Driven Governance

The integration of AI into public systems amplifies existing administrative concerns while adding new dimensions of complexity and risk.

1. **Opacity of Algorithms:** Many AI models function as **"black boxes,"** making it difficult to understand how decisions are made.
Example: **AI-based loan approval** systems have denied benefits without applicants knowing the reason.
2. **Bias and Discrimination:** AI systems often replicate or amplify existing social biases present in training data.
Example: **COMPAS algorithm in the U.S.** was found to assign higher recidivism risk scores to Black defendants.
3. **Lack of Accountability:** Diffused responsibility between developers and administrators makes redress difficult.
Example: **Facial recognition errors** in public surveillance leading to wrongful arrests.
4. **Data Privacy Concerns:** AI systems require large datasets, potentially infringing on citizen privacy.
5. **Automation Bias:** Officials may over-rely on AI recommendations, reducing critical oversight.
6. **Exclusion of Stakeholders:** Marginalized communities are often not involved in designing AI systems that impact them.

Ensuring Ethical Use of AI in Governance

To make AI systems more aligned with democratic and ethical values, institutional and technical safeguards must be employed.

1. **Algorithmic Transparency:** Make AI systems auditable and explainable to the public.
Example: **EU's AI Act** mandates high-risk systems be interpretable and documented.
2. **Fairness by Design:** Integrate bias detection and correction in the development stage.
Example: **IBM's Fairness 360 toolkit** helps assess algorithmic discrimination.
3. **Clear Accountability Norms:** Define who is responsible for each stage of AI implementation and its consequences.
4. **Data Governance:** Strengthen **consent**, anonymization, and data minimization protocols.
(Incorporate **Sri Krishna committee** recommendations)
5. **Human-in-the-Loop Mechanism:** Retain human oversight in critical decision-making processes.
Example: **Delhi Police's use** of AI tools includes manual verification layers for final action.
6. **Inclusive Design Processes:** Involve diverse stakeholders in AI system design to reflect public interest.

Conclusion

As per **UNESCO's 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of AI**, nations must ensure that AI development respects human rights, transparency, and accountability. **Ethical AI in governance isn't opti**