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Q1(a)

Explain how ethics contributes to social and human well-being

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · GS IV · 10 marks · Probity in Governance

Probity in Governance: Concept of public service; Philosophical basis of governance and probity; Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.

Core demand of the question

- Explain how ethics contributes to social and human well-being

Revision summary

Ethics is the inner standard of right conduct when law is absent or easy to dodge.

Social well-being needs trust, fairness, compassion and civic virtue, which ethics supplies cheaper than police.

Human well-being needs dignity, integrity, empathy and self-control, not only income.

Professional and environmental ethics turn skill into care for people and for the next generation.

Without ethics, society spends more on force and the person lives with a damaged conscience.

Introduction

Ethics is the habit of asking what we owe other people, not only what we can get away with. Social well-being is a fair and peaceful common life. Human well-being is a life with dignity, health, work and meaning. Ethics is the inner rule that makes both possible when the policeman is not in the room.

Body**Ethics and social well-being**

- Ethics is a shared standard of right and wrong that guides choice when law is silent, slow or easy to dodge.
- **Social well-being needs trust:** people must believe that a neighbour, a trader and an officer will not cheat them as a first move.
- Honesty in the market keeps prices real and contracts cheap, because each side does not have to hire a spy.
- Fairness and justice reduce the need for revenge. A caste insult, a land grab or a cooked tender, if left as "cleverness", becomes a riot later.
- Compassion and solidarity fund the school, the hospital and disaster relief that a pure market will not supply to the poorest.
- Civic virtue - paying tax, standing in a queue, refusing a rumour - is ethics as public hygiene.
- When ethics fails, the State must spend more on police, courts and locks, which is a tax on everyone's well-being.

- Codes, religions and Constitutions all try to teach this; the test is conduct at the counter and in the family, not a speech.

Ethics and human well-being

- Human well-being is more than income. It includes bodily safety, equal dignity, honest work, and a conscience that can sleep.
- Integrity protects the person from self-contempt. A life built on a lie or a bribe is rich on paper and poor inside.
- Respect for autonomy treats the other as an end, which is Kant's test and also Article 21 dignity in daily form.
- **Empathy stops cruelty that law may not yet name:** humiliation of a petitioner, delay of a pension, or silence when a river is poisoned.
- Temperance and self-control protect health and family from anger, addiction and reckless display.
- Professional ethics in medicine, teaching, accounting and administration convert skill into care rather than into a weapon.
- Environmental ethics extends well-being to the next generation; a strip-mined hill is present profit and future misery.
- **Ethics therefore contributes twice:** it holds society together without constant force, and it lets a person live as a responsible human being rather than as a clever animal.

Flow diagram

Ethics -> Trust and fairness
 Ethics -> Dignity and conscience
 Trust and fairness -> Social well-being
 Dignity and conscience -> Human well-being
 Law and force -> Social well-being
 Ethics -> Law and force

Conclusion

Ethics contributes to social well-being by creating trust, fairness and civic peace that law alone cannot buy. It contributes to human well-being by protecting dignity, conscience and care. A society that treats ethics as optional will pay in courts, riots and inner emptiness.

Facts & figures

Article 21, Constitution of India

Protects life and personal liberty; courts have read dignity into it, which is the legal name for a large part of human well-being.

Immanuel Kant, humanity as an end

The duty to treat persons as ends in themselves, not only as tools, is a classical statement of why ethics serves human well-being.

Aristotle, eudaimonia

Well-being as a flourishing life of virtue, not a pile of pleasure, which still explains why character is part of human welfare.

Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Ethics in Governance

The Fourth Report treated public ethics as a condition of development and trust, not as decoration.

Trust as social capital

Societies with high interpersonal and institutional trust spend less on monitoring and conflict, which is ethics showing up as well-being.

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