Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Vinod is an honest and sincere IAS officer. Recently, he has taken over as Managing Director of the State Road Transport Corporation, his sixth transfer in the past three years. His peers acknowledge his vast knowledge, affability and uprightness. The Chairman of the State Road Transport Corporation is a powerful politician and is very close to the Chief Minister. Vinod comes to know about many alleged irregularities of the Corporation and the high-handedness of the Chairman in financial matters. A Board Member of the Corporation belonging to the Opposition Party meets Vinod and hands over a few documents along with a video recording in which the Chairman appears to be demanding bribe for placing a huge order for the supply of QMR tyres. Vinod recollects the Chairman expediting clearing of pending bills of QMR tyres.

Vinod confronts the Board Member as to why he is shying away from exposing the Chairman with the so-called solid proof he has with him. The member informs him that the Chairman refuses to yield to his threats. He adds that Vinod may earn recognition and public support if he himself exposes the Chairman. Further, he tells Vinod that once his party comes to power, Vinod's professional growth would be assured. Vinod is aware that he may be penalized if he exposes the Chairman and may further be transferred to a distant place. He knows that the Opposition Party stands a better chance of coming to power in the forthcoming

elections. However, he also realizes that the Board Member is trying to use him for his own political gains.

(a) As a conscientious civil servant, evaluate the options available to Vinod.

(b) In the light of the above case, comment upon the ethical issues that may arise due to the politicization of bureaucracy.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2023	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

The case tests integrity, political neutrality, courage of conviction and commitment to public interest. Vinod must neither become an instrument of the ruling establishment nor an asset of the Opposition; his duty is to objectively verify evidence and use lawful institutional mechanisms, accepting personal consequences while protecting the impartiality and credibility of civil services.

Model Answer

Introduction:

Vinod faces a conflict between **personal career security, political pressures and constitutional duty**. As a civil servant, his primary obligation is to public interest, legality and institutional integrity rather than to any political party.

(a) Options available to Vinod:

Option 1: Ignore the matter:

This would protect Vinod from immediate victimisation and transfer. However, overlooking credible evidence of corruption would violate his integrity and duty to protect public resources.

Option 2: Publicly expose the Chairman immediately:

This demonstrates courage and may bring the alleged wrongdoing to public attention. However, acting solely on politically supplied evidence without verification could make Vinod an instrument of the Opposition and compromise political neutrality.

Option 3: Support the Opposition Party:

The promise of future professional growth is clearly an inducement. Accepting it would violate impartiality and convert public service into political bargaining.

Option 4: Verify evidence and initiate institutional action:

This is the most ethical option. Vinod should independently verify the documents, preserve relevant records and follow established procedures through competent vigilance, anti-corruption or investigative authorities. He should ensure that procurement and financial decisions are properly scrutinised and documented.

He should also maintain a **written record of decisions and communications** and resist any unlawful direction. If necessary, he should use protected whistle-blowing or other authorised channels rather than making politically motivated public disclosures.

Best course:

Vinod should neither suppress the matter nor become politically aligned. He should **act firmly, objectively and through due process**, even if it entails an inconvenient transfer. His professional growth must never be traded for political patronage.

(b) Ethical issues arising from politicization of bureaucracy:

Erosion of political neutrality: Civil servants may begin serving political interests instead of constitutional and public interests.

Compromise of integrity: Transfers, promotions and postings may become instruments of reward and punishment.

Fear and moral compromise: Officers may avoid taking action against powerful persons because of career consequences.

Patronage and quid pro quo: Political protection can encourage corruption and create networks of mutual dependence.

Loss of institutional autonomy: Professional advice may be replaced by partisan considerations.

Public trust deficit: Citizens may perceive administration as partisan rather than impartial.

Administrative instability: Frequent transfers weaken institutional memory, expertise and policy continuity.

Conclusion:

Politicisation converts **public administration into an extension of**

political competition. A healthy democracy requires politically accountable governments but politically neutral civil servants. Vinod should therefore uphold integrity, impartiality and constitutional morality, allowing lawful institutions—not political parties—to determine the outcome of the allegations.

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