Polity & Governance · GS - II

In the integrity index of Transparency International, India stands very low. Discuss briefly the legal, political, social and cultural factors that have caused the decline of public morality in India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
12.5	~200 words

Answer Hint

Public integrity; corruption; legal enforcement; political funding; social tolerance; ethical leadership; transparency; institutional accountability

Model Answer

Introduction

Public morality refers to the ethical standards guiding public officials and institutions. Corruption and misuse of authority weaken public trust, reduce service quality and undermine the rule of law.

Factors Behind Declining Public Morality

1. Legal Factors

- Delays in investigation and prosecution weaken deterrence.
- Complex procedures and discretionary powers can create opportunities for rent-seeking.
- Inadequate enforcement of rules and weak internal vigilance allow misconduct to persist.

2. Political Factors

- Opaque political funding and excessive campaign expenditure can create incentives for undue influence.

- Criminalisation of politics and patronage networks undermine ethical public life.
- Weak internal accountability within political organisations can normalise misconduct.

3. Social Factors

- Tolerance of bribery as a routine means of obtaining services weakens collective resistance.
- Social inequalities can make vulnerable groups more dependent on intermediaries.
- Limited awareness of rights and grievance mechanisms reduces accountability.

4. Cultural and Institutional Factors

- Excessive emphasis on personal connections and favouritism may displace impartial procedures.
- Conflicts of interest and the normalisation of shortcuts erode ethical standards.
- Weak protection for whistle-blowers discourages reporting wrongdoing.

Measures Required

Strengthen independent investigation, ensure timely trials, improve political-finance transparency, protect whistle-blowers and expand citizen access to public information. Ethics training, codes of conduct, social audits and transparent digital service delivery can also help.

Conclusion

Public morality depends not only on individual character but also on institutional incentives. Fair enforcement, ethical leadership and citizen participation are essential to build integrity in governance.

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