



Mains Practice Question

Q. What does the following quotation mean to you?

“Never let your sense of morals get in the way of doing what's right.” -Isaac Asimov (150 Words)

13 Jan, 2022 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Begin by explaining the meaning of the given quote.
- Justify the above statement with examples from different fields
- In conclusion, try to link this statement with governance and policy implementation

Answer

Our morals are standards of behaviour or principles of right and wrong which we have given to ourselves. These are derived from our pedagogy, social influence, emotional experiences and personal beliefs. We are naturally inclined to promote and protect these ideals and if we encounter anything antithetical to our moral standards it generates derision and dislike for that thing.

However, all individuals should be aware of the limitations of their moral standards as it may or may not conform to social morals or the moral principles of the others. Such a recognition becomes all the more necessary in the life of those whose actions have far wider implications on the life of others and the society, like individuals in public service. Thus, for committing oneself to righteous decisions and actions by creating a congruity between personal ideals and ideals of others, one can approach the situations in the following manner:

- **The issue of prejudice:** Our belief in personal moral principles may be prejudices in disguise. For example, earlier in Indian society untouchability was practised- where one particular section of the society was deemed impure and eating with them or coming in their contact was considered polluting for others. People perceived it as moral but in reality, it was prejudice.
- **Private and Public life:** Our morals govern our life in the private sphere. But one should not impose this on his/her actions in public life.
- **The obligation of duty and personal beliefs:** Sometimes one's duty in life may be violative of personal morals. In such a conflict, we are required to make a trade-off, and recognise what is the right thing to do. For example, Mahatma Gandhi during the Boer War in South Africa and World War I created an ambulance corps to help the victims. This was not because he sympathized with the British cause but it was his duty as British Indian Citizen to assist the army, even though it involved compromising his personal beliefs.
- **Prioritising universal moral principles:** There are some values which are universal in nature and these should be adhered to even at the cost of personal morals. These values include compassion, altruism, empathy and tolerance. Some of these find resonance in our constitution, particularly in fundamental duties. These values should be put above one's sense of morality, in case of conflict between the two.

What constitutes the right thing to do in various situations may differ from person to person based on their subjective moral standards. However, when a decision is made based on the values-which one is expected to uphold, in his/her respective capacity, such decisions/actions are always right and morally justified.

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