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Q7

Case study. Vijay was Deputy Commissioner of remote district of Hilly Northern State of the country for the last two years. In the month of August heavy rains lashed the complete state followed by cloud burst in the upper reaches of the said district. The damage was very heavy in the complete state especially in the affected district. The complete road network and telecommunication were disrupted and the buildings were damaged extensively. People's houses have been destroyed and they were forced to stay in open. More than 200 people have been killed and about 5000 were badly injured. The Civil Administration under Vijay got activated and started conducting rescue and relief operations. Temporary shelter camps and hospitals were established to provide shelter and medical facilities to the homeless and injured people. Helicopter services were pressed in, for evacuating sick and old people from remote areas. Vijay got a message from his hometown in Kerala that his mother was seriously sick. After two days Vijay received the unfortunate message that his mother has expired. Vijay has no close relative except one elder sister who was US citizen and staying there for last several years. In the meantime, the situation in the affected district deteriorated further due to resumption of heavy rains after a gap of five days. At the same time, continuous messages were coming on his mobile from his hometown to reach at the earliest for performing last rites of his mother. (a) What are the options available with Vijay?(b) What are the ethical dilemma being faced by Vijay?(c) Critically evaluate and examine each of these options identified by Vijay.(d) Which of the options, do you think, would be most appropriate for Vijay to adopt and why?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

- List Vijay's options in full sentences
- **Name the dilemmas:** public duty vs filial duty, unique role vs replaceability

- Evaluate each option; pick stay-and-delegate-rites with reasons

Revision summary

Vijay's options are to leave at once, stay then go, stay through the peak, attempt a short hop, or freeze.

The dilemma is filial duty versus the unique public role of a **Deputy Commissioner** in a still-killing disaster.

Leaving at once risks command failure; using a relief helicopter for a funeral would be wrong.

The best path is to stay through the life-saving window, delegate rites with the sister and a priest, and travel at the first true lull.

Grief is not denied; it is sequenced after the right to life of those still in the open.

Introduction

Vijay is the **Deputy Commissioner** of a hill district that a cloudburst has broken. Roads and phones are down. More than two hundred people are dead and thousands are hurt. His **mother in Kerala has died**, and the family asks him to come for the **last rites**. He has **no other close relative in India. This is not a trick. It is the oldest civil-service wound: the State's hour and the mother's hour** falling on the same night.

Body

(a) Options available to Vijay

First, he can **leave at once** for Kerala, handing the district to the Additional District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, and hope the helicopter and camps run without him. **Second**, he can **stay until the acute phase eases** - roads partly open, the next rain pulse handled - and then go for rites, asking his sister to delay ceremonies if faith and law allow, or to perform them with a priest on video as many families did in the pandemic. **Third**, he can **stay through the whole relief peak** and accept that he may **miss the funeral**, requesting a cousin, a trusted neighbour, or the sister on a later flight to complete rituals, and performing his own **shraddha** when the district can spare him. **Fourth**, he can try a **very short absence** of a day if a special flight exists and if the Chief Secretary formally places a full charge, which in a cut-off hill district is often a fantasy. **Fifth**, he can **collapse** into indecision, which is also a choice, and a bad one.

(b) Ethical dilemmas

The dilemmas are **filial piety versus public trusteeship; unique positional duty** (only one DC is the crisis coordinator) versus **replaceable son** (rites can be done by kin and priest); **personal grief versus the grief of five thousand injured; religious time** (**last rites** soon) versus **hydrological time** (the next cloudburst). There is also **integrity of emotion**: pretending he does not hurt is false; **abandoning the camps to prove he is a good son** may be another falsehood. **Confucius** honoured the parent; the Constitution honours the **right to life** of the living who still need a boat. Both claims are real. That is why it is a dilemma, not a slogan.

(c) Critical evaluation of the options

Leaving at once **honours the mother** and may **save Vijay from a lifetime of guilt**. It **risks command failure** in a theatre where the DC's name is the State. In a remote district, the ADM may be junior; helicopters need a **single political-administrative face**. The public will

not parse his grief; they will see an empty chair.

Staying forever without any rite **can look heroic** and can **break a person**, and Hindu (or any) custom is not a toy. A **middle path** - stay while the rain is killing, delegate rites with a recorded blessing, go as soon as a named officer holds the night - **respects both** if it is honest, not a slow escape.

A one-day hop is **ethically pretty** and **logistically cruel** if it means a helicopter taken off a medical run. Using relief aviation for a funeral would be **a scandal of means**.

(d) Most appropriate option

The most appropriate course is **to remain in the district through the life-saving window, formally vest operational charge in the next competent officer for defined hours, ask the sister and a priest to perform the rites with Vijay present on a satellite call if a link exists, and travel to Kerala at the first genuine lull**, with the Chief Secretary informed so that the State owns the choice. This is **Gandhi's talisman** (the face of the injured in the camp) plus **honour to the parent** delayed, not denied. It is **role morality**: the DC is not an ordinary son while the district is an open wound. When the wound closes, he must **go home and weep**. An officer who never weeps is not stronger. An officer who leaves a drowning block to prove a ritual clock is not more moral. He is **absent**.

Flow diagram

M Mother's rites -> Dilemma
 Cloudburst district -> Dilemma
 Dilemma -> Stay for life-saving window
 Stay for life-saving window -> Go at first lull

Conclusion

Vijay should hold the district while people are still being pulled from the slope, share the rites at a distance if he must, and go to Kerala as soon as a real lull and a named deputy exist. Duty to the living poor and honour to his mother can both be told in that order, not as a cancellation of either.

Facts & figures

Role morality

The idea that some offices carry duties that an ordinary private person does not carry in the same hour.

Gandhi's talisman

Recall the face of the poorest and weakest person; here, the injured in the camp who still need a coordinator.

Last rites

Religious duties to the dead that families rightly honour; they can sometimes be performed by kin with the absent son's intent recorded.

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