



Mains Practice Question

Q. Migrant workers have always remained at the socio-economic margins of our society, silently serving as the instrumental labour force of urban economics. The pandemic has brought them into national focus.

On announcement of a countrywide lockdown, a very large number of migrant workers decided to move back from their places of employment to their native villages. The non-availability of transport created its own problems. Added to this was the fear of starvation and inconvenience to their families. This caused, the migrant workers to demand wages and transport facilities for returning to their villages. Their mental agony was accentuated by multiple factors such as a sudden loss of livelihood, possibility of lack of food and inability to assist in harvesting their rabi crop due to not being able to reach home in time. Reports of inadequate response of some districts in providing the essential boarding and lodging arrangements along the way multiplied their fears.

You have learnt many lessons from this situation when you were tasked to oversee the functioning of the District Disaster Relief Force in your district. In your opinion what ethical issues arose in the current migrant crisis? What do you understand by an ethical care giving state? What assistance can the civil society render to mitigate the sufferings of migrants in similar situations? (UPSC GS-4 Mains 2020)

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Ethical Issues Involved in Migrant Crisis

The given case can be described as an ethical dilemma that can be described as the **lives vs livelihood debate**.

- The Lockdown imposed as a preventive measure to fight **Covid-19** resulted into the migrant crisis.
- Inherent to this crisis there was the trade-off - at least in the short run - between health and human lives, on the one hand, and the economy and livelihoods, on the other hand.
- Lockdown led to the mass exodus of workers who were facing mental agony which accentuated by multiple factors such as:
 - A sudden loss of livelihood
 - Fear of starvation
 - Inability to assist in harvesting their rabi crop due to not being able to reach home in time.
- However, the migrant crisis also posed a risk to lives, as the pace of the spread of a pandemic depends upon network effects, a huge population inherently enables a higher pace of spread.

Ethical Care-Giving State

- The unprecedented crisis triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic makes a strong case for an ethical caregiving state.
- Ethics of care is a feminist philosophical perspective that proposes caring is the foundation of morality.
- As caring is ethically basic to humans, thus caring ethics is freed from the charge of moral relativism and implies a relational and context-bound approach toward morality and decision making, rather than a rule-based approach.
- The Government of India stand in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, exemplifies the ethical

caregiving state, which can be reflected in the following examples:

- The public healthcare system took the major responsibility of providing quarantine facilities, treatment for Covid-19 when private healthcare failed to healthcare services even to the well-off section of the society.
- The government launched Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana which provided the distribution of free grains to the people.
- Further, in order to sustain the economy, the government provided a fiscal stimulus package of Rs 20 lakh crore under the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme.

Role of Civil Society

As Covid-19 gripped the world, it put to test our collective resilience to the global pandemic. In such a scenario, solutions were unlikely to come if everybody is working in silos. The fight against Covid-19 showed why NGOs are referred to as major pillars of society.

- NGOs given their deep connection in combating various socio-economic issues have been natural partners in this endeavor.
- Many NGOs and people, referred to as Covid-warriors, volunteered to help people fight Covid-19 and extend the government's help in the remote corners of the country.
 - Covid-warriors exemplified the immortal human spirit of grit and compassion encapsulated by the tireless battle against the pandemic.
- NGOs initiated to create national emergency funds, partnered with one another to channel donations, provided assistance in nursing homes, and other facilities through technical support and medical teams.
 - Sonu Sood, a Bollywood actor, showed the essence of humanity by helping numerous people to fulfill basic needs and reach their respective homes.
- NGOs created communication and distribution networks across the country's hinterlands.
 - They have also been executing an important task of creating awareness about the virus to prevent its spread as well as educating people on social distancing and its importance.
- The ongoing pandemic put the corporate social responsibility to test.
 - Despite the economic debacle, which affected all sectors of the economy, companies strived to use this crisis as an opportunity to expand their CSR footprint.

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