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Q6

(a) An independent and empowered social audit mechanism is an absolute must in every sphere of public service, including the judiciary, to ensure performance, accountability and ethical conduct. Elaborate. (b) "Integrity is a value that empowers the human being". Justify with suitable illustration.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · 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) An independent and empowered social audit mechanism is an absolute must in every sphere of public service, including the judiciary, to ensure performance, accountability and ethical conduct. Elaborate
- (b) "Integrity is a value that empowers the human being." Justify with suitable illustration

Revision summary

Social audit is people's examination of a public activity with documents and a hearing.

It must be independent of the implementer and empowered to force a public Action Taken Report.

It belongs in schemes, police and, as delay-and-conduct transparency, around courts - not as a panchayat over a pending trial.

Integrity unifies word and act; it empowers by freeing the person from a double life and by creating trust.

Institutions must protect the honest so that integrity is power, not only martyrdom.

Introduction

Power that scores itself will praise itself. Part (a) asks for a social audit that is independent and strong, even around courts. Part (b) asks how integrity gives a person power rather than only tying their hands.

Body**(a) Independent empowered social audit, including the judiciary**

- Social audit is a public examination of a scheme or institution by the people who are affected, with documents, site facts and a hearing, not a closed departmental note.
- MKSS in Rajasthan and the social-audit architecture under MGNREGA showed that a wall of names and a jan sunwai can catch ghost works that an office audit missed.
- Independent means the auditor is not the implementing officer's junior. Empowered means records must be given, findings must bind a response, and victimisation of a speaker is punished.

- **In every public-service sphere:** works, rations, hospitals, police lock-ups, schools, municipal contracts. Performance, money and courtesy are all auditable.
- **CAG audit is essential and still different:** it is expert and periodic. Social audit is local, frequent and owned by the user.
- **Judiciary:** independence of judges from the executive is a constitutional good. It is not a claim that courts are above every account of delay, opacity and conduct.
- **What social audit of justice can mean:** published disposal data, reasons for long vacancies, live streaming where the Supreme Court has allowed it, a usable complaints mechanism for corruption or sexual harassment, and audits of legal-aid quality - not a mob trial of a pending case.
- The in-camera and sub-judice limits remain. Empowered audit of courts is about systems and ethics of office, not about a panchayat overruling a judgment.
- Collegium opacity has been criticised even by judges; a more reasoned disclosure of appointments is a form of public account without destroying independence.
- Police and prisons need social audit with human-rights commissions, not only an internal inquiry that clears itself.
- **Absolute must:** without an independent ear, performance becomes a press release, accountability a circular, and ethical conduct a pledge on Integrity Day.
- **Design:** statutory social-audit units, protection under the [Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014](#), and a time-bound Action Taken Report that is itself public.

(b) Integrity empowers the human being

- Integrity is the unity of word, belief and act. It looks like a chain; it is also a source of power.
- **Inner power:** the person does not spend energy on a second ledger, a cover story, or the fear of a forgotten lie. [Socrates'](#) claim that a good person cannot be harmed in the soul is this point.
- **Social power:** others can trust a promise. A civil servant known not to sell a file can move a room without shouting, because the room believes the note.
- [Gandhi's](#) satyagraha treated truth as strength against an empire. Integrity was the method, not a private ornament.
- **Illustration:** an engineer who records a pier crack and refuses a CM's ribbon has less immediate patronage and more long-term authority - and the public still has a bridge.
- **Illustration:** a Vice Principal who will not bury a flying-squad catch can lose a promotion and still keep the power to look students in the face.
- **Illustration:** a company that recalls a bad lot instead of dumping it at home takes a profit hit and keeps the power to sell tomorrow.
- **Lack of integrity disempowers:** blackmail, sleeplessness, a subordinate who will not warn you, and a court date that owns your future.
- Integrity empowers only if institutions do not systematically punish it. Whistle-blower protection and a matrix that scores honesty are how the value becomes power for more than a martyr.
- **Justification:** integrity is not merely a brake. It is the capacity to act in public without shrinking from one's own name.

Flow diagram

Social audit -> Independent of implementer
Social audit -> Records and ATR bind
Social audit -> Court systems not pending cases
Integrity -> No second ledger
Integrity -> Trust as power
Broken integrity -> Blackmail and fear

Conclusion

Social audit must be independent and able to force an answer in schemes, police and, as system-audit not mob-trial, in the judiciary. Integrity empowers because it frees attention, creates trust, and lets a person act under their own name - if the republic does not hunt them for it.

Facts & figures

MKSS and jan sunwai

The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan's public hearings in Rajasthan helped make social audit a national method for rural works.

MGNREGA social audit

The statute requires social audit of the employment guarantee; a model of user-side account, uneven in practice across States.

Comptroller and Auditor General of India

Constitutional auditor of public money; complements, and does not replace, local social audit.

Supreme Court live streaming

A transparency step for constitutional benches; an example of public account that need not destroy judicial independence.

Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014

Meant to protect public-interest disclosure; necessary if social audit speakers are not to be punished.

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