General Studies Paper 4														
Subject/Year	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	Total
Ethics (Section A)	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	8	8	8	8	8	**88**
Ethics (Section B)	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	**78**

CONTENTS

Ethics (Section A)

2025

Q.1(a). **In the present digital age, social media has revolutionised our way of communication and interaction. However, it has raised several ethical issues and challenges. Describe the key ethical dilemmas in this regard.** **(150 Words, 10 Marks)**

> **Core demand of the Question**
> ● Key Ethical Dilemmas in the Age of Social Media

Introduction

Social media, a powerful medium of communication and mobilisation, fosters expression, transparency, and connectivity, but also poses ethical challenges of **privacy**, **misinformation**, and **responsibility**. These concerns highlight the **key ethical dilemmas** that must be critically examined in the digital age

Body

Key Ethical Dilemmas in the Age of Social Media

● **Privacy vs Publicity:** Constant data collection challenges the right to privacy, a fundamental right under **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Union of India (2017)**.
   Eg: The *Cambridge Analytica scandal,* where personal data was misused for political propaganda.

● **Freedom of Expression vs Hate Speech:** Balancing **John Stuart Mill's Harm Principle** (freedom until it harms others) with the need to regulate hate content.
   Eg: Communal misinformation on WhatsApp has triggered violence in the *Muzaffarnagar riots (2013).*

● **Profit Motive vs Social Responsibility:** Platforms prioritise **algorithmic amplification** of sensational content for profit, raising questions of **utilitarian ethics vs corporate responsibility.**
   Eg: YouTube's recommendation algorithms sometimes promote extremist content for higher engagement.

● **Equality vs Digital Divide:** While social media democratizes information, unequal access deepens exclusion, violating **Rawls' principle of justice (fair equality of opportunity)**.
   Eg: Only **43% of rural households in India have internet access (NFHS-5)**, limiting participation.

● **Authenticity vs Manipulation: Fake news** and **deepfakes** challenge truthfulness, eroding trust in institutions.
   Eg: Misinformation during *COVID-19 vaccine drives* spread fear among vulnerable groups.

● **Individual Autonomy vs Algorithmic Control:** Personalized feeds shape opinions, creating **filter bubbles** and reducing autonomy in decision-making.
   Eg: Social media's role in influencing voter behaviour during the *2019 General Elections.*

● **Accountability vs Anonymity:** While anonymity protects whistleblowers, it also enables cyberbullying and trolling, raising questions of **Kantian ethics** (duty and respect for persons).

Conclusion

Social media embodies both **opportunities** and **dilemmas**. It is not technology itself but its **use** and **regulation** that determine outcomes. As **Aristotle's** idea of the *"golden mean"* suggests, the ethical path lies in balancing rights with responsibilities, ensuring that social media strengthens democracy, inclusivity, and human dignity in the digital age.

Q.1(b). **"Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment but a product of civil education and adherence to the rule of law." Examine the significance of constitutional morality for public servants highlighting the role in promoting good governance and ensuring accountability in public administration.** **(150 Words, 10 Marks)**

> **Core Demand of the Question**
> - Significance of Constitutional Morality for Public Servants
> - Role of Constitutional Morality in Promoting Good Governance and Accountability in Public Administration

Introduction

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasized that *constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment but cultivated through education and adherence to the Constitution*. For public servants, it implies aligning conduct not with personal discretion but with **constitutional values** such as justice, liberty and equality. Constitutional morality thus becomes the ethical compass for promoting good governance and accountability.

Significance of Constitutional Morality for Public Servants

- **Guiding Ethical Conduct Beyond Legal Compliance:** It ensures that civil servants follow the *spirit* of the Constitution, not just its *letter*.
  Eg: An IAS officer resisting political pressure to favour a particular caste/religion in welfare schemes embodies constitutional morality.
- **Safeguarding Rule of Law:** Prevents arbitrariness and promotes **Kantian ethics of duty**, ensuring all actions respect the dignity of citizens.
  Eg: Strict adherence to service rules in the allocation of COVID-19 relief funds.
- **Balancing Majority Opinion with Minority Rights: John Stuart Mill's Harm Principle** and Rawls' *Justice as Fairness* demand protection of vulnerable sections.
  Eg: Public servants implementing *reservation policies* despite resistance from privileged groups.
- **Promoting Impartiality and Non-Partisanship:** Anchors the value of **political neutrality**, crucial for fairness in decision-making.
  Eg: Election Commission officers ensuring free and fair elections irrespective of ruling party interests.
- **Upholding Human Rights and Dignity:** Inspired by Gandhian ethics of *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all).
  Eg: Police reforms focusing on humane treatment of detainees, respecting Article 21 (Right to Life).

Role of Constitutional Morality in Promoting Good Governance and Accountability

- **Equity and Inclusiveness:** Ensures governance that benefits all, especially the marginalized.
  Eg: Reservations and affirmative action implemented despite opposition.
- **Transparency and Openness:** Institutionalises accountability through RTI, social audits, and proactive disclosure.
  Eg: Social audits in Andhra Pradesh's MGNREGA scheme curbing corruption.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Strengthens checks and balances, **CAG, Lokpal, vigilance commissions**.
  Eg: CAG's 2G spectrum audit led to policy corrections and legislative scrutiny.
- **Integrity in Policy Implementation:** Guards against populist shortcuts, ensuring sustainable and just governance.
  Eg: Upholding environmental clearances despite pressure for faster clearances.
- **Citizen-Centric Governance:** Embeds *seva bhava* (spirit of service), prioritising dignity and welfare over expediency.
  Eg: Transparent implementation of DBT ensuring subsidies reach intended beneficiaries.

Conclusion

For public servants, constitutional morality is **the foundation of ethical administration**. By blending professionalism with constitutional values, it ensures **good governance** and **accountability**. As Ambedkar warned, democracy in India rests not only on institutions but also on the **constitutional morality of those who serve them**.

Q.2(a). **Carl von Clausewitz once said, "War is a diplomacy by other means." Critically analyse the above statement in the present context of contemporary geo-political conflict.**

(150 Words, 10 Marks)

> **Core Demand of the Question**
> - Arguments Supporting Clausewitz's View
> - Limitations in the Present Context

Introduction

Clausewitz saw war as an instrument to secure political aims when diplomacy fails. In the 21st century, however, the rise of h**ybrid wars, cyber conflicts,** and **economic coercion** challenges this classical understanding, raising questions about how states pursue power, peace, and ethics in modern conflict.

Body

Arguments Supporting Clausewitz's View

- **War as a tool of geopolitical strategy:** States continue to use war to achieve territorial, political, or security objectives.
  Eg: *Russia–Ukraine conflict* (2022–present), where Russia uses war to assert strategic dominance and resist NATO expansion.
- **Military means to secure national interest:** When diplomacy fails, states resort to force to secure vital interests.
  Eg: *Israel–Hamas conflict* (2023–25), where military action was used to protect security interests and negotiate ceasefire terms.
- **Use of force as coercive diplomacy:** War or threat of force is deployed as a bargaining tool to alter adversaries' behavior.
  Eg: China's military posturing in the *South China Sea* and *Taiwan Strait* acts as a continuation of diplomacy to assert sovereignty claims and strategic influence.

Limitations in the Present Context

- **Nuclear deterrence:** Risk of mutually assured destruction makes large-scale wars irrational.
  Eg: Despite U.S.–Russia tensions, both avoid direct military confrontation.
- **Rise of economic and technological warfare:** States increasingly use sanctions, trade wars, and cyber operations instead of open war.
  Eg: US and China tech rivalry over semiconductors and AI.
- **Global interdependence:** Economic globalization discourages conventional wars due to shared vulnerabilities.
  Eg: Russia–Ukraine war triggered global food and energy crises affecting all nations.
- **International law & institutions:** UN, ICJ, WTO, and multilateral frameworks constrain open wars, pushing states towards diplomacy.
- **Changing nature of conflict:** Hybrid warfare, terrorism, and information wars blur war–peace boundaries, making Clausewitz's linear view inadequate.
  Eg: The 2020 Mumbai power grid cyber-attack.

Conclusion

Wars may still serve **political ends**, but in an age where humanity bears the heaviest costs, ethical statecraft calls for **dialogue**, **cooperation**, and **fairness** to guide decisions. War thus remains not only the last and costliest resort, but also the least moral path in the practice of politics.

Q.2(b). **Keeping the national security in mind, examine the ethical dilemmas related to controversies over environmental clearance of development projects in ecologically sensitive border areas in the country.** **(150 Words, 10 Marks)**

> **Core Demand of the Question**
> - Ethical Dilemmas in Environmental Clearances for Border Development

Introduction

"Prithivi tvam amritasya putri – O Earth, you are the daughter of immortality" (Rig Veda) reflects the sacredness of nature and our moral duty to safeguard it. In **fragile border regions**, this duty often collides with the imperative of national security. This intersection opens up complex **ethical dilemmas** that demand closer examination.

Body

Ethical Dilemmas in Environmental Clearances for Border Development

● **Security Imperative vs. Ecological Responsibility:** Defence projects like roads, tunnels, and hydro dams are justified for troop mobility and deterrence. Yet, they disturb fragile ecosystems, causing landslides, biodiversity loss, and climate risks. The ethical dilemma emerges in prioritizing immediate defence needs against the duty to protect nature.

● **Present Security vs. Inter-generational Equity:** Accelerating clearances safeguards present sovereignty. However, irreversible ecological damage compromises the rights of future generations, raising questions of fairness and stewardship.

● **Strategic Secrecy vs. Procedural Justice:** EIA stresses transparency and public participation. Security projects often bypass these due to secrecy. This creates a conflict between democratic accountability and the state's duty of confidentiality.

● **Utilitarian Justification vs. Moral Duty:** A utilitarian logic supports environmental sacrifice for the greater good of national defence. Ethical theories rooted in **deontology** emphasize moral responsibility towards ecological preservation, regardless of outcomes.

● **National Security vs. Human Security:** Infrastructure may strengthen border defence but displace local communities, erode cultural rights, and undermine livelihoods. The ethical concern arises when **narrow state-centric security** undermines holistic human well-being.

● **Short-term Expediency vs. Long-term Resilience:** Expedient clearances enhance present preparedness. Yet, neglecting **ecological safeguards** increases **vulnerability** to disasters, even jeopardizing defence infrastructure itself.

● **Sovereign Responsibility vs. Global Commitments:** India must balance sovereign defence priorities with its ethical obligation under climate and biodiversity agreements. Ignoring ecological norms undermines **credibility** and **global moral responsibility**.

Conclusion

Ethical dilemmas in environmentally sensitive border areas demand balancing **national security**, **development**, and **ecological responsibility**. Policies must integrate justice, tribal rights, and sustainability. As the *Rig Veda* reminds us, protecting the Earth is a **sacred duty**, and **ethical governance** ensures that development strengthens the nation without eroding rights, culture, or the environment.

Q.3(a). **"Those who in trouble untroubled are, Will trouble trouble itself."** - Thiruvalluvar
(150 Words, 10 Marks).

> **Core Demand of the Question**
> ● Ethical Essence of Composure in Adversity

Introduction

Thiruvalluvar, through this couplet from the *Tirukkural,* asserts that individuals who maintain *inner calm* and *composure* in adverse situations can overcome difficulties effectively. In other words, it is not the external problem ("trouble") that determines the outcome, but the inner state of the person facing it. One who remains unshaken mentally can defeat and transform adversity itself.

Body

Ethical Essence of Composure in Adversity

● **Emotional Intelligence and Self-Control**: Those with high emotional intelligence remain calm in adversity, making better ethical decisions.
Eg: During COVID-19, Kerala's health secretary Dr. Rajan Khobragade coordinated responses calmly and effectively, minimizing panic.

- **Virtue of Fortitude (Aristotelian Virtue Ethics)**: Moral courage enables facing troubles without being perturbed, translating into just and rational actions.
  Eg: E. Sreedharan ("Metro Man") overcame political and logistical hurdles to deliver public projects efficiently, unswayed by stress.
- **Resilience Under Pressure:** Resilient leaders transform challenges into opportunities, embodying the spirit of "troubling trouble."
  Eg: Armstrong Pame, IAS, built the "People's Road" in Manipur by mobilizing community support when funds and government help stalled.
- **Stoic Detachment:** Following Stoic philosophy, remaining unshaken by hardship prevents escalation of problems.
  Eg: T.N. Seshan, as Chief Election Commissioner, enforced electoral reforms despite immense criticism and threats.
- **Gandhian Ethic of Satyagraha:** Peaceful resistance and inner strength confound adversaries and often turn the tide in one's favor.
  Eg: Gandhi's resolute non-violence during the Salt March destabilized the colonial power's strategy.
- **Leadership by Example:** A calm demeanor inspires teams to act rationally, ultimately resolving crises more swiftly.
  Eg: N. Vijayaraghavan, IAS, managed relief in Kerala floods by staying composed, coordinating resources and volunteers without panic.
- **Promoting Accountability and Transparency:** Facing allegations or crises without defensiveness leads to quicker resolution.
  Eg: Ashok Khemka, IAS, upheld transparency in land deals despite repeated transfers and attempts at intimidation.
- **Conflict Resolution and Mediation**: Remaining unruffled in disputes helps mediate with fairness and diffuse tension.
  Eg: Kiran Bedi, IPS, used calm mediation in Tihar Jail reforms, transforming the atmosphere and relationships among inmates.

Conclusion

Thiruvalluvar's wisdom is a reminder that our inner state molds how we address external adversity. By embodying fortitude, equanimity, and emotional intelligence, ethical leaders and civil servants do not just cope with problems; they often resolve or "trouble" the very nature of trouble itself. This timeless lesson in composure under stress is foundational for ethical governance and public service.

Q.3(b). **"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes." - William James** **(150 Words, 10 Marks)**

> **Core Demand of the Question**
> - Power of Attitude in Shaping Personal and Social Change

Introduction

William James' statement underscores the profound **power of personal attitude** in shaping **one's life and circumstances**. In the present context, it resonates with the idea that human beings, by changing their **perspectives**, can **transform their lives**, thereby exercising their **ethical responsibility** in creating meaning and success

Body

Power of Attitude in Shaping Personal and Social Change

- **Personal Responsibility and Self-Transformation:** The quote emphasizes that **individuals** can **transform their lives** by changing their attitudes, reflecting the power of **self-determination**.
  Eg: Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, from humble beginnings, adopted a mindset of **dedication and service**, which led to his rise as a respected scientist and President of India.
- **Positive Outlook for Overcoming Adversity:** A change in **attitude** helps individuals view **challenges as opportunities** for growth, leading to resilience and perseverance.
  Eg: Satyendra Dubey, an IAS officer, maintained his integrity and courage in the face of adversity, fighting against corruption despite the risks to his life.

- **Ethical Decision Making and Duty: Kant's duty ethics** suggest that personal growth and ethical behavior come from altering one's attitude toward **duty and responsibility**.
- **Embracing Continuous Learning and Growth:** A change in attitude towards **learning** and self-improvement drives personal and professional development.
  Eg: Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, promoted a **growth mindset** at Microsoft, fostering a culture of continuous innovation and learning.
- **Social Responsibility and Contribution:** Changing one's attitude can encourage individuals to take **responsibility for the collective good** and contribute to society's welfare.
  Eg: Dr. Verghese Kurien dedicated his life to **empowering dairy farmers** and became the architect of India's **White Revolution**, reshaping India's dairy industry.
- **Empathy and Building Relationships:** A shift in attitude towards **empathy** and understanding fosters stronger, more positive relationships with others.
  Eg: Nelson Mandela's shift from resentment to reconciliation after his imprisonment helped unite South Africa and promote national healing.
- **Adaptability in Leadership and Governance: Leaders** can inspire change by altering their approach to leadership, emphasizing **collaboration** and inclusivity over control.
  Eg: Mahatma Gandhi altered his leadership style from a lawyer to a political and social leader advocating **non-violent civil disobedience**, leading India to independence.
- **Inspiring Collective Transformation:** When an individual alters their attitude, it can influence the attitudes of others, leading to **collective transformation** in society.
  Eg: The #MeToo Movement saw individual stories of courage transform global conversations about sexual harassment, leading to social change and policy reforms.

Conclusion

William James' quote highlights the power of **individual agency** in transforming life by shifting attitudes. By moving from passive acceptance to **active ethical engagement**, we foster **personal growth**, **social justice**, and **ethical leadership**. This requires **self-awareness**, **ethical responsibility**, and a commitment to the **common good**, making James' insight a timeless principle for creating a more **equitable world**.

Q.3(c). **"The strength of a society is not in its laws, but in the morality of its people." - Swami Vivekananda.** **(150 Words, 10 Marks)**

> **Core Demand of the Question**
> - Role of Morality in Societal Strength: Swami Vivekananda's Perspective

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda's quote emphasizes that **moral values**, rather than legal structures, are the true foundation of a strong society. While laws are essential for regulating behavior, it is the **moral integrity** of individuals and communities that ultimately fosters **social cohesion**, **justice**, and **progress**. In the present context, this quote holds significant relevance in the framework of **ethical governance** and societal development.

Body

Role of Morality in Societal Strength: Swami Vivekananda's Perspective

- **Morality as the Foundation of Society's Functioning:** Vivekananda argues that **society's strength** comes from the **moral fabric** of its people, more than from laws. Ethical behavior, honesty, and social responsibility are essential for societal harmony.
  Eg: Denmark and Sweden have low corruption rates due to high **trust** and **moral integrity**, despite having fewer laws on paper.
- **The Limitation of Laws in Ensuring Social Harmony:** Laws cannot guarantee a **just society** without a collective **moral duty**. Without internalized ethics, laws may be ineffective.
  Eg: In **India**, while anti-corruption laws exist, moral failures at individual and institutional levels continue to foster widespread corruption, showing that laws alone don't solve deep-rooted ethical issues.