



ZETA IAS

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DAILY QUEST

General Studies Paper 4

OPEN SESSION

Model Answer

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1. Quick commerce delivery systems reflect utilitarianism but often come at the cost of core human values. Examine this statement in the context of ethical responsibilities towards labour, sustainability, and consumer behaviour.

(Answer in 150 Words) 10

Answer:

Quick commerce (Q-commerce) promotes utilitarian ideals by maximizing consumer pleasure through ultra-fast delivery and, in a way, advances the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number.

While it does have benefits such as generating employment and attracting investment, it often conflicts with core human values like dignity, justice, sustainability, and compassion—particularly in the treatment of delivery workers and in its broader societal impacts.

A. Ethical Responsibilities towards labour

1. Ethical responsibilities towards labour encompass dignity and respect, fair wages, safe working conditions, reasonable hours, and protection from discrimination.
2. However, Q-commerce delivery riders face algorithmic pressure to meet tight time-bound targets, which compromises their right to health, safety, and dignity.
3. There is hardly any respect for human values in the system, as interaction between sellers, riders, and consumers is minimal and transactional.

This violates the Kantian principle of treating individuals as ends in themselves, not merely as means to fulfill consumer gratification.

- For instance, there are several cases where the delivery partner died in a road accident while rushing to meet a deadline and family members don't get adequate compensation or support.
- Multiple reports highlight the lack of minimum wages, absence of health insurance, and verbal abuse faced by riders from customers and supervisors.

B. Sustainability

1. Q-commerce encourages multiple small deliveries using fuel-based vehicles, contributing to increased carbon emissions and packaging waste.
2. It prioritizes short-term consumer convenience over long-term environmental concerns—contradicting ethical responsibilities related to intergenerational justice and ecological stewardship.
3. It also raises questions about sustainable employment, as many quick commerce models are operating at a loss, heavily funded by investors. If funding dries up, the entire system could collapse, leaving thousands jobless.

C. Consumer Behaviour

Q-commerce fuels a culture of instant gratification and impulsive purchasing, reducing the need for planning and organizing.

- It reduces human interaction—consumers hardly engage with the riders—undermining the sense of community and contributing to social isolation.

- It promotes a culture of commodification, consumerism, and materialism, encouraging conspicuous consumption and prioritizing wants over needs.

While Q-commerce enhances convenience, it must not come at the cost of labour dignity, environmental sustainability, or ethical consumption. Companies have a moral responsibility to ensure:

- Minimum wage guarantees
- Social protection and worker safety
- Environmental sustainability norms
- Consumer education on mindful consumption

Balancing utility with core human values is essential for building a truly ethical, humane, and inclusive delivery ecosystem.

(When we lose patience, empathy, and gratitude in our pursuit of instant pleasure, we compromise core human values like kindness, humility, and justice.

Mahatma Gandhi rightly said: "The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.")

2. Ethics deals with human character and conduct, for a civil servant a righteous conduct is a pre-requisite for bringing about a change in the society but ultimately society is laced with materialism, authoritarianism and acceptance corruption.

In this regard how civil servants in India have fared in delivering ethical governance 10m

Answer:

Ethics is a moral philosophy about the scrutiny of the quality of human conduct and character on the basis of established standards with an aim to achieve *sumum bonum*.

So an ethical conduct is of prime importance for a civil servant as they deal with sovereign functions with an aim of public service and in the process have to face many challenges such as the political master may give an order which goes against the constitutional values and also many times civil servants have enormous discretion and powers, under such circumstances if there is lack of ethics it will result in corruption and promote the growth of evilness rather than bringing any positive change.

But the society itself propagates many such evils like people who have illicit wealth are respected, the acceptance of encounter culture etc

In this regard there are many instances where civil servants have failed to deliver ethical governance.

1. Lack of political neutrality especially during the emergency era and even today CBI, ED, ECI have been accused of partisanship.
2. The Indian bureaucracy has been rated as one of the most corrupt and termed as a nightmare by various think tanks.
3. Also many specific cases like the unethical conduct of officers in the Hathras case, or many getting caught red-handed accepting bribes like the Odisha IAS officer case some even in

their very first posting have come to light .

4. The Puja Khedkar case exposed misuse of power even before formal service induction.

But at the same time there many instances where civil servants have strived for ethical governance

1. The success of India democracy by way of free and fair elections.
2. The substantial reduction in poverty and continuous economic growth since independence.
3. The devotion to duty during various disasters like COVID-19.

At the same time ethical governance cannot be ensured by the civil servants alone along with civil servant's ethical conduct there should be politics with principles and the people of the country too should strongly disregard any immoral acts by the government and administration then there would be an emergence of a moral society and ethical governance ie Ram Rajya in the country.

Case Study 1

You are the CEO of the Delicious Cola Company, a major multinational corporation. The company's forte is in manufacturing soft drinks and fruit juices. Delicious Cola currently holds the number one position in the country in terms of market share and revenue generated in the soft drinks and fruit juices segment. However, it is in close competition with another global leader, Tasty Cola, which is currently ranked second in the country. Both companies have heavily invested in India by setting up manufacturing and bottling plants, as well as research and development facilities. The competition is so fierce that even if an employee of one company is seen consuming a product of the rival company, they are terminated immediately. There is also an ongoing fierce battle on social media and television advertisements between the two.

The Cricket World Cup, to be held in India, is just a few weeks away. To capitalize on this major event, Tasty Cola has launched a new product called Tasty Cola Blue, themed to match the Indian cricket team's jersey. A market research report commissioned by Delicious Cola suggests that Tasty Cola Blue will be a super-hit product and will likely make Tasty Cola the market leader in India, displacing Delicious Cola. In response to this report, the promoters and founders of Delicious Cola decide overnight to launch a new product called Delicious Cola Rush BLU to counter Tasty Cola Blue and aim to bring it to market within five days. A delay would result in losing market share during the World Cup season and potentially losing the top position to Tasty Cola.

The R&D unit of Delicious Cola prepares the syrup required for manufacturing Delicious Cola Rush BLU, and production begins immediately. Two days before the launch, you, as the CEO, inspect the product and find that the reports indicate a high level of pesticides in the soft drink. You raise this issue with the promoters and founders, but they insist that production cannot be halted now. They argue that halting the launch would almost certainly result in losing market leadership to Tasty Cola. To compensate for losses, the company might have to shut down some plants and lay off 15% of the 100,000-strong workforce. The promoters further justify the situation by pointing out that the contamination is due to pesticide-laden water supplied by the local government. They argue that the company's fruit juices remain a hallmark of quality and purity, and reassure you that the Delicious Cola Rush BLU soft drink issue will be managed

discreetly. They say the food safety authorities can be handled and the issue will never become public. Moreover, they contend that the pesticide content does not cause immediate health issues. However, you are aware that the pesticides present in the soft drink, although not causing immediate health effects, could have severe long-term consequences, including the potential to cause cancer in individuals who consume it regularly over the next 10–15 years.

- A. What are the ethical dilemmas involved?
- B. Who are the stakeholders in this case?
- C. What are the stakes of the stakeholders? Rank the stakes according to their importance.
- D. What are the options available to you?
- E. What will be your course of action?

Answer:

The above case study highlights the prevalence of cut throat competition between companies to maintain market dominance which is leading to the release of a product in the market that could have very adverse health effects on the people.

A. Ethical dilemmas

- 1. Professional Integrity VS loyalty to founders.
- 2. Corporate governance vs company's dominance.
- 3. Profits of the company VS Social responsibility (Health of the people).
- 4. Personal benefit as a CEO by way of promotion VS Crisis of Conscience .

B and C

Rank	Stakeholders	Stake
1.	CEO is the most important stakeholder as the CEO will decide whether Delicious Cola RUSH BLU will reach the market or no	Increase profit of the company Save jobs Provide quality product to consumers Ensure Corporate Governance
2.	The Delicious cola company, its founders and promoter	Maximize profit ,maintain market dominance
3.	Food Safety Authority	Ensure food safety guidelines are adhered to.
4.	Local government	Supply of water
5.	Public	To get quality products.

D. Options available

- 1. Delay the product by stopping the entire production line until safe drinking water is provided by the local government and persuading the founders and promoters and further requesting the founder and promoters to start a new division as chips, chocolates etc so the to be lay off workers could be accommodated.
- 2. Explore the possibility of making a contingent water arrangement on my own by exploring the possibility of digging a bore well and also verify its water quality.

3. Follow the advice of the founder and promoters but at the same time request them to add a warning on the Delicious Cola Rush BLU bottles of the possibility of adverse health effects.

E. Course of action

As the Delicious Cola Company fruit juices segment is well established more practical course of action would be

1. Instead of the sugary soft drink we create a BLUE color Fruit juice as the case study outlines there is no contamination of fruit juices and they are a hallmark of quality and purity .
2. Also the syrup has been made available by the research and development team so one has to mix the syrup with fruit juices.
3. Further as the world cup event will attract more of the younger generation who nowadays are more health conscious will prefer delicious cola fruit juices over the Sugary beverage of the Tasty Cola and the product will be a super hit and Delicious Cola Company will maintain its market dominance.
4. Also will take up the issue of corruption in the food regulatory body with the ombudsman or the appropriate authority so in a near future any contaminants don't risk the lives of the people.

On the whole this will ensure a win-win situation as the market dominance will be maintained, no need to lay off any workers and most importantly the health of the people won't be at risk.

Case Study 2

Pahadguda, a village in one of the eastern states of India, has a substantial tribal population, dense forest cover, and is home to the iconic Chamakta Pahad (mountain). The Chamakta Pahad holds immense cultural and spiritual significance for the tribal of Pahadguda, who believe that the origin of human civilization began here — that the first human was born on this very mountain. Every year, on a particular day when celestial bodies align in a specific manner, sunlight falls on the mountain in such a way that Chamakta Pahad appears to glow like gold. This day is celebrated by the tribal as "Manav Janam Diwas" (the Day of Human Origin). As part of the celebration, the tribal community climbs the Chamakta Pahad and performs age-old rituals, including animal sacrifices — typically goats, sheep, and chickens. The meat is then cooked and shared among the tribal as prasad, a sacred offering. These rituals have been carried out for centuries and are considered an essential part of their cultural identity.

However, on the same Chamakta Pahad stands a temple of Cthulhu Shanti, a religious sect that strongly advocates non-violence and compassion toward all living beings. Followers of this sect have been actively promoting their philosophy throughout the state. Recently, the state assembly passed a law prohibiting the harming of any living being in and around all Cthulhu Shanti temples across the state. This law is now being extended to Pahadguda as well. The move has not been welcomed by the tribal community. With only a few weeks remaining until Manav Janam Diwas, the district administration issued a circular prohibiting animal sacrifices and the consumption of non-vegetarian food on Chamakta Pahad. This has deeply angered the tribal, who view the circular as a direct attack on their faith and identity.

They have publicly warned that any attempt by the administration to stop their rituals could

lead to serious tension, and have vowed to go ahead with their traditional celebrations including the animal sacrifice and worship of the Chamakta Pahad regardless of the order.

- A. Is the law passed by the state assembly sustainable? Justify your stand.
- B. What options are available to you as Superintendent of Police on the said district under which Pahadguda village comes?
- C. What course of action will you take as Superintendent of Police to manage the situation?

Answer:

The case reflects a conflict between tribal cultural traditions and state-imposed law, posing challenges in balancing legality, cultural identity, and public order while upholding constitutional and civil service values.

A. Sustainability of the Law Passed by the State Assembly

1. The state assembly has the sovereign right to legislate in accordance with its constitutional mandate. As per social contract theorists like Hobbes and Locke, a legitimate government can make laws to ensure the welfare of its people.
2. The law also aligns with Article 48 and Article 51A(g) of the Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy), which promote compassion toward all living beings and discourage animal cruelty.
3. However, the situation reflects a conflict between law and ethics: Although the law is constitutionally valid, it is not ethically sustainable in this specific context.-
 - It violates Kantian ethics, as tribals are being treated as a means to an end (to fulfill the values of another group), and such an act cannot be universalized.
 - It also contradicts Rawls' Theory of Justice by failing both the equality principle (equal basic liberties) and the difference principle (benefiting the least advantaged groups, i.e., the tribal community).

Hence, the law is legally valid but ethically unsustainable in its current form and implementation.

B. Options Available as Superintendent of Police

1. Facilitate community dialogue to find a mutually respectful middle ground.
2. Recommend that the district administration seek judicial review or a temporary stay on the law's application in this tribal context.
3. Propose an interim compromise: allow animal sacrifices at the foothills, and only the cooked meat (prasad) to be brought up to Chamakta Pahad for consumption.
4. Escalate the matter to the State Tribal Welfare Department for policy-level consideration.
5. Enforce the circular strictly — though this risks social unrest and deepens alienation.

C. Course of Action as Superintendent of Police

As SP, my foremost duty is to maintain public order and uphold the law. At the same time, I must embody civil service values such as neutrality, empathy, and responsiveness. Based on these, I will:

1. Initiate a Peace Committee meeting involving tribal elders, temple authorities, and the district collector. I will try to find a middle ground for say animal sacrifices occur at the foothills, and only prasad (cooked meat) is offered and consumed atop Chamakta Pahad.
2. Persuade the Cthulhu Shanti temple priest not to object to the peaceful ritual involving consumption of prasad. I will request their cooperation in providing water and sweets to tribal visitors on Manav Janam Diwas, symbolizing mutual respect.
3. Reassure the tribal community that the police and district administration will formally raise their concerns with appropriate state authorities regarding the blanket application of this law at Chamakta Pahad, and request a re-examination or contextual relaxation of its provisions.
4. If a middle ground is not reached, the priority must be to prevent direct confrontation between the tribal community and followers of the Cthulhu Shanti sect. To that end, I will:
 - Ensure adequate police deployment to maintain peace and prevent escalation.
 - Allow the tribals to perform their rituals peacefully,
 - Subsequently, if necessary, after few days initiate symbolic or mild legal action (such as a warning or fine) to uphold the law while avoiding criminalization of a deeply rooted cultural tradition.
 - Transparently communicate to the tribal community that the administration has formally recommended a review of the law's applicability at Chamakta Pahad by the relevant state authorities, reinforcing our commitment to justice and fairness.

This approach balances the rule of law with ethical governance, respecting cultural identity, harmony, and justice, while also avoiding potential conflict through empathetic administration.