

ETHICS CASE STUDIES

Environment v/s Development

Industrial chemicals are produced on a big scale by a conglomerate. It suggested establishing a second unit. Due to its negative impact on the environment, many states rejected this proposal. But one state government acceded to the request and permitted the unit close to a city, brushing aside all opposition. Further, the unit was set up 10 years ago and was in full swing till recently. The pollution caused by the industrial effluents was affecting the land, water, and crops in the area. It was also causing serious health problems to human beings and animals. This gave rise to a series of agitations demanding the closure of the plant. In a recent agitation, thousands of people took part, creating a law-and-order problem necessitating stern police action. Following the public outcry, the State government ordered the closure of the factory. The closure of the factory resulted in the unemployment of not only those workers who were engaged in the factory but also those who were working in the ancillary units. It also very badly affected those industries which depended on the chemicals manufactured by it.

As a senior officer entrusted with the responsibility of handling these issues, how are you going to address it?

Emotional Intelligence in Corporate Offices

Ranbir is the Chief executive officer of a company. The Company has been growing and has recruited quite a few specialists recently. The functional heads in the company have to meet their staff in an open meeting every two months. Ranbir detested these meetings. It was open to everyone in the office. The staff came up with a long list of trivial and tiresome complaints and grievances. They repeated the same things and spoke at length. Even when the staff knew of the constraints, they went on with their complaints. They wanted more space for lounge, for bathrooms and crèche. Ranbir pointed to lack of space, and yet the staff continued to complain. Ranbir cultivated a habit of sitting through the meeting with a cheerful face, but with his mind switched off from the proceedings. The meeting became a tiresome ritual he had to get through.

Due these issues many employees had left the company and its further hampering the Business of the company.

Q. In Ranbir's situation what action would you have taken and why?

Media ethics vs Public Safety

You are a struggling reporter of a news channel and have been under severe pressure from your Editor-in-Chief to bring some sensational news to boost Television Rating Points (TRPs).

You have interviewed a famous religious leader of a minority faction on the recent Ayodhya verdict of Supreme Court. In the interview, the religious leader used a provocative statement and urged the members of the community to rebel against the court ruling. If the interview is aired, it might spark communal tensions and law and order problem in society. You are very well aware that if the interview is presented to the Editor-in-Chief, he will definitely air it to boost TRPs. The interview may lead to the exponential growth of your career.

In such circumstances, would it be right to present the interview to Editor-in-Chief?

- (a) Identify the moral dilemma faced by you.
- (b) Analyse your role and duties as a responsible reporter, also suggest your course of action.

Privatization of public services vs Welfare of workers

The Government has planned the strategic disinvestment of State Road Transportation Corporation in a phased manner by allowing some private companies to ferry buses on marked routes. The outraged workers have called for a strike against the move. You are the head of the workers union of the transport corporation. In a meeting with State officials, they have informed you about the circumstances of inefficiency, corruption and deteriorating quality of service to commuters. You have also presented the worker's viewpoint and their complaints of low payscale and non-payment of salaries from the past few months. A deadlock has occurred between the two parties where no-side is willing to lose. To break the deadlock, the officials offer you a bribe and other perks to comply with the decision of privatisation in a phased manner. State transport services are in a state of peril and there is a huge outcry among the common masses.

- (a) Identify the moral dilemma faced by you.
- (b) Analyse your role and duties, also suggest your course of action.

National Security and Honey Trapping

You are a senior officer at an intelligence agency working for the internal security of the nation. You find out that a junior officer has been a victim of honey trapping through social media. In all of this, his phone was hacked and confidential files were leaked.

The entire department has come together and wants you to take strict action against that officer for his behavior. That junior officer is highly skilled and a valuable asset for the organisation. He is also very close to you as you have mentored him throughout and he also respects you a lot. Moreover, any action against him might attract media attention and bring a bad reputation to the organisation at large.

(A) What are the ethical issues involved and the options available to you in such a situation?

(B) Also, suggest a course of action you would like to follow.

Personal relations vs Ethical values

Pawan is pursuing MBA and shares a room with you in the private hostel. He desperately needs a job after completing his course because of educational loan and weak economic background. In his last two semesters, he couldn't secure good grades due to serious illness. In current semester he has to secure good marks at any cost to satisfy minimum criteria for placements.

Few days before the final semester exam, he comes to you and asks for money. He is stressed and nervous. He tells you about his plan to purchase semester papers to clear the exam and convinces you for the same by giving reference to his bad health, family status and his education loan.

In such circumstances, would it be right to lend money to him?

(a) Identify the moral dilemma faced by you.

(b) Analyse your role and duties as a friend, also suggest your course of action.

Development vs Environmental and Human Rights

You are the Managing Director of Metro Rail Corporation (MRC) of a metropolitan city and you have received orders and funding for construction of the metro track and a parking space in a densely forested area of the city with houses of few underprivileged families as well in it.

For the construction, the forest has to be cleared and the families have to be moved to some other place. The locals have started a protest after knowing about the order. They are highly raged about cutting down thousands of trees and the affected families have also joined them because the forest holds emotional value for them.

On the other hand, the minister who directly controls the MRC is pressuring you to start the felling process as soon as possible. You know that going against his orders will have serious repercussions.

(a) What are the ethical issues involved and the options available to you in such a situation?

(b) Also, suggest a course of action you would like to follow. (250 words)

Mob Lynching

You are posted as an additional superintendent of police in a district. The incidents of lynching over the rumours of child lifting have increased in the state in past few months.

Recently, one such incident took place at the Government hospital, where two brothers who had taken their nephew to a doctor for treatment were misjudged and attacked by the mob over suspicion of child lifting.

The police rushed to the spot after receiving the information and rescued the brothers. However, one of them was declared dead on arrival at the hospital. The deceased person was as a young leader and potential candidate for the upcoming Panchayat elections.

The locals from the nearby village along with the relatives of the deceased person are protesting and accusing police of negligence. They are claiming the incident as a planned political murder and demanding for arrest of the rival candidate who has strong political backing.

(a) Identify the stakeholders and various dimensions of the crisis involved in the issue.

(b) What would be the course of action taken by you to manage the situation as an additional superintendent of police? Suggest the measures to deal with the incident lynching. (200 words)

Rule of Law vs Social Norms

You are the Superintendent of Police (SP) in the district where instances of honour killing are rampant. One day you receive a phone call from a girl informing you of the potential threat to her and her partners' life from her family as she has decided to marry a boy belonging to a lower caste. Moreover, the local police station is not filing the FIR or granting them protection. You ask her to visit your office but she demands police protection to come out from the hideout as her father's goons are chasing her.

On further inquiry, you come to know that the girl is the daughter of one of the most powerful Minister of the State and both girl and boy are legally eligible to get married. The family is concerned about the family prestige due to the lower caste of the boy and also of the financial stability of marriage as they both are unemployed. You are under extreme political pressure to charge the boy of kidnapping the girl or else face the consequences.

In such circumstances, point out the ethical dilemma faced by you and options available to you. Also, chalk out the course of action you would prefer to follow. (250 words)

Corruption nexus versus Call of duty

You are District Magistrate of a flood-prone district. The flood control department has allocated forty crore rupees for building embankments in the low lying area of the river bed. There have been various complaints from locals over the delay in project completion, violations of rules and misuse of funds by the nexus of politicians and contractors.

During monsoon, the embankment construction couldn't withstand a single season of flooding. This has led to the submergence of many villages in floodwater and thousands of people are trapped in the villages. The villages are completely cut off and there is a scarcity of food and drinking water. Due to water stagnation, there is also a risk of epidemic spread in the region.

There is huge discontent and protest over the allegation of corruption against the local politician. As he is a popular face of ruling political party in the state, there is severe pressure from political heads to cover the corruption issue. Defying the orders of political bosses will bring wrath towards you and may also lead to transfer.

1. As a District Magistrate what will be your course of action to manage the situation in the district. (200 words)
2. Identify the various dimensions of the crisis involved in the issue. Based on your understanding, suggest measures to deal with the crisis. (200 Words)

Personal relation v/s Public duty

You are a Municipal Corporation Commissioner of your city which is under heavy rainfall over the last few days. The boundary wall of one of the housing society collapses. The incident took place at midnight, leading to the death of 12 workers, including two children, sleeping in the shade beside the wall.

On the preliminary inquiry, it has been found that inspite of inappropriate soil conditions, the permission to construct wall was given by previous Municipal Commissioner, who happens to be your close friend. Also, irregularities in construction material have been found and the other officials in the department are trying to influence or manipulate you. The whole scenario seems like a nexus between the officials of the municipal department and builder. However, the builder is a close relative of one of the most powerful leaders of the party in power and is trying to threaten you.

(A) What are the ethical issues involved and the options available to you in such a situation?

(B) Also, suggest a course of action you would like to follow.

Call of Duty versus Human Value

You are a traffic constable and while on duty you see 3 people riding a motorcycle without a helmet and jumping the red signal. On stopping them, you came to know that one of them met with an accident due to potholes and is severely bleeding and due to non-arrival of ambulance they are taking him to the hospital. On further enquiry, you came to know that the driver does not have a driving license and works as day wager. While on his way to work, he found the man lying injured on the road and in a rush to take him to hospital, he left his helmet on the site of an accident. The driver expresses his financial inability to pay increased fines. Recently, due to the enforcement of new Motor Vehicles Act, you are under severe pressure from your seniors for strict enforcement.

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Environmental Impact Assessment of a Project in Naxal Area

You are leading a survey team that has been assigned to carry out environmental impact assessment of a project proposed in a Naxal area. Members have been allotted a remote village each to conduct surveys and ascertain the response of residents. You are responsible not to disclose the identity of the villagers. During the review of survey findings you find some responses that are contradictory. You accompany the concerned surveyor to that village next day for verification. You carry ground check from the list of respondents and ask them for clarification of the response they had given earlier. Some of them seem awestruck and even deny any knowledge of the survey being conducted, you try to verify this from other residents of the village who were also surveyed and get similar replies. This raises serious doubts about the veracity of the survey process.

1. What are the ethical issues involved in the situation?
2. As a team leader accountable for the credibility of the survey and working on a hard time frame, what are the possible options before you? List their merits and demerits.
3. Giving reasons, state the course of action you would follow.

Right to be Forgotten

Ramesh, once a struggling theatre artist was accused and later freed from rape charges, which the jury found out to be ill conceived and wrongly targeted. Not able to handle the situation, he changed profession and moved on. Many years later, while his closest friends know about the incident, his co-workers do not. One day, out of curiosity, he surfs his personal records on the internet, and to his surprise, finds that the results reflect an old report in a local newspaper about the rape charges he faced.

Ramesh is upset; after all these years, he would like to be able to disclose the event only to whomever he wants. He has been informed about the decision of the European Court of Justice, which allows individuals to submit requests to a search engine to remove certain results from searches on their names, and citing the same, requests the search engine and media outlet to remove the results.

Valid arguments can be advanced for making the 'Right to be Forgotten' a fundamental right? What those arguments could be? What limitations, if any, can it be subjected to? Should there be any obligations on the search engines regarding cases, which are no longer relevant, as the one mentioned above?

Ethnic Conflict and Refugee Settlement

You are the officer in charge of a refugee settlement team in a multilateral humanitarian organization. There is an ethnic conflict in the nearby border area and as a result, many people are affected and displaced. The economically better-off neighbouring countries have accommodated the streams of migrants with financial support from your organization. The violence in the region has increased recently and the influx of people seeking refuge has grown exponentially. With countries following protectionist policies the refugees are left in a vulnerable situation. You are asked to represent the organization for the settlement of refugees with neighbouring countries, who also happen to be a powerful economic bloc. However, they refuse any more accommodation on the following grounds:

1. Drainage of resources in face of subdued economic conditions.
2. Domestic political repercussions.
3. Rehabilitation will encourage more influx.
4. Permanency of settlement in face of better prospects than at home.

What are the counter-arguments that can be cited to convince the countries for an immediate solution? Suggest some long term measures as well that could be followed to address the problem.

Ebola Outbreak and Experimental Drugs

The Ebola outbreak in Nigeria has affected thousands of people in a short span of time and infected many others. There is no vaccine or treatment available to cure the disease. You are the head of the health department of one of the countries that have been severely hit by the epidemic. While there is no treatment currently available for the disease, an experimental drug is being used in some other country. This drug has shown positive results and consequently some of the patients have also managed to recover from the disease. However, it is not yet clear whether the relief came due to the drug alone, or otherwise.

Given the high mortality rate of the disease and its rapid spread, other countries affected by this disease have already given a go-ahead for the mass production of this experimental drug. But some health experts are sceptical about the efficacy of the drug and have even warned against its use as it may result in some deadly side-effects.

1. Bring out and discuss the above case.
2. What would you do in the above situation? Give reasons.

Resident Welfare Association (RWA) vs Night Shelters For Labourers

You are the Station House Officer of a police station. Recently, there has been a spurt in theft incidents in your area. Some of these incidents have occurred even during daytime. The Resident Welfare Association (RWA) has blamed the labourers, residing in night shelters for the crimes.

The night shelters are the result of an initiative by the police to help the homeless people to seek refuge from the biting cold at night. You have taken great pain to get these night-shelters up and running. The record of all those who stay in these night shelters, for instance, their names and identity proofs, is with the police. But the police has no information if any one of them has a criminal record.

Even as an investigation regarding the thefts is going on, the RWA members are demanding that these night shelters be dismantled and the labourers be driven away from their homes.

1. What are the options available to you?
2. Evaluate each option and suggest the best course of action.

District Collector's Responsibility To Conduct Fair Elections

You are a District Collector of a city which is scheduled to go to polls in a week. The responsibility to conduct fair elections has been given to you. However, suddenly your mother suffers a heart attack and has to be admitted to a hospital in your home district, which is at a distance of 250 kms from the district of your posting. Doctor informs you that she needs to be shifted in Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and her chances of survival are bleak. You are the only child and want to be with her and your family at this moment. Your plea for an emergency leave has been rejected by the Election Commission. What would you do under such circumstances?

SAATH TO SUCCESS

