Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Suppose you are an officer in-charge of implementing a social service scheme to provide support to old and destitute women. An old and illiterate woman comes to you to avail the benefits of the scheme. However, she has no documents to show that she fulfills the eligibility criteria. But after meeting her and listening to her you feel that she certainly needs support. Your enquirers also show that she is really destitute and living in a pitiable condition. You are in a dilemma as to what to do. Putting her under the scheme without necessary documents would clearly be violation of rules. But denying her the support would be cruel and inhuman.

(a) Can you think of a rational way to resolve this dilemma? (b) Give your reasons for it.

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EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Compassion; rule of law; procedural fairness; social justice; verification; discretion; alternative documentation; due process; welfare delivery; accountability

Model Answer

Introduction

The dilemma involves balancing compassion for a vulnerable woman with compliance with eligibility rules. Ethical administration should protect welfare entitlements without arbitrary relaxation of procedures.

(a) Rational Resolution

1. **Conduct field verification:** Arrange an enquiry through authorised local officials to establish her identity, residence and destitution.
2. **Explore alternative evidence:** Check whether applicable rules permit certificates from authorised officials, local records or other acceptable documents.
3. **Facilitate documentation:** Help her obtain the required identity or eligibility documents through the appropriate process.
4. **Provide interim support:** Refer her to available emergency food, shelter, healthcare or other lawful assistance while verification proceeds.
5. **Seek a reasoned decision:** If documentation remains impossible, refer the case to the competent authority for a decision under applicable provisions rather than unilaterally bypassing rules.
6. **Improve access:** Record the barrier and recommend outreach or simplified documentation procedures for similarly vulnerable people.

(b) Reasons

This approach protects her dignity and welfare while maintaining legality, fairness and auditability. It avoids both mechanical rejection and unauthorised favouritism. Consistent procedures also protect public resources and other eligible beneficiaries.

Conclusion

Compassion should guide the administration's response, while lawful verification governs the final decision. Ethical governance means helping vulnerable citizens overcome procedural barriers without abandoning accountability.