



Mains Practice Question

Q. Identify the foundational values of civil services. Describe the ways and means to prevent non-ethical behaviour among civil servants. (250 words)

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Approach

- Give a brief introduction to the foundational values of civil services.
- Identify the foundational values of civil services.
- Discuss the key obstacles encountered in upholding the foundational principles
- Describe the ways and means to prevent non-ethical behaviour among civil servants.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

The foundational values for civil services represent the fundamental principles and ethics that guide the conduct and responsibilities of civil servants. These foundational values are essential for maintaining credibility, effectiveness, and public trust in civil services.

Body

The **Nolan Principles** (also known as the Seven Principles of Public Life) were first set out by Lord Nolan in 1995 and apply to anyone who works as a public office holder. In accordance with the Law, persons in public life shall observe the following principles:

- **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should make decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
 - **Example:** In 2010, the 2G spectrum allocation scam exposed a lack of selflessness among some public officials who were involved in corrupt practices for personal gains, causing a significant loss to the public exchequer.
- **Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
 - **Example:** The IAS officer, Durga Shakti Nagpal, demonstrated integrity when she took a stand against illegal sand mining activities in Uttar Pradesh, despite facing political pressure and threats to her position.
- **Objectivity:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
 - **Example:** The CBI plays a critical role in investigating corruption cases and ensuring objectivity and impartiality in its proceedings.
- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
 - **Example:** In 2018, the CAG of India released a report on the Rafale fighter jet deal, highlighting the need for accountability and transparency in defense procurement.

- **Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
 - **Example:** The RTI Act empowers citizens to seek information from public authorities, promoting openness and transparency in governance.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
 - **Example:** Kiran Bedi, former IPS officer, gained a reputation for her honesty and integrity during her tenure as the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research and Development.
- **Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership.
 - **Example:** Dr. Verghese Kurien, known as the "Milkman of India," demonstrated leadership in transforming India's dairy industry and empowering farmers through the Operation Flood program.

Some of the key obstacles encountered in upholding the foundational principles:

- **Political Interference:** Civil services often face pressure from political leaders and parties, leading to interference in administrative decisions, transfers, and postings.
 - This interference undermines the autonomy and impartiality of civil servants, making it challenging to uphold principles such as integrity and impartiality.
- **Corruption:** Corruption remains a significant challenge within the Indian civil services, with instances of bribery, nepotism, and favoritism affecting the integrity and accountability of public officials.
 - Corruption erodes public trust in government institutions and undermines efforts to promote transparency and accountability.
- **Bureaucratic Red Tape:** Complex bureaucratic procedures and cumbersome administrative processes can hinder the efficiency and responsiveness of civil services.
 - Excessive red tape leads to delays in decision-making, inefficiencies in service delivery, and frustration among citizens and businesses.

Several ways and means to achieve to prevent non-ethical behaviour among civil servants :

- **Establish Clear Codes of Conduct:** Implementing and enforcing codes of conduct that outline expected standards of behavior, ethical principles, and guidelines for civil servants can serve as a foundational framework for promoting ethical conduct.
 - Fostering ethical leadership at all levels of the civil services can set a positive example and create a culture that values integrity, honesty, and fairness.
- **Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms:** Instituting robust accountability mechanisms, such as performance evaluations, disciplinary procedures, and whistleblower protection frameworks, can hold civil servants accountable for their actions and deter unethical behavior.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Providing regular training and capacity-building programs on ethics, integrity, and professionalism can enhance civil servants' awareness of ethical issues and equip them with the necessary skills to make ethical decisions in their roles.
- **Implement Technology Solutions:** Leveraging technology solutions, such as digital platforms for service delivery, e-governance initiatives, and data analytics tools, can increase transparency, efficiency, and accountability within civil services while reducing opportunities for corruption and unethical behavior.
- **Enhance Public Awareness and Engagement:** Increasing public awareness about ethics in governance and encouraging citizen engagement in oversight and monitoring can create accountability pressures and reinforce the importance of ethical behavior among civil servants.

Conclusion

There is an urgent need for undertaking continuous institutional reforms to streamline bureaucratic processes, reduce discretionary powers, and improve governance structures that can help prevent opportunities for corruption and unethical behavior among civil servants

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