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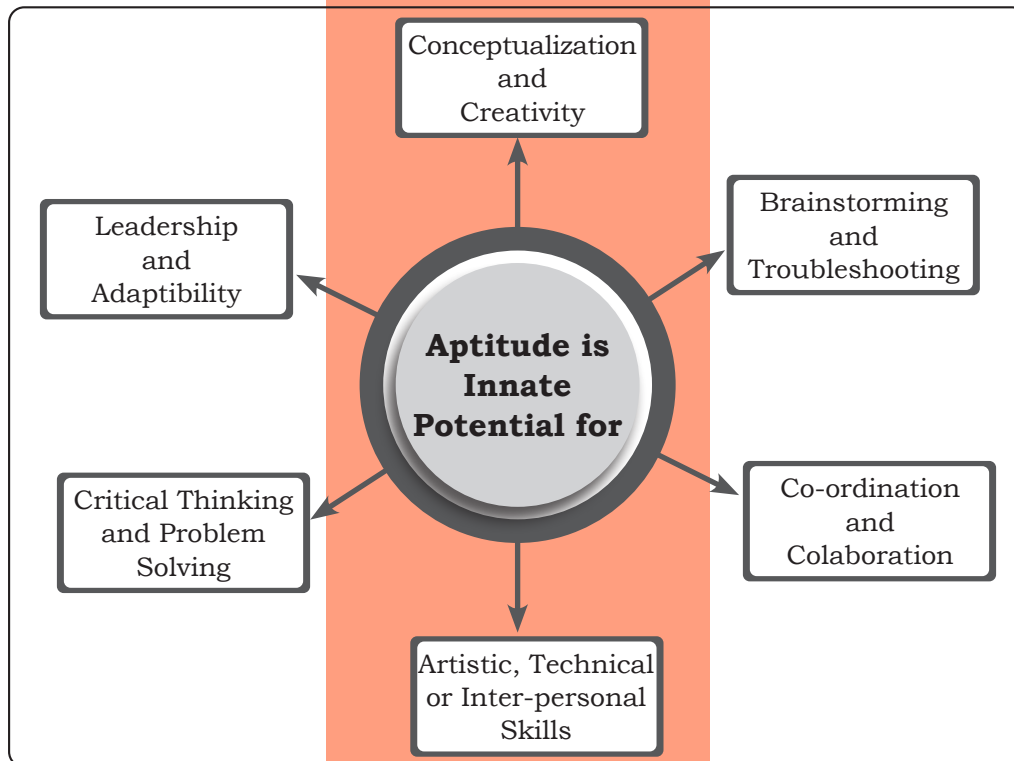
Aptitude & Foundational Values for Civil Services

1

Chapter

Aptitude is a natural ability or innate potential to learn or acquire a skill. It is a natural tendency for successful learning of some specific set of skills, which can be further enhanced with adequate knowledge and training. It indicates aptness/suitability to succeed in a particular field.

In other words, aptitude is a natural talent or inborn ability that makes it easier for us to learn or do certain things/tasks. For instance, the ability to paint, produce music, or learn languages, ability to lead and perform administrative functions, etc. Learning some skills comes more easily to some people and others require greater effort and practice. When we say that someone is 'gifted' or has a talent, it means he/she has aptitude for that particular skill/action.



Aptitude is different from interest, skill or intelligence as:

- Interest is something that attracts us without the need to have any particular skill for a thing. A person may be interested in a particular activity, job or training, but may not have the potential/aptitude to perform well in that particular area and achieve success. For example, one may have an intense interest in music, but not enough ability to succeed in a career as a performer.

- Skill is the knowledge or ability to perform a given task with ease and precision, aptitude on the other hand, denotes the potential to get skilled if training is done. While skills are the abilities that can be acquired by way of reading, observation, practice, and training, aptitude is inborn and unique.
- Intelligence is capacity for learning, reasoning, understanding, and similar forms of mental activity. It is the ability to learn and apply skills. On the other hand, aptitude is specific ability of a person to master a skill. However, aptitude requires a degree of intelligence to do the job well.

Aptitude for a Civil Servant

With the advent of the new public administration and increasing diversity in the administrative field, an administrator needs to adorn both physical and mental aptitude. He should have both General Mental Ability (basic thinking capacity and learning ability to perform any intellectual task) as well as desired value system of public administration to perform his duty, not only efficiently, but also effectively. Roughly the kinds of aptitude desired in a civil servant include:

- Good communication/interpersonal skills
- Leadership, management and organizational skills
- Critical thinking and listening ability
- Skill to effectively manage and raise resources
- Ability to establish collaborative networks and successful teamwork
- High level of professionalism
- Ability to think on their feet and develop innovative solutions
- Skill of persuasion and ability to negotiate with difficult people

Role and Importance of Aptitude in Civil Services

- The civil services form the permanent structure and backbone of the administration. A qualitative, professional, skilled and committed workforce is, hence imperative to maintain the high standards of public administration.
- In Indian public administration, the civil servants are entrusted with a diverse set of responsibilities such as from simple administrative and clerical tasks to complex decision making, policy implementation and serving as a link between government and citizens. Hence, it is vital for civil servants to possess diverse skills such as grasping capabilities, good analytical skills, and ability to establish collaborative networks and successful teamwork.
- In public administration, leaders face different kind of problems and challenges every day such as high unemployment, and insufficient government spending, fast changing socio-economic scenario, etc. Laws and administrative rules cannot explain everything and leaders cannot always mimic previous successes because the elements affecting each challenge change day to day. In such cases a civil servant needs abundance of impromptu decision making skills and critical thinking ability to exercise discretion with conviction.
- The emerging concept of e-governance and motto of 'Less Government More Governance', demand transformational changes in the machinery of government as well as in the work style and orientation of government officials. With the role and functions of



administrators having become swiftly changing and increasingly challenging, civil servants must be equipped with the necessary skills and capabilities to meet these new challenges. They must have the aptitude to master new technologies and new styles of functioning. They should serve as the 'Agents of Change' to catalyse reform initiatives.

- In a diverse country like India, the civil servants often face complex and often contrasting socio-economic objectives and challenges often creating a deep sense of moral/ethical dilemma in them about their own duties and functions. This demands an inherent aptitude to prevail over contradictions, solve the dilemmas and keep up the spirit to perform in spite of adverse circumstances.
- Under the framework of 'inclusive governance' administrators need to build teams across diverse stakeholders. For example, to create a favourable business climate in a city, an economic development director needs to bring together local business leaders, the Chamber of Commerce and also environmental advocates. This demands a civil servant to possess an ability to receive and act upon feedback as well as effective interpersonal skills to bridge the gaps and encourage collaboration for a common objective.

Aptitude and Attitude

Aptitude refers to the inherent ability to learn and grasp, whereas attitude refers to one's disposition towards an object, person or action. The fundamental difference between the two concepts can be enumerated as follows:

- Aptitude is the 'ability to learn' and attitude is the 'desire to learn', i.e., aptitude basically tells about the potential ability to learn or acquire a skill while, attitude tells about a person's desire to perform or learn.
- While attitude is associated with character or virtues; it is a reflection of one's personality, aptitude is associated with competence; it determines if the person can develop desired skills to do a task.
- Attitude is a psychological phenomenon which can be positive, negative or neutral. On the other hand, aptitude can be mental (general mental ability) or physical (motor).
- Aptitude remains fixed and determinate throughout our lives, however, the attitude may undergo continuous changes depending upon the consequences of past actions and knowledge gained from external sources.

Which is More Important? Attitude or Aptitude

- 'It is our attitude, not our aptitude that determines our altitude'
 - According to some experts, success is 99% attitude and 1% aptitude. As per research studies, recruiting people with the right skills can be costly if they do not have the right attitude, where there is a lack of 'fit'. In a study by Leadership IQ (of over 20,000 new hirings over 3 years), it was found that 46% of the people hired fail within the first 18 months on the job and they did not fail for lack of skills, but rather for lack of attitude. Thus, having people with a right attitude is considered more important for organizational success than having people with high aptitude and a wrong attitude.
 - Attitude is a motor driving the acquisition and use of a specific ability. If a person is fully equipped for a role, but lacks real enthusiasm, the best skill-set will count

for very little. For instance, a person having an aptitude for music, but lacking the desire to hone his/her skill will not make him/her a good musician no matter how greatly he might be gifted. It requires an attitude of competitive learning to develop and hone one's skills.

- When a positive mindset is undertaken, performance on nearly every level—productivity, creativity and engagement improves. Thomas Edison once said, “Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.” Therefore, to succeed in life, a positive attitude towards hard work and perseverance are extremely important.
- ‘We are not all equally talented in every task put before us’
 - Another point of view is that not everyone has the ability to learn the skills, especially at a proficient level. A person who is keen, but has no natural talent, ability and skill can hardly excel in the field. For instance, a person who has the willingness and enthusiasm to start a new business venture, but lacks the required business acumen will succumb to its pressure and challenges. Thus, a person with a good attitude, but no aptitude, is no good.
 - A person with a higher aptitude can outperform in learning a skill or performing a task while others struggle despite having a positive inclination towards it. For instance, sports is a common activity, but only an athlete or a sports person with unique talent and strength excels in the field. Excellent leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and George Washington had great skills and knowledge to capitalize on their strengths and develop the greatest potential in others.
- ‘Aptitude without attitude is blind; Attitude without aptitude is lame’

As per this view, both the right skills (aptitude) and the disposition (attitude) are equally important to excel in a particular field. It is the right blend of the two inherited and acquired qualities respectively that go hand in hand in determining the gains and losses in a person's life.

For instance, a person who is hardworking and sincere in his job as well as committed to his organizational goals, but lacks the initiative taking capabilities and the aptitude for leadership owing to his lack of soft skills, cannot be deemed fit for a higher level post. Similarly, if one has smart, persuasive and team building skills, but owing to the callous attitude towards work he cannot be trusted with a higher authority position.

The examples of famous scientists like Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein show us that along with their specific abilities, they also had the right disposition/mental attitude to face the challenges and not to give up even after successive failures.

Importance of Aptitude and Attitude in Public Administration

For a civil servant both these qualities, i.e., aptitude and attitude are of equal importance as they go hand in hand in developing a personality which inculcates a sense of service. A civil servant must have an aptitude/ability to do his job as well as an attitude to do his duty, i.e., to serve the people. For instance, in a feudal and patriarchal society, in order to promote female literacy, an officer must himself have a favourable attitude towards women empowerment along with the effective persuasive skills to change people's attitude.

The variety of challenges faced by a civil servant during his tenure like posting in an insurgent afflicted area, pressure of political executives to bend rules in their favour or



dilemma of following the rule book objectively, yet with an inclusive approach. This requires a combination of a right kind of attitude to face challenges with a positive outlook and a combination of intellectual aptitude, emotional aptitude and moral aptitude.

The dynamic field of new public administration with increasing use of technology for efficient delivery of services requires not only an attitude to adapt oneself to the changing environment and demands of the job, but also an aptitude to learn quickly to perform one's job in the most efficient way. In the field of public service, a civil servant needs to deal with a variety of stakeholders with different temperaments like seniors, subordinates, politicians, community leaders as well as common people. Here, attitudinal attributes like flexibility, patience, perseverance are as much important as aptitude related qualities like focus, team building, prudence and negotiation ability for efficient discharge of one's duty.

In a diverse country like India, where social and religious tensions and conflicts can be of frequent occurrence, a civil servant would require not only an attitude of tolerance, but also skills of leadership and persuasion to establish peace and order.

Foundational Values of Civil Services

Civil/public service values are those values which are created and sustained by the government on behalf of the public. These are the principles on which government and policies should be based on. Adherence to foundational values such as integrity, objectivity, non-partisanship, tolerance, compassion, dedication to public service, etc., serve as guiding principles for civil servants in the discharge of public service duties. Moreover, they provide normative consensus about the rights and benefits to which citizens are entitled to.

In India, civil service values have evolved over years of tradition. Values like integrity and devotion to duty, etc., have been mentioned in Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964 and the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968 which a civil servant must follow in his/her tenure of service to the nation. Meanwhile, the Draft Public Service Bill, 2007 enumerated certain values which should guide the public servants in the discharge of their functions. These include allegiance to the various ideals enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution, apolitical functioning, good governance for betterment of the people to be the primary goal of civil service, duty to act objectively and impartially, accountability and transparency in decision-making, maintenance of the highest ethical standards, merit to be the criteria for selection of civil servants, avoidance of wastage in expenditure, etc.

However, the most important guide for the development of a Code of Ethics for public services has been the recommendations made in the 10th Report of Second Administrative Reforms Commission. The Commission recommended that in addition to upholding the constitutional spirit, the civil servants shall be guided by the values which include adherence to the highest standards of integrity and conduct; impartiality and non-partisanship; objectivity; dedication to public service; and empathy and compassion towards the weaker sections.

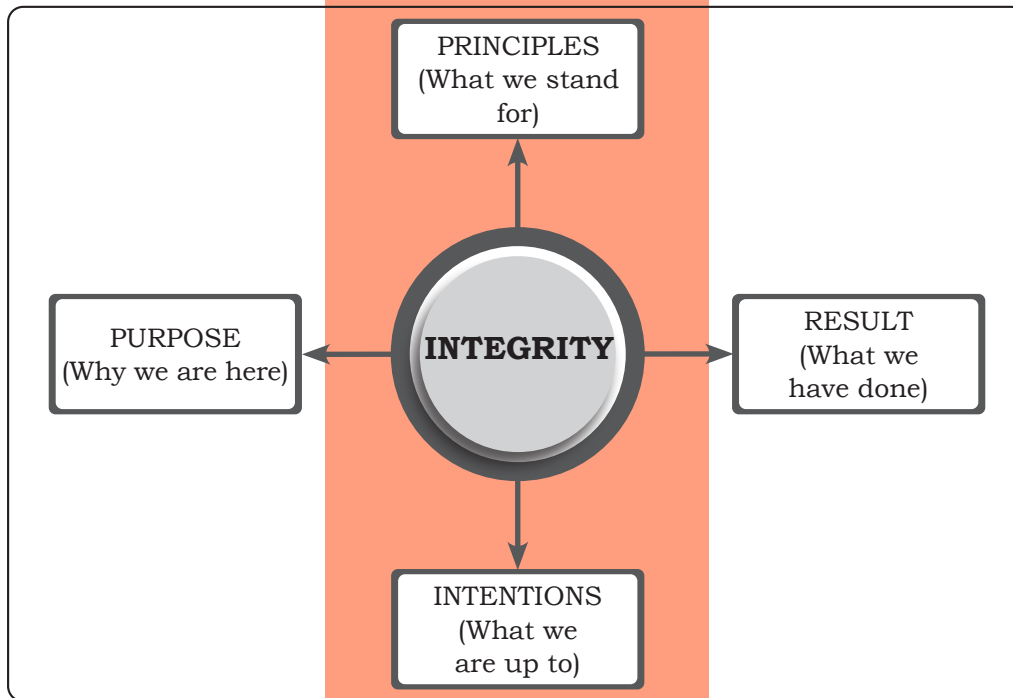
Integrity

Integrity means adopting similar standards or moral principles in similar situations across time and interested parties. In other words, it means to be honest and consistent in thoughts, speech and action. It is a quality of eliminating the gap between 'what we think, what we say, and what we do'. It means doing the right thing even when nobody is

watching. A man of integrity is never influenced by contentions and pressures from outside and would only respond to his conscience.

The term 'integrity' comes from the Latin adjective 'Integer' meaning whole or complete. In this context, it means an inner sense of wholeness and soundness of moral principles. It is the consistency of character across time and situations.

Integrity is a four-step process- keeping in mind the aim/ purpose of one's action or inaction and acting consistently with that choice, even when it is inconvenient or unprofitable to do so; choosing the right course of conduct in conformity with moral principles; openly declaring one's intentions or where one stands; and the results of one's actions.



Types of Integrity

As integrity involves managing various commitments and values, one might conjecture that integrity can take many manifestations based on person's overall integrity.

- **Intellectual integrity:** It refers to practicing what one advocates for; being consistent and true in one's thinking. Integrity is often characterized as a kind of 'openness'— an openness to criticism and to the ideas of others. It requires one to overcome self deception and temptation and act in accordance with one's truthful conscience. Socrates was an outstanding example of a person of intellectual integrity who was committed to the pursuit of truth and knowledge, and demonstrated it even in the face of attacks on his integrity.
- **Moral integrity:** It refers to consistency and honesty in the application of standards of morality or right and wrong; used for judging others as well as oneself. It requires an unconditional and unyielding commitment to ethical principles. Like Buddha emphasized on the purity of 'thoughts, words and deeds'.



- **Professional integrity:** It refers to acting in accordance with professional values, standards and norms with consistency and willingness; even in the face of criticism or allurements. For example, holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations (like accepting gifts or favours) that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Political Integrity

Integrity is important for politicians because they are chosen, appointed, or elected to serve society. In order to be able to serve the society, politicians are given power in their positions to make, execute, or control policy. They have the power to bring change and make a difference. There is, however, a risk that this power will not be used by politicians to serve society. Aristotle said that ‘because the rulers have power they will be tempted to use it for personal gain’. It is important that politicians withstand this temptation, and to do so requires integrity.

Furthermore, integrity is not just about why a politician acts in a certain way, but also about who the politician is. The general perception of people about the honesty and integrity of their representatives is crucial to build trust between the governing and the governed. Therefore, integrity is about having the right ethical virtues that become visible in a pattern of behaviour.

Integrity is Not a Single Trait

The virtue of integrity does not exist in isolation rather it involves several other virtues to supplement and complement it. People with integrity are guided by a set of core principles that empowers them to behave consistently to high standards. The core principles of integrity are virtues such as honesty, wisdom, compassion, objectivity, courage, trustworthiness, etc. Thus, integrity is equated with trustworthiness, steadfastness to commitments, and moral uprightness. To be a ‘Man of Integrity’, one needs to:

- Be courageous to be able to face personal consequences. For example, IAS officer Ashok Khemka has been transferred 45 times in 23 years by state governments after he exposed corruption in the departments he was posted in.
- Resist temptations and allurements to do or submit to what is against public service values.
- Listen and act according to one’s conscience.
- Be honest and consistent to core beliefs and values.
- Be objective and rational in approach.

Integrity: A Holistic Approach to Life

Integrity is not limited to a single role or aspect of life. Personal life (responsibility and honesty towards spouse, friend and family), professional life (commitment to work and professional values) as well as social life (public welfare v. private interest) all demand integrity. An individual life is an integrated whole. One cannot separate his/her personal life or conduct from his professional or social life. For example, a police officer, who practices domestic violence at home, cannot be trusted with neutrality and ‘justice to all’ approach while doing his duty.