Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Rakesh is a responsible district level officer, who enjoys the trust of his higher officials. Knowing his honesty, the government entrusted him with the responsibility of identifying the beneficiaries under a health care scheme meant for senior citizens.

The criteria to be a beneficiary are the following:
(a) 60 years of age or above.
(b) Belonging to a reserved community.
(c) Family income of less than 1 Lakh rupees per annum.
(d) Post-treatment prognosis is likely to be high to make a positive difference to the quality of life of the beneficiary.

One day, an old couple visited Rakesh’s office with their application. They have been the residents of a village in his district since their birth. The old man is diagnosed with a rare condition that causes obstruction in the large intestine. As a consequence, he has severe abdominal pain frequently that prevents him from doing any physical labour. The couple has no children to support them. The expert surgeon whom they contacted is willing to do the surgery without charging any fee.

However, the couple will have to bear the cost of incidental charges, such as medicines, hospitalization, etc., to the tune of rupees one lakh. The couple fulfils all the criteria except criterion ‘b’. However, any financial aid would certainly make a significant difference in their quality of

life.

How should Rakesh respond to the situation?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2018	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Ethical dilemma; compassion and empathy; rule of law; procedural integrity; distributive justice; humanitarian considerations; alternative welfare schemes; transparency and accountability; responsible discretion

Model Answer

Introduction

Rakesh faces an ethical dilemma between strict adherence to the eligibility criteria and his moral responsibility to help an elderly, vulnerable couple in genuine medical and financial distress.

Ethical Issues Involved

1. **Compassion versus Rules:** The couple deserves empathy, but criterion ‘b’ explicitly restricts eligibility to members of a reserved community.
2. **Equity and Justice:** Extending benefits outside the prescribed criteria may undermine fairness towards other eligible applicants.
3. **Integrity and Accountability:** Manipulating records or falsely certifying eligibility would violate administrative ethics.
4. **Human Dignity:** Their age, poverty, lack of family support, and treatable condition create a compelling humanitarian concern.

How Rakesh Should Respond

1. Follow the Rules: He should not approve the couple under this scheme because they do not satisfy all the stipulated conditions.

2. Explain the Decision Humanely: He should communicate the eligibility requirements respectfully, without humiliating or discouraging the couple.

3. Explore Alternative Assistance: He should urgently investigate other government health insurance schemes, senior-citizen welfare programmes, charitable hospital funds, district medical assistance, and relevant non-governmental organisations.

4. Facilitate Medical Support: With the couple's consent, he should coordinate with the hospital, social welfare department, and district health authorities to explore assistance for medicines, hospitalisation, and related expenses.

5. Recommend Policy Review: If the rules permit, he may submit a proposal to competent authorities for exceptional medical assistance to indigent senior citizens outside the reserved category.

6. Maintain Transparency: All recommendations and decisions should be properly documented and free from favouritism.

Conclusion

Rakesh should combine procedural integrity with compassion. By respecting the scheme's rules while actively pursuing lawful alternative assistance, he can uphold justice and protect the dignity and well-being of the elderly couple.

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