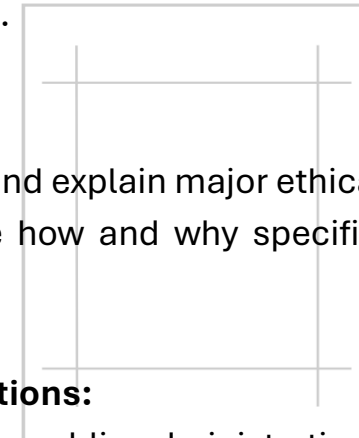


Discuss the major problems affecting ethical conduct in public administration. Examine how politicisation, corruption and pressure groups have aggravated these problems in recent times.

Question Understanding – Finding Information

- **Precise Syllabus Mapping:** Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration. (GS Paper – IV)
- **Essential Instructions in GS Paper IV Answer Writing:**
 - Answer the question as a future civil servant, not as a philosopher. Clearly mention the ethical principles involved; keep any flowcharts/diagrams simple and concise.
- **Directive words:**
 - Discuss → Identify and explain major ethical problems
 - Examine → Analyse how and why specific factors have worsened these problems
- **Focal points of the questions:**
 - Ethical challenges in public administration
 - Role of: Politicisation, Corruption & Pressure groups
 - Contemporary relevance



Answer Writing Structure (Outline)

Introduction Paragraph

- Ethics-centric framing
- Governance orientation

Body Paragraph

A. Major Problems Affecting Ethical Conduct

- **Decline in Integrity and Probity**
 - Conflict of interest
 - Misuse of public office
- **Loss of Neutrality and Objectivity**
 - Biased decision-making
 - Favouritism and nepotism
- **Weak Accountability and Transparency**
 - Delayed disciplinary action
 - Ineffective oversight mechanisms
- **Ethical Apathy and Normalisation of Wrongdoing**
 - Moral relativism
 - “Ends justify the means” mindset

B. How Politicisation, Corruption and Pressure Groups Aggravate These Problems

- **Politicisation of Administration**
Aggravating Role
 - Undermines administrative neutrality
 - Frequent transfers create ethical insecurity
 - Pressure to prioritise political loyalty over public interest
- **Corruption**
Aggravating Role
 - Encourages abuse of discretion
 - Distorts service delivery and policy outcomes
 - Erodes citizens' trust in institutions

- **Pressure Groups**

- Aggravating Role**

- Policy capture by vested interests
 - Unequal access to decision-makers
 - Ethical compromise due to lobbying and coercion

- **C. Inter-Linkages (Analytical Edge)**

- Politicisation shields corruption
 - Corruption empowers pressure groups
 - Pressure groups reinforce politicisation

- **Conclusion (max. 30-35 Words)**

- Reform-oriented
 - Ethical leadership focus

Dos & Don'ts

- **Do for Maximum Marks**

- ✓ Can use Brainstorming idea (in words): Politicisation → Corruption → Pressure Groups → Ethical Decline
 - ✓ Use Ethics vocabulary (integrity, neutrality, accountability)
 - ✓ Cite governance-based examples
 - ✓ Maintain balanced and analytical tone
 - ✓ Separate problems and causes clearly
 - ✓ Write from public interest perspective

- **Don't do these Common Mistakes**

- × Avoid political commentary or party references
 - × Don't moralise or preach
 - × Avoid naming individuals or scandals
 - × Don't write a GS-II polity answer
 - × Avoid generic statements without analysis

Notes Oriented Content for Writing Answer

Ethical conduct in public administration is the cornerstone of democratic legitimacy, ensuring that officials act with integrity, impartiality, and a commitment to the public good. However, modern governance faces a deep-rooted crisis of values, where the gap between official codes of conduct and actual practice leads to widespread systemic failures.

Major Problems Affecting Ethical Conduct

The fundamental ethical challenges in public administration often stem from the friction between personal interests and professional duties:

- **Conflict of Interest:** Situations where a public official's personal interests (financial, familial, or professional) could compromise their impartiality.
- **Abuse of Discretionary Power:** Broad administrative powers often lack sufficient checks, leading to arbitrary decision-making and favouritism.
- **Lack of Accountability:** Constitutional protections (like Article 311 in India) and complex hierarchies can sometimes reduce the enforcement of accountability for unethical actions.
- **Culture of Secrecy:** Opaque decision-making processes limit public scrutiny, creating an environment where misconduct can go unnoticed.
- **Evasive Tendency:** A lack of initiative or shifting of responsibility ("buck-passing") to avoid difficult ethical dilemmas or risks.
- **Systemic Pressures:** Resource crunches, unrealistic targets, and a "toxic work culture" often force officials to prioritize outcomes over ethical processes.

Aggravating Factors in Recent Times

A. Politicisation

The "politicisation of bureaucracy" has shifted the loyalty of public servants from the Constitution to the political executive.

- **Spoils System Dynamics:** The use of transfers and postings as "rewards or punishments" tames independent bureaucracy and forces partisan alignment.
- **Policy Paralysis:** Honest officers may fear political vendetta (e.g., frequent transfers), leading to a "play it safe" attitude or red-tapism.

- **Post-Retirement Allure:** Expectations of post-retirement positions can influence active officials to make biased decisions in favour of the government.

B. Corruption

Corruption is often viewed as "greasing the wheels" of departments, but it severely erodes the moral fiber of administration.

- **Collusive Corruption:** An "unholy nexus" between politicians, bureaucrats, and anti-social groups leads to large-scale scams like 2G Spectrum or Vyapam.
- **Normalization of Bribery:** Complex bureaucratic layers for basic services have normalized petty bribery, destroying the "spirit of service" among junior staff.
- **Injustice and Inequality:** Corruption acts as a regressive tax, diverting welfare funds from the marginalized and deepening social injustice.

C. Pressure Groups

While essential for democracy, some pressure groups have recently aggravated ethical challenges through "influence peddling".

- **Cronyism & Lobbying:** Powerful interest groups (e.g., industrial lobbies) exert pressure for favorable legislation, often at the expense of public welfare.
- **Undue Pressure on Field Officers:** Local pressure groups or "vested interests" can use public protests or political connections to force administrators into unethical compromises.
- **Marginalization of General Interest:** Aggressive advocacy for narrow specific interests can lead to an "unfair resource allocation" that ignores the broader common good.

To conclude the discussion on ethical conduct in public administration, it is evident that while structural problems like limited accountability and excessive discretionary powers persist, modern aggravators have deepened the crisis. Ultimately, an administration is only as trustworthy as the ethical framework it upholds. Without systemic reforms and committed leadership, these issues will continue to weaken the "social contract" between the state and its citizens.
