



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** "Ethics in public administration operates at the intersection of personal virtue, professional integrity, and societal responsibility". Discuss. (150 words)

14 Aug, 2025 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

### Approach:

- Define ethics in public administration.
- Explain the three dimensions: personal virtue, professional integrity, and societal responsibility.
- Show interconnections and how they affect governance and service delivery.
- Include examples from Indian administrative practices, policies, or case studies.
- Conclude with relevance for modern public administration.

### Introduction:

Ethics in public administration guides the behavior, decisions, and governance of public servants. It operates at the intersection of **personal virtue, professional integrity, and societal responsibility**, ensuring accountability, trust, and legitimacy in democratic governance.

### Body:

#### Personal Virtue

- **Personal virtue** forms the foundation of ethical public service.
- It encompasses qualities like **honesty, courage, empathy, and self-discipline**.
- Individual morality shapes day-to-day decision-making and sets the tone for organizational behavior.
  - For instance, an officer refusing to accept a bribe or resisting political pressure demonstrates **personal integrity**, which influences colleagues and promotes an ethical organizational culture.
- Without personal virtue, other ethical dimensions may weaken, leading to compromised governance.

#### Professional Integrity

- Involves **adherence to rules, transparency, accountability, and impartiality**.
- Ensures **objective decision-making and procedural propriety** under pressure.
  - Example: Implementation of **Right to Information (RTI)** promotes transparency and citizen empowerment.
- Bridges **personal ethics** with societal responsibility, ensuring fair administration.

#### Societal Responsibility

- Extends ethics to **serving public interest, social justice, and marginalized groups**.
- Requires equitable **policy implementation** and citizen-focused service delivery.

- Example: **MGNREGA** ensures rural livelihood security and reflects societal responsibility.
- Without this dimension, ethical behavior may become symbolic or self-serving.

### **Interconnection**

- **Personal virtue** underpins **professional integrity**, which enables societal responsibility.
- Weakness in any dimension can undermine **ethical governance**.
- Example: Corruption at the individual level erodes public trust and reduces the impact of social programs.

### **Conclusion:**

**Ethics** in public administration requires a holistic approach, integrating **personal virtue**, **professional integrity**, and **societal responsibility**. Upholding these, guided by Aristotle's **virtue ethics**, where officers cultivate **virtue**, **courage**, and **practical wisdom**, and embracing the public service **ethos** of **integrity**, **impartiality**, and **accountability**, ensures **transparent**, **citizen-centric**, and **equitable governance**.

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