



Mains Marathon

Day 22: Integrity and probity can be maintained in public life by empowering the human consciousness. Explain. (150 Words)

01 Aug 2022 | GS Paper 4 | Theoretical Questions

Approach / Explanation / Answer

- Briefly define Integrity and Probity and their need in Public Life.
- Discuss how can it be inculcated by empowering the human consciousness.
- Conclude by summarizing the importance of integrity and Probity.

Answer:

Probity means ethical behaviour that **upholds public values and ensures impartiality, accountability, and transparency**. In public service, it is the presence of procedural integrity with high standards of ethical behaviour. It balances service to the community against the self-interest of individuals.

Integrity is regarded as the **honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions**. It is the practice of being honest and showing consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values. In other words, one's actions must be in conformity with one's professed moral principles.

Need for Integrity and Probity

Integrity and probity in public life are the standards that society expects those elected or appointed to public office to **observe and maintain in the conduct of the public affairs** to which they have been entrusted. These standards are what safeguard the nation from **corruption by politicians and public officials** who have been given almost unrestricted access to public resources together with the power to take decisions that impact on the lives of everyone and the nation as a whole.

Ways to inculcate Probity and Integrity

- Institutional structure which includes laws, rules, regulation with carrot and stick approach to promote ethical conduct in public service.
- Promoting the culture of integrity i.e., inculcating moral values and responsibility.
- Leaders leading by example to promote the ethical work culture, thus providing models to the youth to emulate.
- The 2nd ARC has recommended setting up a Code of Ethics for all departments of the government.

- A dedicated unit to oversee violation of Code of ethics & Code of conduct by government officials be set up both at state and centre level.
- Information must be made accessible to common public through websites.
- Mandatory declaration of assets and liabilities of government employees, accompanied by proper auditing.
- Establishment of an Independent Anti-Corruption Agency.
- Citizens Advisory Boards to incorporate ideas of common public in improving governance.
- Mandatory Social Audit of all government programs, for example: Meghalaya has passed a law for social audit of government programs.

Consequences of the absence of Integrity

The absence of integrity and probity in public life is **manifested in corruption** which is a worldwide phenomenon. But its impact is strongest and most pervasive in small states that already suffer from all the known disadvantages that characterise smallness such as unfavourable economies of scale, high per capita cost of government, remoteness, and distance from large markets and centres of large populations among others. Leaders who are corrupt will exploit these weaknesses to the fullest to enrich themselves and those closest to them at the expense of the country.

The debilitating effects of corruption are well documented. For example, for Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole the Inter-American Development Bank has estimated that on average some 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is lost to corruption annually. Both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have identified corruption as one of the main obstacles to development. It **stultifies creativity, inventiveness and enterprise in a people, and puts a brake on the growth of democracy**, all of which are essential conditions for development.

The vast majority of public officials both elected and appointed give sterling and dedicated service to the country. They keep alive and constantly seek to enrich the best traditions of selfless public service. These officials need to be encouraged and their contributions recognised. The best way to give such encouragement and recognition is to call to account those who will not play by the rules.

Conclusion

The principle of probity in public life is the cornerstone of good governance. It is at the center-stage of Sustainable Development Goals. Probity in governance is the antithesis of corruption in public life. It is emphasized by the UN Convention against corruption.

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