



Mains Practice Question

Q. Analyze the role of whistleblowing in promoting transparency and accountability in public administration. Evaluate its ethical and legal dimensions. **(250 Words)**

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Approach

- Start the answer by introducing the Whistleblowing.
- Illustrate the role of whistleblowing in promoting transparency and accountability in public administration.
- Evaluate its ethical and legal dimensions.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Whistleblowing, the act of disclosing information about illegal, unethical, or harmful activities within an organization, plays a crucial role in promoting transparency and accountability in public administration.

- In India, The Whistle-blower Protection Act, 2014 established a mechanism for receiving and inquiring into public interest disclosures against acts of corruption, wilful misuse of power or discretion, or criminal offences by public servants.

Body

- **Promoting Transparency:**
 - Whistleblowing serves as a powerful tool for unveiling hidden truths within public administration. By exposing corruption, fraud, or malpractice, whistleblowers shed light on clandestine activities that undermine the principles of transparency.
 - For instance, Edward Snowden's revelations about mass surveillance by the NSA unveiled the extent of government intrusion into privacy, sparking global debates on surveillance ethics.
- **Fostering Accountability:**
 - Accountability lies at the core of effective governance. Whistleblowing acts as a check on abuse of power, ensuring that public officials are held responsible for their actions.
 - Cases such as the Watergate scandal, where whistleblowers exposed political misconduct leading to the resignation of the then US President, highlight the pivotal role of whistleblowing in holding leaders accountable.
- **Ethical Dimensions:**
 - Ethical considerations underpin whistleblowing actions. Whistleblowers often face ethical dilemmas, torn between loyalty to their organization and a moral duty to disclose wrongdoing.
 - The ethical principle of utilitarianism, which prioritizes the greatest good for the greatest number, supports whistleblowing when it serves the public interest, even if it contradicts organizational loyalty.
- **Legal Dimensions:**
 - Legal protections for whistleblowers vary across jurisdictions. While some countries have

robust whistleblower protection laws, others lack adequate safeguards, leaving whistleblowers vulnerable to retaliation.

- For instance, the United States enacted the Whistleblower Protection Act, 1989 to shield federal employees from reprisals, thereby encouraging disclosures of wrongdoing.

▪ **Challenges and Risks:**

- Whistleblowing entails inherent risks and challenges. Whistleblowers often face retaliation, ranging from harassment to termination, jeopardizing their careers and livelihoods.
- The case of Chelsea Manning, who faced imprisonment for leaking classified documents exposing war crimes, underscores the personal sacrifices whistleblowers may endure.

▪ **Institutional Responses:**

- Effective whistleblowing mechanisms require institutional support. Organizations need to establish clear policies and procedures for reporting misconduct, coupled with assurances of confidentiality and non-retaliation.
- For example, the establishment of whistleblower hotlines in corporate settings provides employees with a secure channel to report wrongdoing anonymously.

▪ **Public Perception and Impact:**

- Public perception of whistleblowers varies widely, influenced by cultural, social, and political factors. While some view whistleblowers as courageous truth-seekers, others perceive them as traitors or troublemakers.
- The portrayal of whistleblowers in the media can shape public opinion and influence policy responses, highlighting the interconnectedness between whistleblowing, media, and public discourse.

▪ **Global Perspectives:**

- Whistleblowing transcends national boundaries, with global implications for governance and accountability. International organizations play a crucial role in advocating for whistleblower protections and fostering a culture of transparency.
- The emergence of platforms like WikiLeaks, which facilitate the anonymous disclosure of classified information, underscores the global reach of whistleblowing activism.

Conclusion

Whistleblowing serves as a cornerstone of transparency and accountability in public administration, transcending ethical, legal, and practical dimensions. Upholding the rights and protections of whistleblowers is imperative for safeguarding democratic principles and promoting good governance on a global scale. Examples like Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, and the Watergate scandal underscore the transformative impact of whistleblowing on public discourse and accountability.