



Mains Practice Question

Q. How does the idea of 'moral agency' influence the responsibility of individuals in positions of power? **(150 words)**

22 Aug, 2024 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach:

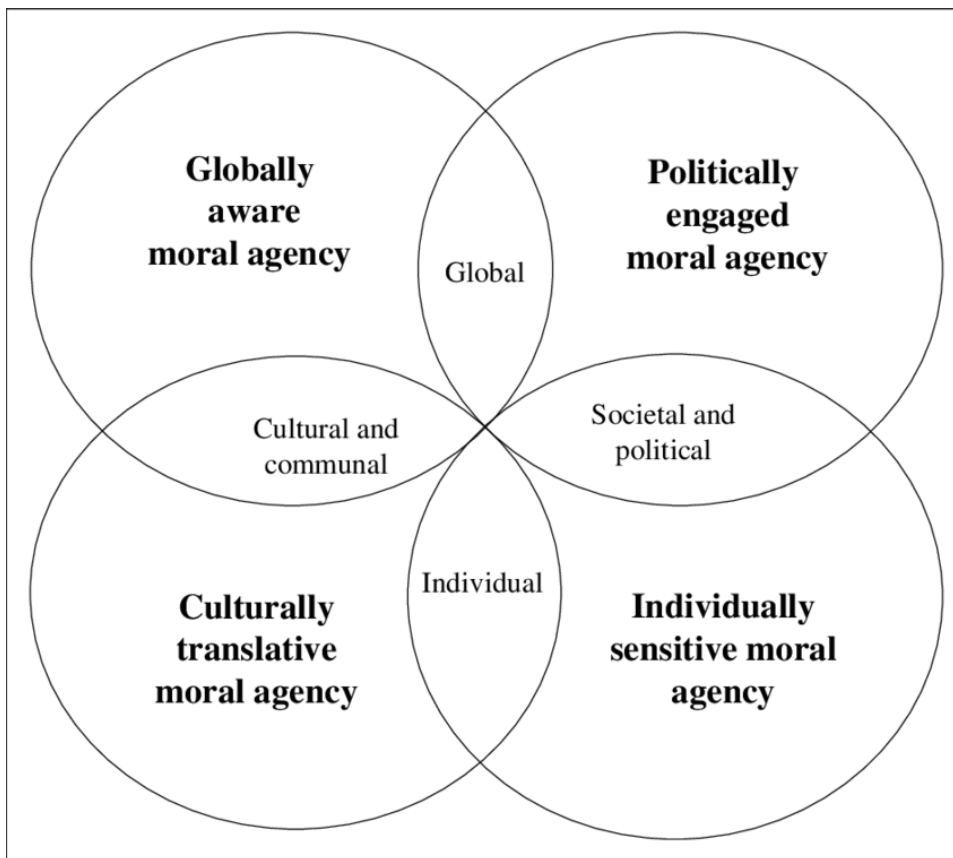
- Introduce the answer by defining moral agency and its key components
- Give supporting arguments to Enhanced Responsibility of Individuals in Power
- Conclude positively.

Introduction

The concept of **moral agency**, which posits that individuals are **capable of making informed and ethical choices**, is central to understanding the responsibilities of those in positions of power.

- These individuals, due to their influence and authority, bear a **heightened moral obligation** to act with integrity and in the best interests of the public they serve.
- **Key Components of Moral Agency**
 - **Autonomy:** The ability to make choices independently without undue external influence.
 - **Rationality:** The capacity to reason logically and critically.
 - **Consciousness:** The awareness of oneself and one's surroundings, including moral considerations.

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Body

Enhanced Responsibility of Individuals in Power

- **Amplified Impact of Decisions:** Those in power have a broader sphere of influence, meaning their decisions affect a larger number of people.
 - **E Sreedharan's** decisions in managing the **Delhi Metro project** affected millions of daily commuters, local businesses, and urban development, showcasing how a leader's choices can have far-reaching consequences.
- **Access to Privileged Information:** Leaders often have access to information not available to the general public, increasing their responsibility to make informed and ethical decisions.
 - As a key figure in **India's missile program**, **Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** had access to sensitive national security information, carrying the responsibility to use this knowledge for the **country's defense while maintaining ethical standards.**
- **Role Model Effect:** Those in power serve as role models, influencing the behavior and values of others through their actions.
 - **Rohit Sharma** exemplifies the "**Role Model Effect**" by treating all players equally and supporting younger teammates like a big brother.
 - His leadership style, marked by humility and inclusiveness, inspires young players to emulate his approach both on and off the field.
- **Resource Control:** Powerful individuals often control significant resources, amplifying their capacity to effect change - **both positive and negative.**
 - **Azim Premji's** control over vast corporate resources at **Wipro** and his decision to donate a significant portion of his wealth to education exemplify the ethical use of financial power.
- **Systemic Influence:** Those in power can **shape systems and institutions**, creating long-lasting impacts beyond their immediate actions.
 - T.N. Seshan reforms as **Chief Election Commissioner** reshaped India's electoral system, demonstrating how those in power can create lasting institutional change.
- **Capacity to Address Complexity:** Power often comes with the ability to tackle large-scale, complex problems, creating a responsibility to address issues others cannot.
 - **Kailash Satyarthi's (Child Rights Activist)** unique position allowed him to address the

complex issue of child labor, demonstrating how leaders can tackle large-scale social problems.

- **Accountability for Organizational Culture:** Those in power shape the **culture and ethical climate of their organizations**, bearing responsibility for the collective behavior of those under their influence.
 - **Narayan Murthy's** emphasis on corporate governance at Infosys set the tone for ethical practices, influencing the culture of the **entire Indian IT industry**.

Conclusion

The idea of moral agency is **fundamental to understanding the responsibilities of individuals in positions of power**. These individuals, due to their influence and the trust placed in them, bear a heightened moral obligation to **act with integrity, fairness, and in the best interests of the public they serve**. By recognizing and fulfilling their moral agency, leaders can inspire others, promote positive change, and leave a lasting legacy.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/mains-practice-question/question-8428/pnt>

