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## Mains Practice Questions

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**Q.** Define the following terms: (150 words)

(a) Altruism

(b) Humility

(c) Power and Morality

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### **Approach**

- Define the given term.
- Give one or two examples to explain the meaning of the terms.
- Connect with the relevance of the term with the public service.

### **Altruism**

- Altruism or selflessness is the concern for the welfare of others. It is a traditional virtue in many cultures and a core aspect of various religious traditions and secular worldviews, though the concept of 'others' toward whom concern should be directed can vary among cultures and religions. Altruism or selflessness is the opposite of selfishness.
- The altruist dictum can be stated as: "An action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favourable than unfavourable to everyone except the agent." Auguste Comte's version of altruism calls for living for the sake of others
- In a way, utilitarianism can result in altruism. Utilitarianism recommends acts that maximise the good of society. As the rest of society will always outnumber the utilitarian, a utilitarian will practise some form of altruism.

### **Humility**

- It is recognised as a virtue in all religions. Many other virtues spring from or gather lustre from it. Humility **does not mean self debasement or denying one's merits**, talents and accomplishments.
- It means that we should not place ourselves on a higher pedestal than others – even when we far exceed them in talents and achievements.
- Even if one is rich and powerful, one should not feel a sense of superiority over the poor and weak. One should judge oneself in relation to one's abilities, and consider whether one has utilized them in full measure.
- One should, from a religious point of view, try to utilize one's abilities in performing duties towards God and fellow men. The fact that one has greater talents and means than others indicates that one has greater responsibilities towards them.
- Thinking about what we have done in relation to what we could have done serves as a corrective to pride and arrogance.

- Humility will enable political leaders and administrators to approach ordinary people in a polite and courteous manner. Unless public servants cultivate humility, they will be unable to show concern and consideration towards the problems of common people.
- Public servants should regard their duty as service to people. They should not regard themselves as rulers or bosses. They are trustees of power which ultimately is derived from people.

### **Power and Morality**

- The term 'political' refers to all those practices and institutions which are concerned with government. Power is the ability to get others to do what you want. Power can take many forms, from brute force to subtle persuasion.
- Ex President Mukherjee has said politics without morality is no politics.
- Power invariably leads to corruption, abuse and oppression and morality is needed to restrain such issues.
- It is noteworthy that democracies control the likely dangers of misuse of power through institutional arrangements. It is hoped that politicians will become enlightened and pursue public interest. However, few people believe that such a change of heart will remove the tension between exercise of power and practice of morality. The answer has to be found in distributing power and placing checks on it.