Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Migrant workers have always remained at the socio-economic margins of our society, silently serving as the instrumental labour force of urban economics. The pandemic has brought them into national focus.

On announcement of a countrywide lockdown, a very large number of migrant workers decided to move back from their places of employment to their native villages. The non-availability of transport created its own problems. Added to this was the fear of starvation and inconvenience to their families. This caused, the migrant workers to demand wages and transport facilities for returning to their villages. Their mental agony was accentuated by multiple factors such as a sudden loss of livelihood, possibility of lack of food and inability to assist in harvesting their rabi crop due to not being able to reach home in time. Reports of inadequate response of some districts in providing the essential boarding and lodging arrangements along the way multiplied their fears.

You have leant many lessons from this situation when you were tasked to oversee the functioning of the District Disaster Relief Force in your district.

1. **In your opinion what ethical issues arose in the current migrant crisis?**
2. **What do you understand by an ethical care giving state?**

3. **What assistance can the civil society render to mitigate 2 the sufferings of migrants in similar situations?**

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Human dignity, social justice, migrant vulnerability, compassion, state accountability, right to livelihood, ethical caregiving state, disaster preparedness, civil society participation, inter-state coordination, inclusive welfare

Model Answer

Introduction

The migrant crisis exposed the vulnerability of informal workers and gaps in disaster preparedness. It raised fundamental ethical questions about human dignity, social justice, state responsibility and the treatment of workers essential to the economy.

1. Ethical issues arising from the crisis

- **Human dignity:** Workers faced hunger, exhaustion and unsafe journeys, often without adequate shelter or transport.
- **Social justice:** Informal workers lacked sufficient social security despite their contribution to urban development.
- **Administrative preparedness:** Sudden restrictions without adequate transition arrangements intensified suffering.
- **Right to livelihood:** Loss of wages and employment threatened workers' survival and their families' welfare.
- **Empathy and compassion:** Inadequate food, healthcare and accommodation reflected failures to respond sensitively to human distress.

- **Federal coordination:** Weak coordination between source and destination states complicated transport, relief and rehabilitation.
- **Information and accountability:** Poor communication and inconsistent assistance undermined trust in public institutions.

2. Meaning of an ethical caregiving state

An ethical caregiving state treats citizens as rights-bearing individuals deserving dignity, protection and equal concern, especially during crises. It:

- Prioritises vulnerable groups in policymaking.
- Provides timely food, shelter, healthcare and social security.
- Anticipates risks through preparedness and contingency planning.
- Ensures transparent, non-discriminatory and accountable relief.
- Coordinates across departments and states while enabling accessible grievance redressal.

Caregiving should empower people and protect their rights rather than create dependence or replace accountable institutions with charity.

3. Role of civil society

- **Immediate relief:** NGOs, community groups and religious organisations can provide food, water, temporary shelter, medical aid and transport support.
- **Legal and informational assistance:** Help workers access entitlements, registration, wages and grievance mechanisms.
- **Community kitchens and helplines:** Coordinate relief and identify families requiring urgent assistance.
- **Monitoring:** Document gaps in relief delivery and report exploitation or exclusion.
- **Long-term support:** Facilitate skill development, education for migrant children and access to social-protection schemes.
- **Partnerships:** Collaborate with district administrations, employers and labour organisations while maintaining transparency.

Conclusion

The crisis demonstrated that economic growth must be accompanied by social protection and humane governance. A prepared, accountable state working with civil society can ensure that migrants are treated not as disposable labour but as citizens entitled to dignity and security.