Case Study

“Have you said anything to your wife about this? Your decision will affect her as much as it will affect you. And what about your kids? Have you thought about how it might affect them? You may have to move. And what about your family’s needs? They have become accustomed to a certain kind of life. If you move ahead and blow the whistle, everything will change. You may never even work in the industry again. Think about all your education, about your plans and goals.” Rohit Sawant is trying to talk some sense into his friend, Srinivas Rao, who has discovered that the managers of his company knowingly let a product on the market with a defect. The defect is beginning to hurt people, mainly children. Further, his friend has discovered that the problem could be solved with a relatively inexpensive part costing Rs. 20. Since there are no government or industry standards, however, the company will wait until forced by the government to attend to the defect, thinking that this is the more profitable move. Sawant’s friend thinks it is his duty to bring this to the attention of the public, but Sawant knows, having seen this kind of situation before, that his friend will be fired and will almost certainly never work again as an engineer because of his reputation as a whistleblower. Sawant’s friend has a family. Nevertheless, he still wants to blow the whistle. Should his friend consider the impact his decision will have on his family? In this case, are his family obligations morally relevant? How, exactly, should he weigh his obligations to the public against his obligations to his family?