Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

In a modern democratic polity, there is a concept of the political executive and permanent executive. Elected people's representatives form the political executive and bureaucracy forms the permanent executive. Ministers frame policy decisions and bureaucrats execute these. In the initial decades after independence, the relationship between the permanent executive and the political executive were characterized by mutual understanding, respect and cooperation, without encroaching upon each other's domain.

However, in the subsequent decades, the situation has changed. There are instances of the political executive insisting upon the permanent executive to follow its agenda. Respect for an appreciation of upright bureaucrats has declined. There is an increasing tendency among the political executive to get involved in routine administrative matters such as transfers, posting etc. Under this scenario, there is a difinitive trend towards 'politicization of bureaucracy'. The rising materialism and acquisitiveness in social life has also adversely impacted upon the ethical values of both the permanent executive and the political executive.

What are the consequences of this 'politicization of bureaucracy'? Discuss.

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EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2019	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Political interference; administrative neutrality; erosion of integrity; compromised meritocracy; arbitrary transfers; weakened accountability; policy instability; public trust deficit; corruption; democratic governance

Model Answer

Introduction

Politicization of bureaucracy refers to the increasing influence of political interests over administrative appointments, transfers, decisions and implementation. While political direction is essential in a democracy, excessive interference undermines the neutrality and professionalism of the permanent executive.

Consequences of Politicization of Bureaucracy

1. Erosion of Administrative Neutrality

Civil servants may prioritise the interests of the ruling political establishment over constitutional values and the public interest, weakening impartial administration.

2. Decline in Integrity and Morale

Honest officers who resist improper pressure may face punitive transfers or stalled careers. This discourages ethical conduct and promotes compliance with political demands.

3. Compromised Meritocracy

Appointments and postings based on political loyalty rather than competence undermine professionalism, institutional capacity and administrative efficiency.

4. Growth of Corruption

Political-administrative nexus may facilitate favouritism, patronage, misuse of public resources and decisions benefiting particular individuals or groups.

5. Policy Instability and Poor Implementation

Frequent transfers disrupt continuity, institutional memory and long-term planning. Policies may be altered to serve short-term political objectives rather than sustainable development.

6. Weakening of Accountability

Officials may shift responsibility to political superiors, while political leaders may blame bureaucrats for administrative failures. This creates an accountability deficit.

7. Threat to Democratic Governance

Selective enforcement of laws and unequal delivery of public services undermine the rule of law, social justice and citizens' trust in institutions.

Conclusion

Political executives must retain democratic control over policy, while civil servants must exercise impartiality, integrity and professional independence in implementation. Transparent transfers, merit-based appointments, fixed tenures and effective accountability mechanisms can help preserve this balance.