



Mains Practice Question

Q. “The biggest ethical challenge of the 21st century is not corruption, but moral apathy.” Do you agree? Justify your answer with examples. **(150 words)**

30 Jan, 2025 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Introduce the answer by highlighting the gravity of moral apathy as an ethical challenge alongside corruption
- Give arguments suggesting Moral Apathy as the Greater Ethical Challenge
- Delve into key points questioning if Is Corruption Still a Major Ethical Challenge?
- Conclude in a balanced manner.

Introduction

Moral apathy refers to the indifference towards **ethical responsibilities, social injustices, and civic duties**. In the 21st century, **ethical challenges go beyond the active violation of ethics**, such as **corruption**. While corruption directly breaches ethical norms, **moral apathy allows unethical behavior** to thrive by cultivating complacency and inaction.

Body

Moral Apathy as the Greater Ethical Challenge:

- **Erosion of Civic Responsibility:** People often remain silent in the face of injustice, enabling unethical practices.
 - **Example: Bystander effect** in cases like mob lynching incidents, where onlookers fail to intervene.
- **Declining Public Accountability:** Voter apathy and lack of demand for ethical governance result in a culture of impunity.
 - **Example: Low voter turnout in elections** despite rising concerns over governance and corruption.
- **Workplace Ethics and Organizational Indifference:** Employees ignoring unethical practices such as **discrimination, harassment, or financial fraud**.
 - **Example: Whistleblower suppression in corporate scams (e.g., the 2008 financial crisis).**
- **Environmental Negligence:** Public indifference to climate change, despite clear evidence of environmental degradation.
 - **Example: Minimal individual action on pollution** and waste management despite awareness campaigns.
- **Social Inequalities and Lack of Empathy:** Apathy towards marginalized communities leads to the persistence of systemic inequalities.
 - **Example: Indifference to the plight of migrant workers** during the Covid-19 lockdown in India.
- **Political Indifference and Lack of Active Citizenship:** People often **tolerate unethical**

political practices instead of holding leaders accountable.

- **Example: Normalization of hate speech** and misinformation in political discourse.

While moral apathy exacerbates unethical behavior, corruption remains a significant challenge:

- **Institutional corruption** weakens democracy and governance (e.g., **scams like 2G spectrum, Commonwealth Games scam**).
- **Petty corruption** in everyday services erodes public trust (**e.g., bribery in government offices**).
 - However, moral apathy allows corruption to thrive by discouraging accountability and action.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Moral Education:** Integrating ethics in education can cultivate responsible citizenship.
- **Encouraging Active Civic Engagement:** Platforms for participatory governance and transparency can reduce public apathy.
- **Whistleblower Protection and Accountability Mechanisms:** Encouraging ethical behavior in workplaces and institutions.
- **Promoting Social Empathy:** Encouraging volunteerism and sensitization campaigns for social issues.

Conclusion

While **corruption remains a significant ethical issue, moral apathy is the greater challenge** as it allows corruption and other unethical practices to persist unchecked. Addressing moral apathy, sometimes referred to as the worst pandemic, through awareness, civic engagement, and ethical education is crucial for fostering a more just and responsible society.

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