



Mains Practice Question

Q. With the changing nature of public administration and higher expectations from public servants, codes of conduct in the public sphere assumed greater importance. Comment. (150 Words)

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Approach

- Introduce with explaining the codes of conduct that are expectations from public servants.
- Discuss the importance of the code of conduct in the sphere of public service
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

A code of conduct is a set of rules, standards of behaviour or practices for an individual or organization that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of an organization in a way that contributes to the welfare of its stakeholders.

For example, the Election Commission of India's Model Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for conduct of political parties and candidates during elections mainly with respect to speeches, polling day, polling booths, portfolios, election manifestos, processions and general conduct.

Similarly a set of codes of rules are prescribed for civil servants with regard to their conduct in performing their duties. Codes of conduct are normally written documents. Besides the explicit codes, there are implicit unwritten norms too.

Body

Importance of Code of Conduct in the sphere of public service

- The motto that "public service is a public trust" recognises that compared to ordinary citizens, public servants enjoy many powers and privileges. Hence, codes of conduct for civil servants impose special obligations and restrictions on exercise of public power and authority.
- Codes of Conduct increase the possibility that government servants will act in public interest and will avoid improper forms of behaviour.
- By continuously comparing their conduct against prescribed norms, civil servants get into the habit of doing the right things.
- Codes Of Conduct express the commitment civil servants to certain moral standards
- The codes set standards for public servants and express their special responsibility as members of the civil administrative system.
- Codes of conduct can prove effective by appealing to one's pride and moral sense or by creating a sense of remorse for wrong doing.

Further, International organizations have recognised the usefulness of code of conduct in international anti-corruption agreements. The **U.N. Convention against Corruption (2003) recognised** a public service code as necessary for prevention of corruption:

- States must endeavour to ensure that their public services are subject to safeguards that promote efficiency, transparency, and recruitment based on merit.
- Once recruited, public servants should be subject to codes of conduct, requirements for financial and other disclosures, and appropriate disciplinary measures

Conclusion

It is necessary to chart out codes of conduct for public servants on the basis of code of ethics. They both are complementary to each other.

To streamline both it is necessary to execute the reforms recommended in the second Administrative Reform Committee (ARC) report such as that the rigid rule bound bureaucracies should be changed into flexible and action-oriented.

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