Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Vijay was Deputy Commissioner of remote district of Hilly Northern State of the country for the last two years. In the month of August heavy rains lashed the complete state followed by cloud burst in the upper reaches of the said district. The damage was very heavy in the complete state especially in the affected district. The complete road network and telecommunication were disrupted and the buildings were damaged extensively. People's houses have been destroyed and they were forced to stay in open. More than 200 people have been killed and about 5000 were badly injured. The Civil Administration under Vijay got activated and started conducting rescue and relief operations. Temporary shelter camps and hospitals were established to provide shelter and medical facilities to the homeless and injured people. Helicopter services were pressed in, for evacuating sick and old people from remote areas.

Vijay got a message from his hometown in Kerala that his mother was seriously sick. After two days Vijay received the unfortunate message that his mother has expired. Vijay has no close relative except one elder sister who was US citizen and staying there for last several years. In the meantime, the situation in the affected district deteriorated further due to resumption of heavy rains after a gap of five days. At the same time, continuous messages were coming on his mobile from his hometown to reach at the earliest for

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performing last rites of his mother.

- **(a) What are the options available with Vijay?**
- **(b) What are the ethical dilemma being faced by Vijay?**
- **(c) Critically evaluate and examine each of these options identified by Vijay.**
- **(d) Which of the options, do you think, would be most appropriate for Vijay to adopt and why?**

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2025	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Options before Vijay, public duty versus filial duty, emotional attachment, disaster management, leadership responsibility, delegation, continuity of administration, personal loss, moral obligation, compassion, duty ethics, consequences, exceptional circumstances

Model Answer

Ethical Context

Vijay faces a conflict between his deeply personal and familial obligation to perform his mother's last rites and his public duty as the district's chief crisis administrator during an ongoing disaster.

(a) Options Available

1. Remain in the district and continue personally supervising rescue and relief operations.
2. Leave immediately for Kerala to perform the last rites.
3. Temporarily hand over operational responsibilities to a competent Additional District Magistrate or senior officer and travel to Kerala.
4. Remain in the district until the immediate emergency stabilises and then leave.
5. Coordinate virtually from Kerala after ensuring a robust command structure and delegation.

(b) Ethical Dilemmas

The major dilemma is between duty to public and duty to family. Other issues include compassion versus professional responsibility, personal grief versus administrative leadership, continuity of relief operations versus individual autonomy, and consequential welfare of thousands versus the legitimate emotional needs of Vijay and his family.

(c) Evaluation

Remaining in the district ensures continuity and inspires confidence but imposes a severe personal and emotional burden. Leaving without delegation may endanger relief operations. Immediate departure after proper delegation respects his legitimate family responsibility while preserving administrative continuity. Delaying the journey until conditions improve may balance both duties, but the timing of the last rites makes indefinite postponement problematic.

(d) Most Appropriate Option

Vijay should immediately establish a clearly documented command-and-control arrangement with the senior-most competent officer, personally brief the State Government, ensure uninterrupted rescue, medical and relief operations, and then travel to Kerala for the last rites. He should remain reachable for critical decisions.

Conclusion

Public service demands sacrifice, but it does not require denial of legitimate human obligations. Ethical leadership lies in combining duty with compassion through effective delegation and continuity planning.