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Q1

(a) In the present digital age, social media has revolutionised our way of communication and interaction. However, it has raised several ethical issues and challenges. Describe the key ethical dilemmas in this regard. (b) "Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment but a product of civil education and adherence of the rule of law." Examine the significance of constitutional morality for public servant highlighting the role in promoting good governance and ensuring accountability in public administration.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS IV · 10 marks · Ethics in Public Administration

Public / Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems; ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions; laws, rules, regulations and conscience as sources of ethical guidance; accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding; corporate governance.

Core demand of the question

- (a) Name social-media dilemmas: truth, privacy, dignity, polarisation, duty of the State
- (b) Define constitutional morality; show why a civil servant needs it for good governance and accountability

Revision summary

Social media speeds speech and also rumour, hate, privacy harm and blurred official voice.

The ethical knots are truth versus virality, privacy versus publicity, and freedom versus incitement.

Constitutional morality, as **Ambedkar** taught, is learned respect for constitutional forms, not a natural feeling.

For a civil servant it means equality, dignity, reasoned process and files that can face a court.

Good governance and accountability rest on that habit when popular anger or a minister wants a shortcut.

Introduction

A phone is now a **public square, a rumour mill and a file**. Part (a) asks what **ethical knots** that square ties. Part (b) asks the civil servant to live by **constitutional morality**, which Dr **Ambedkar** said is **not a natural sentiment**. **Together they are one paper: how we speak, and what law we obey when we speak for the State.**

Body**(a) Ethical dilemmas of social media**

Truth versus speed. A forward can ruin a person before a fact-check. The dilemma is between **freedom of speech** (Article 19) and **harm** (dignity, riot, suicide). Kant's test - would I will a world of untested accusation? - says no. Mill's harm principle says the State may step in when speech **incites violence**, not when it merely offends.

Privacy versus publicity. A viral video of a patient or a child is a **dignity** wound. The right to privacy after **Puttaswamy** is an ethical floor, not only a case name.

Identity versus civic friendship. Algorithms reward **anger**. Communal and gendered hate is easy; **fraternity** (the Preamble) is hard. The dilemma for a public servant is whether to **mute, rebut, or ignore**. Silence can be prudence; it can also be **cowardice**.

Opacity of the platform. A private company curates a public sphere. Who owes **accountability** - the user, the firm, or the State? Over-censorship is another dilemma: a takedown can hide a genuine whistle-blower.

Professional boundary. An officer's personal handle can look like an **official verdict**. Integrity here is **not using the office to trend**.

(b) Constitutional morality for the public servant

- **Ambedkar**, borrowing Grote, said Indians must learn to **respect constitutional forms**: majority is not licence, office is not property. The Supreme Court has used the phrase in **Manoj Narula**, **Navtej Johar**, and the **Delhi government** cases to mean **reason, equality, dignity and institutional process**.

For a civil servant this is **not poetry**. It is **Article 14** in a licence, **Article 21** in a demolition, **neutrality** in a communal file, and **rule of law** when a minister wants a shortcut. **Good governance** is predictable, reasoned, recorded action. **Accountability** is the file that can be shown to a court, a CAG, and a citizen. Constitutional morality is the habit that makes those three possible when **popular morality** or **political pressure** pulls the other way.

Gandhi wanted means as clean as ends. **Ambedkar** wanted **forms that protect the weak**. **The officer needs both: a clean hand and a constitutional head.**

Flow diagram

Social media -> Truth privacy hate
 Constitutional morality -> Good governance
 Constitutional morality -> Accountability
 Truth privacy hate -> Constitutional morality

Conclusion

Social media creates dilemmas of truth, privacy, hate and official voice. Constitutional morality is the trained respect for rights and process that lets a public servant govern fairly and answer for every file, even when the crowd is loud.

Facts & figures

Ambedkar on constitutional morality

He warned the Constituent Assembly that constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment and must be cultivated.

Puttaswamy, 2017

The Supreme Court held privacy to be a fundamental right, which frames the ethics of viral personal content.

Article 19 and 21

Free speech and dignity-liberty sit in tension on every communal forward; the officer must know both, not only one.

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