Geography · GS - IV

“Max Webar said that it is not wise to apply to public administration the sort of moral and ethical norms we apply to matters of personal conscience. It is important to realize that the state bureaucracy might possess its own independent bureaucratic morality.” Critically analyse this statement.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - IV	Geography

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Max Weber; bureaucratic morality; public duty; professional ethics; rule of law; personal conscience; impartiality; accountability; ethical discretion

Model Answer

Introduction

Max Weber's concept of bureaucracy emphasises hierarchy, rule-based functioning, impersonality and professional responsibility. The idea of bureaucratic morality suggests that officials have duties arising from their institutional roles.

Arguments Supporting the Statement

- **Role-based obligations:** Officials must follow lawful procedures rather than make decisions solely on personal beliefs.
- **Impartiality:** Standardised rules protect citizens from personal prejudice.
- **Administrative continuity:** Professional norms ensure consistent service delivery despite changes in personnel or government.

Critical Analysis

Bureaucratic morality cannot be entirely separated from broader ethical principles. Blind obedience may enable unlawful orders, discrimination or human rights violations. Efficiency and procedural compliance alone do not guarantee justice.

Civil servants must combine professional duty with constitutional morality, integrity, compassion and accountability. When an order appears unlawful or unethical, they should seek clarification, record concerns and use appropriate reporting mechanisms.

Conclusion

Bureaucratic morality is necessary for impartial and predictable administration, but it cannot justify moral disengagement. Professional rules must operate within constitutional and ethical boundaries, ensuring that public duty serves justice and human dignity.

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