



Mains Practice Question

Q. "Individual moral attitudes shape collective social consciousness." Comment with reference to public service. **(150 words)**

09 Jan, 2025 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Introduce the answer by briefing Individual moral attitudes shape social consciousness
- Highlight the Link Between Individual Morality and Social Consciousness
- Delve into Public Service and the Multiplier Effect of Moral Attitudes
- Highlight the Challenges in Translating Individual Morality into Collective Social Consciousness
- Suggest a Way Forward
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Individual moral attitudes form the foundation of a society's collective social consciousness. **Personal ethics, integrity, and values** not only guide **individual behavior but also influence societal norms and expectations**. In public service, where decisions impact millions, the moral attitudes of individuals play a crucial role in shaping governance systems, public trust, and collective social behavior.

Body

Link Between Individual Morality and Social Consciousness

- **Reflection of Leadership Values:** Public officials with high moral standards set an example for society, creating a ripple effect on collective values.
 - **Example:** IAS officer **Armstrong Pame, known as the "Miracle Man of Manipur,"** demonstrated selflessness by constructing a 100-km road without government funding, inspiring collective community efforts.
- **Building Trust in Governance:** Individual morality fosters accountability and transparency, instilling public confidence in institutions.
 - **Example:** **T.N. Seshan**, the former Chief Election Commissioner, upheld integrity in electoral reforms, reshaping public perception of free and fair elections.
- **Role in Policy Implementation:** Moral public servants ensure equitable implementation of welfare schemes, addressing societal inequalities.
 - **Example:** Officers fighting against corruption in programs like the Public Distribution System (PDS) strengthen public trust in governance.

Public Service and the Multiplier Effect of Moral Attitudes

- **Ethical Leadership Inspiring Collective Action:** Leaders with ethical convictions motivate societal participation in initiatives like **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**.
- **Promoting Social Justice:** Moral attitudes help reduce biases and foster inclusion in public service delivery.

- Civil servants supporting marginalized groups, like **promoting land rights for tribal communities, enhance collective social justice.**
- **Resistance to Moral Decay:** Individual integrity resists **corruption and nepotism**, preventing the normalization of unethical practices in society.
 - **Example:** Whistleblowers like **Satyendra Dubey (against corruption in the National Highways Authority of India)** challenged institutional complacency.

Challenges in Translating Individual Morality into Collective Social Consciousness

- **Systemic Constraints:** Ethical individuals may face resistance in corrupt systems.
- **Societal Pushback:** Traditional norms and vested interests can **impede collective acceptance of moral reforms.**
- **Lack of Institutional Support:** Without mechanisms for protection, individuals may struggle to sustain moral stands (**e.g., harassment of whistleblowers**).

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Ethical Foundations in Public Service** Introduce compulsory ethics training for public servants to develop a strong moral compass and improve their ability to take principled stands.
 - Programs like **Mission Karmayogi** are a step in the right direction.
- **Institutionalizing Protection for Ethical Public Servants:** Strengthen laws like the **Whistleblower Protection Act** to safeguard individuals exposing corruption or unethical practices.
 - Establish **independent bodies** to review and support public servants facing challenges due to their moral decisions.
- **Promoting Community Participation in Governance:** Encourage participatory governance models to align public service decisions with the moral expectations of society.
 - **Kerala's Kudumbashree model** promotes grassroots participation, fostering trust and collective consciousness.
- **Encouraging a Value-Based Education System:** Integrate **value-based education** in schools to nurture future citizens with a strong ethical foundation.
 - Run campaigns to **emphasize the importance of morality in public life**, thereby creating societal pressure for ethical governance.

Conclusion

Individual moral attitudes act as **seeds that shape collective social consciousness, especially in public service**, where the actions of a few can influence millions. The ethical resolve of public servants is crucial in creating a governance system that prioritizes fairness, transparency, and inclusivity.