

• THE IAS AKADEMIA • VIKASH SIR

CLASS I OF III • 18 AUGUST 2026 • 7:00 PM

The Final Revision *Marathon*

Ethics & Essay • UPSC CSE Mains 2026

Day One — Ethics: turning what you already know into marks the examiner can see.

500

MARKS IN PLAY

3

CLASSES

0

NEW BOOKS

We are because you are

18 · 19 · 20 August — 7:00 PM every evening

TUESDAY 18 · TONIGHT

Ethics End to End

Definitions · 20 diagrams · example bank ·
thinkers · the case-study method

90 MINUTES

WEDNESDAY 19

Essay Architecture

Decoding · thesis · ten introductions ·
transitions · counter-argument · eight
conclusions

90 MINUTES

THURSDAY 20

You Write. We Evaluate.

Two timed essay attempts, a case study, then the
grand revision of both papers

90 MINUTES

Nothing new enters your preparation after Thursday. Everything after that is recall.

THE OPPORTUNITY

500

250 GS Paper IV — Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

250 Essay — two essays, 125 each

Two papers with no fixed syllabus to finish — and therefore the two papers where the distance between what you know and what you score is widest.

ESSAY I	ESSAY II	THEORY	EXAMPLES	CASE STUDIES
Sharper thesis	Connected paragraphs	Definition + diagram	Specific, two lines	Decision + safeguard

Target: a +100 swing. *Not a promise — an arithmetic possibility, earned five marks at a time.*

You do not need more content. You need faster retrieval.

WHAT MOST ASPIRANTS DO THIS WEEK

A new compilation from a friend

A new thinker discovered on day four

A fourth PDF on the same twelve values

Re-reading, because re-reading feels safe

Panic disguised as preparation

Adds pages. Adds nothing to the booklet.

WHAT THE LAST THREE DAYS ARE FOR

Recall — say it without the notes

Consolidation — one page per theme

Application — the same example, five questions

Presentation — heading, diagram, whitespace

Practice — under the clock

Adds nothing to your knowledge. Adds marks.

Mains is no longer a test of how much you know. It is a test of how much of what you know reaches the answer booklet.

Five movements, one paper

I	The Definition Bank	Forty terms, reproducible in twenty seconds — and the six distinctions examiners keep testing	18 min
II	The Diagram Bank	Ten frameworks you can redraw in under ninety seconds, usable across fifty answers	20 min
III	The Example Bank	Fifty examples across eight domains — each written in two lines, never a biography	18 min
IV	Thinkers in Twenty Seconds	Verified quotations, the misattribution trap, and Indian philosophy used as argument	16 min
V	The Case-Study Method	One flowchart, one mnemonic, one live attempt — then the exam-hall algorithm	18 min

MOVEMENT ONE

The Definition Bank

Every GS-IV answer opens with a definition. It is worth one to two marks, takes twenty seconds, and is the single most reliable place to signal precision — or to reveal that you are improvising.



Ordinary definition versus high-scoring definition

ORDINARY

"Integrity means honesty. An officer with integrity does not take bribes and follows the rules."

*Circular, moralising, indistinguishable from four hundred other scripts.
Earns the mark for effort, not for precision.*

HIGH-SCORING

"Integrity is the condition of being undivided — a consistent alignment between stated values, private conviction and public conduct, so that an officer is not a different person depending on who is asking."

*Names the genus, adds the differentiator, ends in administrative behaviour.
Twenty-two seconds to write.*

THE FORMULA

Genus + Differentiator + Administrative consequence

= Two marks in twenty seconds

Rule for tonight: if a definition cannot be written in twenty-five seconds, it is not a definition — it is a paragraph pretending to be one.

Foundations — the eight that open most answers

BANK 1 OF 3

Ethics

The systematic, reasoned inquiry into what is right — a standard that exists independently of law and of what a community happens to practise.

Morality

The actual norms a community holds and practises — which can be sincerely believed and still be ethically indefensible.

Value

A deeply held belief about what is important, which silently decides action when two duties compete and no rule settles the matter.

Virtue

A settled, no-longer-effortful disposition of character — Aristotle's *hexis* — a trained habit rather than a rule recited each morning.

Conscience

The internal moral recognition that arrives before any external instruction — Aquinas separates the innate grasp of principle from its application to this case.

Duty

An obligation to act regardless of personal preference or convenience — the patient's need does not wait on the doctor's mood.

Dharma

Duty calibrated to role and circumstance — *svadharma* is the duty specific to this person in this situation, not a universal rule for everyone.

Justice

Three kinds usually operate in one decision — distributive (fair allocation), procedural (fair process), corrective (fair remedy). Name which one is at stake.

Answer move: define, then immediately locate the term in a decision. "Ethics asks what should be done; morality reports what is done — an officer meets the gap between them most weeks."

Governance ethics — the vocabulary of public office

BANK 2 OF 3

Integrity

Being undivided — the same person regardless of who is asking. A property of the individual.

Probity

Integrity built into process — systems, audit and disclosure that make corruption structurally difficult regardless of who is posted there.

Objectivity

Deciding on evidence and impartial analysis, free of personal preference — the rule applied identically regardless of who is asking.

Impartiality

Treating all parties equally on relevant criteria, without favour on irrelevant grounds — caste, religion, kinship, political affiliation.

Accountability

Answerability with consequence — vertical (to a superior), horizontal (to CAG, CVC, courts) and social (to citizens directly).

Transparency

The condition in which processes, criteria and records are visible to those affected — wage theft is hardest where the muster roll is on the wall.

Constitutional Morality

Fidelity to the Constitution's underlying spirit — equality, dignity, due process — not merely to its enforceable text. Ambedkar: it has to be cultivated.

Discretion

Latitude to decide within a rule. The same latitude that permits compassion in a good officer permits extraction in a bad one — hence criteria and record.

One-line differentiator to memorise: integrity is a person, probity is a system; objectivity is about evidence, impartiality is about persons.

Attitude, aptitude and emotional intelligence

BANK 3 OF 3

Attitude

A learned evaluative response with three components — cognition (belief), affect (feeling), behaviour (tendency).

Aptitude

The capacity to actually perform a role's functions. The examination measures knowledge; the cyclone measures aptitude.

Emotional Intelligence

The capacity to recognise, understand, manage and use emotion — one's own and others' — in judgment and action.

Self-Awareness

Knowing one's emotional state, its triggers and its effect on judgment — naming the gap in real time, not afterwards.

Self-Regulation

The pause between noticing an emotion and choosing a response — managing disruptive feeling rather than reacting automatically.

Empathy vs Sympathy

Empathy understands from within the other's perspective and alters action; sympathy is feeling that often leaves action unchanged.

Amygdala Hijack

Goleman's term for the amygdala overriding the prefrontal cortex — if an officer speaks in that half-second, he speaks without judgment.

Public Service Motivation

Perry's finding that public servants can be intrinsically motivated by the social value of the work.

Answer move: never write "EI is important." Name the domain that failed — a collector who shouts at a sarpanch has a self-regulation failure, not a knowledge failure.

The six distinctions examiners keep testing

ETHICS · MORALITY

Reasoned standard of right versus the norms a group actually practises.
Practices can be sincere and still indefensible.

INTEGRITY · PROBITY

Virtue of a person versus virtue designed into a process. Integrity transfers out; probity stays behind.

EMPATHY · SYMPATHY

Understanding from inside the other's position versus feeling on their behalf. Only the first reliably changes the decision.

OBJECTIVITY · IMPARTIALITY

Fidelity to evidence versus equal treatment of persons. An officer can be impartial between parties and still reason from bad data.

BRIBERY · EXTORTION

Both parties trade willingly versus the citizen being squeezed. The victim's consent is the whole difference.

NEPOTISM · CRONYISM

Favour flowing through blood versus through friendship. Both defeat merit; only one is visible on a family tree.

Write the distinction as a single sentence with "versus" in it. That sentence is worth more than a paragraph of adjectives.

Stop writing "corruption". Name the form.

PRECISION LAYER

Embezzlement Taking what was entrusted to your care. No second party bribes you.	Patronage Jobs and favours distributed to political supporters — a whole administrative layer at once.	Regulatory Capture No bribe at all — the regulator has gradually adopted the industry's interests as its own.
Quid Pro Quo Benefit exchanged for benefit, often with no single document proving it. The pattern is the evidence.	Conflict of Interest Exists the moment a decision touches your private interest — even if you ultimately decide on merit.	Moral Hazard Risk taken freely because someone else carries the cost of it going wrong.
Free Rider Enjoying a shared benefit without contributing the fair share that sustains it.	Moral Disengagement Bandura: euphemism does the moral work — "encroachment removal" instead of families displaced.	Banality of Evil Arendt: catastrophic outcomes rarely need monstrous people, only ordinary ones who stop thinking.

In the exam hall: when a case study describes wrongdoing, your first sentence should name it precisely — "this is extortion, not bribery, because the shopkeeper is not offering anything." That one word signals command of the subject.

MOVEMENT TWO

Ten Diagrams That Enter Fifty Answers

A diagram earns marks for three reasons: it proves structure before the examiner reads a word, it compresses a paragraph into fifteen seconds of writing, and it is the one thing on the page that looks different from the four hundred scripts before yours.



The Master Decision Flowchart

STEP 1

Identify Stakeholders

Who is affected? Who holds power? Who is voiceless here?



STEP 2

Name the Conflict

Which duties are in tension? Law against ethics?
Duty against outcome?



STEP 3

Apply Frameworks

Deontology · consequentialism · virtue · care. At least two.

STEP 4 • NON-NEGOTIABLE

Check the Constitution

Does any option violate rights, equality or due process? Say so explicitly.



STEP 5

Decide & Justify

State the action *and* the reasoning. Never the action alone.



STEP 6 • MOST SKIPPED

Build Safeguards

What stops this recurring? Name the institutional fix.

WHERE MARKS GO

Most candidates leap from Step 1 to Step 5 and lose the analytical marks in between. Step 4 separates a plausible answer from a constitutionally sound one; Step 6 is what distinguishes a twenty-mark answer from a ten-mark one.

Four frameworks, four verdicts — know all four before choosing one

What makes an action right?

Deontology · <i>Kant</i> DOES IT FOLLOW THE DUTY? Right = conforms to a universalisable rule, regardless of consequence. <i>Weakness: rigid where flexibility would be humane.</i>	Consequentialism BEST OUTCOME? Right = maximises good over harm in aggregate. <i>Weakness: can justify sacrificing a minority.</i>	Virtue Ethics · <i>Aristotle</i> WHAT WOULD CHARACTER DO? Right = what practical wisdom would choose in this situation. <i>Weakness: judgment, not a calculable rule.</i>	Care Ethics WHAT DOES THIS PERSON NEED? Right = relational response to particular need, not to the general protocol. <i>Weakness: hard to scale.</i>
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Answer move: run the dilemma through two frameworks and say whether they converge or diverge. "Consequentially the demolition is defensible; deontologically it is not, because it treats residents as means. I therefore choose..."

Why corruption happens — and therefore exactly what stops it

$$C = M + D - A$$

Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability

Monopoly (M)

One authority, no alternative provider — a single office issues the licence.

LEVER · REDUCE IT

GeM portal · e-auctions · multiple service windows.
Competition removes the rent.

Discretion (D)

Wide latitude with no published criteria — land allocation, clearances.

LEVER · REDUCE IT

Published criteria · rule-bound process · DBT with no middleman.

Accountability (A)

Detection risk and the speed of consequence — the only term that subtracts.

LEVER · RAISE IT

RTI · CVC · Lokpal · social audit · CAG. Raises the cost of being caught.

One idea, many questions: asked for anti-corruption measures, do not list. Sort every measure into M, D or A and the answer organises itself. Asked whether a reform will work, ask which variable it changes.

The Conflict of Interest Decision Tree

Could a private interest influence this decision?



Actual

The private interest *has* influenced the decision.

REMEDY

Prosecution under the PCA

Corruption has already occurred.

Potential

It *could* influence — the decision has not been taken yet.

REMEDY

Declare + recuse

Or divest the private interest. Recusal becomes necessary, not optional.

Apparent

It *looks* as if it could, even where no real influence exists.

REMEDY

Disclose + document

Transparency protects public trust — and removes the appearance itself.

FIVE REMEDIES, ESCALATING

1 · Declare → 2 · Recuse → 3 · Divest → 4 · Transfer from the function → 5 · Refuse the appointment

Goleman's five domains · Kohlberg's six stages

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE — BUILD UPWARD



Domains 1–3 are personal competence; 4–5 are social. Social skill built on an unexamined self collapses under pressure.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT — THREE LEVELS, SIX STAGES

POST-CONVENTIONAL

- 6 • Universal ethical principles
- 5 • Social contract and individual rights

CONVENTIONAL

- 4 • Law and order — the rule because it is the rule
- 3 • Interpersonal approval — the good boy standard

PRE-CONVENTIONAL

- 2 • Self-interest exchange · 1 • Fear of punishment

Use it to explain why three officers behave differently in the same situation — same act, three moral architectures underneath.

The iceberg of corruption · the integrity–probity matrix



Three you can draw in the margin

Attitude · the ABC cycle

Cognition · belief



Affect · feeling



Behaviour · action

Persuasion enters at cognition; training enters at behaviour. Say which one your solution targets.

Governance · the legitimacy chain

Transparency — information is visible



Accountability — visibility carries consequence



Trust — citizens expect fair treatment



Legitimacy — compliance without coercion

The ethical decision funnel

Individual values

Constitutional values

Public interest

Consequences, near and long



Defensible decision

Four inputs, one output. Draw it once and every value-conflict question has an opening structure.

How to draw a diagram that earns a mark

Five to seven boxes, never more. A diagram with twelve boxes is a paragraph that has lost its nerve.

Label it with the concept, not the question. "Klitgaard's corruption formula", not "diagram showing corruption".

One arrow direction only. Mixed arrows read as confusion; a single flow reads as method.

Write one sentence under it. The diagram shows the structure; the sentence claims the mark.

Pencil, ruler-free, thirty seconds. Neat is enough. Beautiful is a waste of the clock.

TONIGHT'S NINETY-SECOND TEST

**Close the deck. Take one blank sheet.
Redraw all ten diagrams from memory.**

Whatever you cannot reproduce in ninety seconds is not yet knowledge — it is recognition, and recognition does not travel into the examination hall.

An examiner who sees a candidate sketch the master flowchart in the margin before answering is looking at someone who has internalised method, not memorised content.

MOVEMENT THREE

The Example Bank

Fifty examples across eight domains — governance, current affairs, science, war, cinema, sport, literature, philosophy. Wide enough that no answer of yours ever has to open with "Gandhi said".



Two lines. Fact, then concept.

WHAT MOST SCRIPTS DO

"T.N. Seshan was appointed Chief Election Commissioner in 1990. He was a strict officer who introduced voter identity cards and took many steps to reform elections. He was awarded the Magsaysay Award and became very famous for his honesty and courage in the face of political pressure..."

Four lines of narration, no concept named. Costs a minute, earns nothing.

WHAT A SCORING SCRIPT DOES

"Seshan's tenure at the ECI (1990–96) shows that **institutional independence is exercised, not inherited** — the powers he used were already in the Constitution; what changed was the willingness to use them."

Two lines. The concept is italicised in the examiner's mind before he finishes the sentence.

INSTITUTIONAL INDEPENDENCE

T.N. Seshan at the ECI, 1990–96. The powers existed already; the willingness to use them was new.

PRINCIPLED DISSENT

Ambedkar's 1951 cabinet resignation over the Hindu Code Bill — dissent exercised through office, not against it.

TRANSPARENCY

RTI Act, 2005 · Sweden's Press Act, 1766. India joined a two-century-old idea; the pairing shows transparency is a design choice, not a stage of development.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

South Africa's TRC · Rwanda's Gacaca courts. Truth traded for amnesty — reconciliation chosen over retribution, with a real cost admitted.

PUBLIC ETHICS CODIFIED

Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life, 1995. Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership.

INTEGRITY + EFFICIENCY

E. Sreedharan, Delhi Metro. Probity and deadlines are not a trade-off; publicised timelines were the accountability device.

REDUCING DISCRETION

Direct Benefit Transfer architecture. The middleman is removed structurally, not exhorted to be honest.

SUBSIDIARITY

73rd and 74th Amendments, 1992. Decisions moved to the most local competent level — the constitutional form of trusteeship.

CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY BREACHED

The Emergency, 1975–77. Every step had a legal form; the constitutional spirit was still abandoned. The best answer to "legality equals ethics".

PUBLIC VALUE BEYOND GDP

New Zealand's Wellbeing Budget, 2019. A state choosing what to measure — and therefore what to be accountable for.

Contemporary India — recency that signals reading

BANK 2 OF 3

QUID PRO QUO · RIGHT TO KNOW

Electoral bonds struck down. Anonymity in political funding held unconstitutional against the citizen's right to know.

DUE PROCESS

Supreme Court guidelines against punitive demolition. Punishment cannot precede adjudication, whatever the local sentiment.

ABUSE OF DISCRETION

Bilkis Bano remissions set aside. Remission is a power exercised on reasons — not a favour dispensed on identity.

INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

NEET-UG 2024 paper leak. One breach in an examination system taxes the trust of millions who never cheated.

EMPATHY BUILT INTO DELIVERY

Kerala's pandemic response. Community kitchens and local-body coordination — empathy expressed as logistics, not sentiment.

CRISIS GOVERNANCE UNDER POLARISATION

Manipur. Administrative neutrality is hardest exactly when every act is read as taking a side.

EMERGING DIGITAL ETHICS

Deepfakes and the DPDP Rules. Consent and verifiability become administrative problems, not merely technical ones.

LAW AGAINST ENFORCEMENT

Deaths in manual scavenging continue decades after prohibition — a statute without administrative will is a statement of intent.

DUTY OF CARE

Coaching-centre regulation after student suicides. The state's duty of care extends into private educational spaces.

POWER ASYMMETRY

Athletes protesting against their own federation. Grievance redressal fails first for those whose careers depend on the accused.

Beyond governance — science, war, cinema, sport, literature, philosophy

BANK 3 OF
3

INFORMED CONSENT

Tuskegee, 1932–72 · Henrietta Lacks. Consent withheld from the poor while the science advanced on their bodies.

CORPORATE NEGLIGENCE

Bhopal, 1984 · Chernobyl, 1986. Cost-cutting and cover-up are the same failure at different scales of institution.

MORAL COURAGE

12 Angry Men · Newton · Spotlight. One dissenter, one honest officer, one institution finally reporting on itself.

RIGHT AGAINST RIGHT

Antigone · Arjuna. Two legitimate duties, no clean option — the template for every real dilemma.

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

Thalidomide · Montreal Protocol, 1987. One shows the cost of waiting for proof; the other, the payoff of acting before it.

OBEDIENCE AND DISENGAGEMENT

Milgram, 1961 · Abu Ghraib · My Lai. "Superior orders" was rejected as a defence at Nuremberg for a reason.

LETTER AGAINST SPIRIT

Maradona's "Hand of God" · Mankading · Sandpapergate. Sport is the cleanest laboratory for rule-following versus fair play.

LAW AGAINST MERCY

Les Misérables · Kafka's The Trial. Javert enforces perfectly and destroys; procedure without purpose becomes its own cruelty.

DUAL-USE DILEMMA

The Manhattan Project · gain-of-function research. The same work saves and endangers, with no way to keep only the good half.

BYSTANDER EFFECT AT SCALE

Rwanda, 1994 · Srebrenica, 1995. Diffusion of responsibility, but between states rather than passers-by.

PROCEDURAL PROPORTIONALITY

Vinesh Phogat's Paris disqualification. A rule applied exactly as written can still feel like injustice — and both facts matter.

CONSCIENCE AGAINST STATE

Socrates, 399 BCE · Russell's imprisonment. Accepting the penalty while rejecting the verdict — dissent with consequences owned.

One idea — many questions

THE SINGLE EXAMPLE The Emergency, 1975–77 Every step had a legal form. Preventive detention was authorised, press censorship was notified, elections were postponed under law. And the constitutional spirit was still abandoned. <i>Learn it once. Use it eight ways.</i>	Legality ≠ ethics. The sharpest single illustration available to you.	Constitutional morality. Ambedkar's warning about what text alone cannot secure.
	Courage of conviction. Officers and judges who dissented, and what it cost them.	Obedience and Arendt. Ordinary administrators executing extraordinary orders.
	Institutional safeguards. Why later reforms attacked discretion rather than character.	Political neutrality. The civil service's hardest test in independent India.
	Essay: power and restraint. Institutions larger than the individuals who lead them.	Essay: freedom. How quickly a free society can consent to its own suspension.

Do this tonight for five examples only. Five examples × eight destinations covers more of the paper than fifty examples revised once.

MOVEMENT FOUR

Thinkers in Twenty Seconds

The objective is not philosophy dumping. A thinker enters your answer to carry an argument you were already making — one sentence, correctly attributed, at the exact point of tension.



Thinker → central idea → where it belongs

TEN, NOT FIFTY

THINKER	CENTRAL IDEA	WHERE IT EARNS A MARK
Aristotle	Virtue is a mean between excess and deficiency; character is trained habit	Proportionality of response; against extremism in administrative conduct
Kant	Act only on a maxim you could will as universal law; persons as ends	Any "just this once" exception; dignity arguments against expedient harm
Bentham / Mill	Greatest happiness of the greatest number — Mill adds quality over quantity	Resource allocation; then the minority-sacrifice objection you must raise yourself
Rawls	Fairness is what you would choose behind a veil of ignorance	Affirmative action, welfare targeting, policy design that favours the designer
Arendt	Most evil is done by people who never decided to be evil	Obedience, file-pushing, moral disengagement inside a hierarchy
Amartya Sen	Development as expansion of real freedoms; <i>niti</i> distinguished from <i>nyaya</i>	Why a correct rule can still produce an unjust outcome on the ground
Ambedkar	Constitutional morality has to be cultivated; social democracy precedes political	Every constitutional-values question; fraternity as an administrative duty
Gandhi	Purity of means; trusteeship; the seven social sins	Ends-justify-means cases; CSR and stewardship; politics without principle
Buddha	Hatred does not cease by hatred; compassion as discipline, not sentiment	Communal tension, restorative approaches, retaliation cycles
Vivekananda	They alone live who live for others; service as the form of religion	Public service motivation; the aptitude-versus-ambition distinction

Ten thinkers, one sentence each, and you will never need an eleventh in this examination.

Eight quotations that survive scrutiny

<i>"Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."</i> KANT · GROUNDWORK, 1785	<i>"Virtue is a mean between two vices, the one of excess and the other of deficiency."</i> ARISTOTLE · NICOMACHEAN ETHICS II.6
<i>"You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions."</i> BHAGAVAD GITA 2.47	<i>"Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love — this is an eternal law."</i> DHAMMAPADA 1.5
<i>"In the happiness of his subjects lies the king's happiness; in their welfare, his welfare."</i> KAUTILYA · ARTHASHASTRA I.19	<i>"Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated."</i> AMBEDKAR · CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY
<i>"They alone live who live for others; the rest are more dead than alive."</i> SWAMI VIVEKANANDA	<i>"You have power over your mind — not outside events. Realise this, and you will find strength."</i> MARCUS AURELIUS · MEDITATIONS II

One quotation per answer is elegant. Three is a compilation, and a compilation reads as a candidate hiding behind other people's sentences.

Five quotations you should stop attributing

"Be the change you want to see in the world." — Gandhi

Absent from the ninety-plus volumes of his Collected Works; traceable to a 1974 self-help author. Use his actual 1925 line about changing ourselves first.

"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." — Gandhi

A biographer's paraphrase, not Gandhi's words. For the same point, cite the Dhammapada instead — and be textually safe.

"We are what we repeatedly do..." — Aristotle

Will Durant's 1926 summary. The idea is Aristotelian; the sentence is not. Quote the Golden Mean passage instead.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil..." — Burke

No verified instance in Burke. For the same argument, Arendt is both accurate and stronger.

"The unexamined life is not worth living" — from The Republic

Genuinely Socrates — but from the *Apology*. The quote is safe; the citation most scripts attach to it is not.

Safer habit for the hall: write the idea and name the tradition — "as the Dhammapada teaches" — rather than inventing a citation you cannot defend.

A thinker should strengthen the argument, not decorate it

DECORATION

"As Kant said, act on universal maxims. As Gandhi said, be the change. As Aristotle said, excellence is a habit. Therefore the officer should be honest and take the right decision in this case."

Three names, no argument. The thinkers are load-bearing for nothing — remove them and the paragraph is unchanged.

LOAD-BEARING

"Suppressing the report would protect public calm in the short term. But Kant's test is decisive here: if every officer concealed inconvenient findings whenever calm was at stake, no report would carry information at all — and the practice destroys the very institution it claims to protect."

One thinker, placed at the exact point where two options compete, doing work no sentence of yours could do faster.

Test before you write the name: if deleting the thinker leaves the paragraph unchanged, delete the thinker.

Six concepts with a precise administrative use

Nishkama karma · *desireless action*

Doing the duty fully while relinquishing attachment to reward or recognition. Use for officers in unglamorous postings, and against transfer-driven decision-making.

Svadharma · *duty of this role*

Duty calibrated to role and situation, not a universal rule. Use where personal conviction and official responsibility pull apart.

Niti and nyaya · *rules and realised justice*

Sen's distinction: correct institutions do not guarantee just outcomes. The sharpest way to argue for outcome audits over process compliance.

Trusteeship · *Gandhi*

Wealth and authority held on behalf of others. Use for CSR, public office as custody, and stewardship of natural resources.

Anekantavada · *Jain many-sidedness*

No single standpoint captures the whole truth. The Indian argument for stakeholder consultation before a contested decision.

Sthitaprajna · *steadiness of mind*

Equanimity in success and reverse alike. The indigenous vocabulary for self-regulation in emotional-intelligence answers.

TWO RULES

Translate every term in the same sentence you use it. Never more than two Indian concepts in one answer — beyond that, the answer stops arguing and starts performing.

MOVEMENT FIVE · 125 OF THE 250 MARKS

The Case-Study Method

Case studies are not a test of how moral you sound. They test whether you can take a defensible decision under competing obligations — and then protect the system from having to face it again.



S.T.A.K.E. — mapped onto the master flowchart

RECALL	WHAT YOU ACTUALLY WRITE	THE SENTENCE THAT EARNS THE MARK
S Stakeholders	Four tiers, named as persons and institutions — including whoever cannot speak in this situation.	<i>"The affected parties are X and Y; the silent stakeholder is the next monsoon's tenants."</i>
T Tension	Name the competing duties as a pair. Law against ethics, compassion against precedent, duty against loyalty.	<i>"The conflict is between procedural fairness to other applicants and immediate relief to this family."</i>
A Alternatives	Four or five options, never two — then evaluate them in a table, not in prose.	<i>"Option 3 is least restrictive while preserving the record; it is therefore proportionate."</i>
K Knowledge of law & values	Constitutional check, statute or conduct rule, then the ethical framework — in that order.	<i>"Any option that punishes before adjudication fails Article 21 and is unavailable to me."</i>
E Execution + Evaluation	Decide, sequence the steps in time, and name the safeguard that prevents recurrence.	<i>"Immediate relief within 24 hours; systemic correction through a published criteria order within a month."</i>

Time budget for a 250-word case study: two minutes reading, one minute mapping S–T–A, seven minutes writing, thirty seconds for the safeguard line. The safeguard is never the sentence you run out of time for.

Four tiers of stakeholder — the fourth wins marks

I Primary Those directly affected by the decision — the displaced family, the patient, the complainant, the contractor.	2 Secondary Those affected indirectly — colleagues, the local community, your own family, the subordinate who must execute it.	3 Institutional The office itself, the service, the courts, the exchequer — and the precedent your decision creates for every successor.	4 Future / invisible Those with no voice in the room — future generations, the ecosystem, the unorganised worker, the citizen who never files a complaint.
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WRITE IT LIKE THIS

"Beyond the parties before me, two stakeholders have no representation here — the downstream villages who will drink this water, and every future applicant who will cite this decision as precedent."

DRAW THIS IN THE BOOKLET · THIRTY SECONDS

The ethical dilemma matrix

OPTION	LEGALITY	ETHICS	PUBLIC INTEREST	FEASIBILITY	LONG-TERM IMPACT
1 · Comply with the instruction	Lawful on its face	Fails — complicity	Harms the vulnerable	Easy	Normalises the practice
2 · Refuse outright and resign	Permissible	Clean conscience	Vacates the post to a worse successor	Available	Nothing changes structurally
3 · Written record + escalate through channel	Fully lawful	Defensible	Protects beneficiaries	Slower, but real	Creates a precedent and a paper trail
4 · Leak to the press immediately	Breaches conduct rules	Motive good, means questionable	Mixed	Immediate	Damages internal channels for everyone after

Then one sentence: "I choose option 3 because it is the least restrictive alternative that still preserves both the record and the beneficiary's entitlement."

"Either obey the senior or resign" is a half-marks answer

WHY THE BINARY FAILS

It treats the officer as a moral spectator with two moves. Real administration has a graded repertoire — and the examiner is testing whether you know it.

Generate five options before evaluating any of them.

IMMEDIATE

Stop the harm now — relief, medical aid, suspension of the order, protection of the complainant.

INSTITUTIONAL

Use the channel that exists — written note, file record, referral to the competent authority.

CONSULTATIVE

Bring in those affected and those with standing — legal opinion, technical committee, gram sabha.

CORRECTIVE

Undo the damage already done — restitution, revised order, reasoned withdrawal, apology on record.

PREVENTIVE

Change the incentive so the dilemma does not recur — published criteria, rotation, audit trail, disclosure norm.

Twelve recurring situations — and the principle that decides each

Political pressure Record in writing, act within the rule, escalate through channel. Neutrality is a duty, not a preference.	Corruption by a colleague Evidence before accusation; internal channel first; protect the junior who reported it.	Conflict of interest Match the remedy to severity — declare, recuse, divest, transfer, refuse.
Whistleblowing Internal before external, proportionate disclosure, protection sought under law.	Communal tension Impartial firmness, visible even-handedness, local credible interlocutors, no collective punishment.	Disaster and crisis Life first, rules second, record throughout — then regularise. Say the sequence explicitly.
Public protest Least restrictive alternative, proportional response, dialogue before force, grievance addressed.	Privacy against security Necessity, proportionality, authorisation, sunset. Never an open-ended power.	Procurement Criteria published before bids, technical committee, no post-hoc specification changes.
Workplace harassment Complainant's safety first, statutory committee, confidentiality, no informal settlement.	Personal relationship vs duty Disclose and step aside. Sympathy expressed privately, decision taken impersonally.	Environment against livelihood Precautionary principle plus intergenerational equity — with a real transition plan for those who lose work.

Recognise the type in the first thirty seconds and you have your structure before you have finished reading the question.

Twelve phrases that make an answer sound like administration

Proportional response — the force or penalty matched to the actual seriousness.	Least restrictive alternative — the option achieving the aim with the smallest intrusion.	Due process — notice, hearing, reasons, appeal, in that order.
Procedural fairness — the process would look fair to the party who lost.	Reasoned decision — recorded grounds, capable of surviving review.	Conflict-of-interest disclosure — declared before the decision, not after the allegation.
Institutional accountability — the office answerable, not merely the individual blamed.	Public trust — the asset that pays for every future instruction to be obeyed.	Empathy without compromising legality — compassion inside the rule, not instead of it.
Immediate relief with systemic correction — the two-clock answer examiners reward.	Intergenerational equity — the interest of those who cannot yet object.	Stakeholder consultation — legitimacy bought cheaply, before the decision hardens.

Warning: vocabulary cannot substitute for a decision. A script full of these phrases that never says what the officer will do scores below a plain one that does.

YOUR TURN**8 minutes · write, do not think aloud**

You are the District Magistrate. A high-value government contract has been awarded, following due process, to a firm in which your brother-in-law holds a minority stake — a fact you learn only after the award. The work has begun, the tender was competitive, and no irregularity is alleged. A local newspaper has begun asking questions. Your immediate superior advises you to "let it be, since nothing wrong has happened."

1 · STAKEHOLDERS, ALL FOUR TIERS

2 · THE TENSION, NAMED AS A PAIR

3 · FOUR OPTIONS

4 · YOUR DECISION, WITH THE REASON

**5 · THE SAFEGUARD AGAINST
RECURRENCE**

An apparent conflict still demands an act

Classify first. This is an *apparent* conflict of interest — no influence occurred, but the appearance alone is incompatible with public confidence. Naming the category decides the remedy.

Reject the superior's advice with a reason, not a refusal. "Nothing wrong has happened" answers the wrong question; the issue is what a reasonable citizen would believe about the process.

Act on the record. Written disclosure to the competent authority, dated; recusal from all further decisions on this contract — variations, extensions, payments.

Transfer the function, not the file to the drawer. Supervision moves to another officer of equal rank; the work is not stalled, because the contractor and the public both have an interest in completion.

Answer the press through the institution. A factual statement of the disclosure and recusal — transparency ends the story that concealment would have created.

Safeguard, the mark most scripts lose. A standing requirement that bidders declare relationships with officers of the district, checked before award — so the next DM never learns this fact from a newspaper.

Three sentences that would have cost you marks: "I will resign." "I will cancel the contract." "Since due process was followed, no action is required."

The exam-hall algorithm

SECTION A · THEORY QUESTION

READ — underline the directive verb
DECODE — how many parts does it have?
DEFINE — one sentence, twenty seconds
STRUCTURE — headings before sentences
EXAMPLE — two lines, dated, specific
DIAGRAM — thirty seconds, labelled
BALANCE — the honest objection
CONCLUDE — forward, not summary

SECTION B · CASE STUDY

STAKEHOLDERS — four tiers
ISSUES — the tension as a pair
OPTIONS — four or five, never two
EVALUATION — the matrix, ruled fast
DECISION — action plus reasoning
IMPLEMENTATION — sequenced in time
PREVENTION — the systemic fix

If the clock beats you, write PREVENTION as a single line and stop. Never leave it out.

Paper IV on one screen

DEFINITIONS · SAY THEM, DON'T READ THEM

Ethics · morality · value · virtue · conscience · duty · dharma · justice · integrity · probity · objectivity · impartiality · accountability · transparency · constitutional morality · discretion · attitude · aptitude · EI · empathy · sympathy

DIAGRAMS · REDRAW IN 90 SECONDS

Master flowchart · theory wheel · $C = M + D - A$ · COI tree · EI pyramid · Kohlberg's stages · corruption iceberg · integrity–probity matrix · ABC cycle · legitimacy chain · decision funnel

EXAMPLES · TWO LINES EACH

Seshan · Sreedharan · Ambedkar's resignation · DBT · RTI · 73rd–74th · TRC · the Emergency · electoral bonds · demolition guidelines · Kerala's response · Manipur · Bhopal · Tuskegee · Milgram · Rwanda · 12 Angry Men · Newton · Antigone · Socrates

THINKERS · ONE SENTENCE EACH

Aristotle · Socrates · Kant · Bentham · Mill · Rawls · Arendt · Sen · Ambedkar · Gandhi · Buddha · Vivekananda · Kautilya. Avoid: "be the change", "eye for an eye", "we are what we repeatedly do", the Burke line.

CASE-STUDY SPINE

Stakeholders (4 tiers) → Tensions (as a pair) → Alternatives (4–5) → Knowledge: Constitution, rule, framework → Execution + safeguard. Options: immediate → institutional → consultative → corrective → preventive.

VOCABULARY · TWO OR THREE PER ANSWER

Proportional response · least restrictive alternative · due process · procedural fairness · reasoned decision · disclosure · institutional accountability · public trust · empathy without compromising legality · immediate relief with systemic correction · intergenerational equity

The last fifteen minutes — ten things, nothing new

1 Six definitions, said aloud in your head — not read.	2 Three diagrams you are certain you can draw.
3 Five examples with dates attached.	4 Five thinkers, one sentence each. Not six.
5 The constitutional values list — dignity, equality, fraternity, justice, liberty.	6 The four stakeholder tiers, in order.
7 The five columns of the dilemma matrix.	8 The five option tiers, ending in preventive.
9 The phrase: compassion inside the rule, never instead of it.	10 One conclusion sentence you can adapt to any question. Rehearse it now.

Nothing on this list is new. That is the point of the list.

Three tasks. Nothing more.

O1

Redraw the ten diagrams

One blank sheet, no notes, ninety seconds each. Mark the ones that failed and redraw only those tomorrow morning.

O2

Five examples, eight destinations

Take five examples from tonight and write, for each, the eight questions it can answer. One page total.

O3

Finish the case study

Write the full 250-word answer to tonight's case, ending with the safeguard line. Bring it tomorrow.

END OF CLASS I

You already know enough.
Now make it reachable.

Do not try to impress the examiner. Make it easy for the examiner to give you marks.

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VIKASH SIR

Class II · tomorrow, 7:00 PM