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Q1

(a) State the three basic values, universal in nature, in the context of civil services and bring out their importance. (b) Distinguish between "Code of ethics" and "Code of conduct" with suitable examples.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · 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

- (a) State the three basic values, universal in nature, in the context of civil services and bring out their importance
- (b) Distinguish between "Code of ethics" and "Code of conduct" with suitable examples

Revision summary

The three universal civil-service values are integrity, impartiality and objectivity.

Integrity is honest trusteeship; impartiality is equal treatment; objectivity is fact-and-law decisions with recorded reasons.

They matter because public money, **Article 14** equality and a file that can face a court all depend on them.

A code of ethics states values; a code of conduct lists punishable do's and don'ts.

Nolan and the **Second ARC** illustrate ethics; the CCS Conduct Rules, 1964 illustrate conduct.

Introduction

Civil service is other people's power held in trust. Part (a) names three values that travel across countries and creeds. Part (b) separates the inner compass of ethics from the enforceable list of conduct.

Body**(a) Three basic values, universal in civil services**

- The three basic values that are universal in civil services are integrity, impartiality and objectivity.
- They appear, in close form, in the **Nolan principles of public life** in the United Kingdom and in the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission's** report on Ethics in Governance in India.
- **Integrity means the public office is not a private shop:** no bribe, no lie in the file, no use of official knowledge for a family plot.
- Without integrity, every other skill becomes a better tool for theft, as Warren Buffett later warned about intelligence without honesty.

- Impartiality means the same law and the same queue for a friend, a stranger and a rival of the minister.
- **Article 14 of the Constitution of India is impartiality in legal form:** equal protection, not a private caste or party of the officer.
- Objectivity means the decision follows facts, statute and recorded reasons, not rumour, gift or fear of transfer.
- A speaking order is objectivity made visible; a whisper in the corridor is its opposite.
- These three are universal because a tax file in Tokyo, a licence in Nairobi and a ration card in a tehsil all fail in the same way when they are missing.
- **Dedication, empathy and political neutrality support them, but they are not substitutes:** a kind officer who cooks a muster is still a failed trustee.
- **Importance:** integrity keeps public money real; impartiality keeps the republic one; objectivity keeps the file fit for a court and for a citizen who cannot buy a favour.
- Training, asset disclosure, e-procurement and the **Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964** do not create these values, but they make it harder to live without them.

(b) Code of ethics and code of conduct

- **A code of ethics is a short statement of values and purposes:** what kind of person the service asks you to be.
- A code of conduct is a list of do's and don'ts that can be inquired into and punished.
- Ethics is aspirational and wide. Conduct is specific and justiciable in a departmental sense.
- **Example of ethics:** selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership in the Nolan list; or the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission's** call for a code of ethics for ministers and civil servants.
- **Example of conduct:** the **Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964** on gifts, criticism of government, political activity, property returns and conduct unbecoming of a government servant.
- The **All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968** do the same work for the Indian Administrative Service and allied services.
- A code of ethics would say "do not use inside knowledge for private gain". A code of conduct names the form, the time limit and the disciplinary door.
- Ethics can cover a humiliation that no clause has yet listed. Conduct cannot invent a penalty that the rule does not carry.
- Companies Act, 2013 duties of directors and many professional charters (medical, legal) mix both: a value sentence plus a punishable breach.
- India has been stronger on conduct rules than on a living, taught code of ethics. Both are needed: values without a rule become a speech; rules without values become a hunt for loopholes.
- A sound officer reads the Conduct Rules as the floor and the code of ethics as the ceiling.

Flow diagram

Universal values -> Integrity
Universal values -> Impartiality
Universal values -> Objectivity
Code of ethics -> Aspirational values
Code of conduct -> Enforceable rules
Aspirational values -> Public officer
Enforceable rules -> Public officer

Conclusion

Integrity, impartiality and objectivity are the universal core of civil service, because they make power safe for a stranger. A code of ethics names that character. A code of conduct enforces the floor, as the 1964 and 1968 Conduct Rules do.

Facts & figures

Nolan principles of public life

Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership, set out in the United Kingdom in 1995 for holders of public office.

Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Ethics in Governance

The Fourth Report argued for a code of ethics and stronger integrity systems for ministers and civil servants in India.

Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964

The principal Union conduct code on gifts, political activity, property, criticism and conduct unbecoming of a government servant.

All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968

Conduct rules for All India Services, including political neutrality and integrity in office.

Article 14, Constitution of India

Equality before the law and equal protection of the laws; the constitutional name for impartiality in public power.

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