Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Rajesh is a Group A officer with nine years of service. He is posted as Administrative Officer in an Oil Public Sector undertaking. As an Administrative Officer he is responsible for managing and coordinating various administrative tasks to ensure smooth functioning of office. He also manages office supplies, equipment etc.

Rajesh is now sufficient senior and is expecting his next promotion in JAG (Junior Administrative Grade) in the next one or two years. He knows that promotion is based on examination of ACRs/Performance Appraisal of last few years (5 years or so) of an officer by a DPC (Departmental Promotion Committee) and an officer lacking requisite grading of ACRs may not be found fit for promotion. Consequences of losing promotion may entail financial and reputational loss and set-back for career progression. Though he also puts his best efforts in official discharge of his duties, yet he is unsure of assessment by his superior officer. He is now putting extra efforts so that he gets thumping report at the end of financial year.

As Administrative Officer, Rajesh is regularly interacting with his immediate boss, who is his reporting officer for writing his ACR. One day he calls Rajesh and wants him to buy computer-related stationery on priority from a particular vendor. Rajesh instructs his office to initiate action for procuring these items. During the day, the

dealing Assistant brings an estimate of Rupees Thirty Five Lakhs covering all stationery items from the same vendor. It is noticed that as per delegated financial powers, as provided in the GFR (General Financial Rules) as applicable in that Organisation, expenditure for office items exceeding Rupees Thirty Lakhs requires sanction of the next higher authority (boss in the present case). Rajesh knows that immediate superior would expect all these purchases should be done at his level and may not appreciate such lack of initiative on his part. During discussions with office, he learns that common practice of splitting of expenditure (where large order is divided into a series of smaller ones) is followed to avoid obtaining sanction from higher authority. This practice is against the rules and may come to the adverse notice of Audit.

Rajesh is perturbed. He is unsure of taking decision in the matter.

- **(a) What are the options available with Rajesh in the above situation?**
- **(b) What are the ethical issues involved in this case?**
- **(c) Which would be the most appropriate option for Rajesh and why?**

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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Integrity, financial probity, conflict of interest, abuse of discretion, rule of law, procurement ethics, fear of adverse appraisal, institutional pressure, audit accountability, transparency, public interest, due process

Model Answer

(a) Options Available

1. Split the procurement into smaller orders as commonly practised.
2. Process the entire procurement after obtaining the prescribed sanction.
3. Seek written instructions from the reporting officer regarding the procurement.
4. Raise the issue with the competent higher authority or finance/procurement section.
5. If necessary, report suspected procedural violations through the appropriate institutional mechanism.

(b) Ethical Issues

The central conflict is between career interest and professional integrity. Rajesh faces pressure because his reporting officer controls his performance assessment. Other issues include financial propriety, obedience versus legality, institutional culture, misuse of delegated powers, fairness in procurement and accountability for public expenditure.

Splitting expenditure deliberately to circumvent the prescribed sanction is not merely a technical irregularity; it undermines transparency and the hierarchy of financial accountability.

(c) Most Appropriate Option

Rajesh should not split the procurement. He should process the complete requirement transparently and obtain the sanction prescribed under the applicable financial rules. Since the reporting officer is also the competent authority, Rajesh should respectfully place the financial requirement and applicable rule before him.

If pressure persists, he should seek written instructions and, where necessary, consult the finance/procurement authority.

He should maintain proper records of estimates, approvals, comparative evaluation and procurement decisions.

Ethical Justification

Rajesh's fear of an adverse appraisal cannot justify violation of financial rules. A good ACR is a professional objective, whereas misuse of public money can create legal, administrative and reputational consequences.

Conclusion

Rajesh should demonstrate integrity without being confrontational. Respectful dissent, written documentation, procedural compliance and institutional escalation provide the best balance between professional loyalty and public accountability.