

LUKMAAN IAS

General Studies Paper IV — Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

PYQ Trend Analysis & 2026 Expected Topics/Questions

16 Topic Clusters (Section A + Section B) | 2013–2025 | UPSC Civil Services Mains

Section A — Theory

Sectoral Topic-wise Popularity Ranking (2013–2025)

Rank	Topic	Years Asked	Times Asked
1	Essence, determinants & consequences of ethics in human actions	10 — 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2023, 2024	20
2	Aptitude & foundational values for civil service (integrity, impartiality, empathy, etc.)	10 — 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2025	18
3	Ethical issues in International Relations and funding	9 — 2014, 2015, 2017, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025	10
4	Emotional Intelligence — concepts & application	7 — 2013, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, EXPECTED	7
5	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government	5 — 2015, 2017, 2018, 2021, 2025	7
6	Attitude — content, structure, function	5 — 2014, 2015, 2016, 2020, 2021	5
6	Accountability and ethical governance	5 — 2014, 2016, 2018, 2021, 2022	5
6	Challenges of corruption	5 — 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2022	5
9	Dimensions of ethics	4 — 2015, 2021, 2024, 2025	6
10	Concept of public service	4 — 2018, 2019, 2024, 2025	5
11	Philosophical basis of governance and probity	4 — 2014, 2019, 2023, 2025	4
11	Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct	4 — 2016, 2018, 2024, 2025	4
13	Law, rules, regulations & conscience as sources of ethical guidance	3 — 2022, 2023, 2024, EXPECTED	5
14	Corporate governance	3 — 2017, 2022, 2023, EXPECTED	3
14	Information sharing & transparency, RTI	3 — 2015, 2019, 2022, EXPECTED	3
16	Moral and political attitude	2 — 2013, 2017	2
16	Role of family, society, educational institutions in inculcating values	2 — 2020, 2023, EXPECTED	2
16	Status and problems (of ethics in public administration)	2 — 2014, 2022	2
19	Ethics in private and public relationships	1 — 2014	1
19	Social influence and persuasion	1 — 2016, EXPECTED	1
19	Sexual harassment/domestic violence/patriarchal attitude	1 — 2014, EXPECTED	1
19	Strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance	1 — 2014	1
19	Citizen's Charter	1 — 2019, EXPECTED	1
19	Work culture	1 — 2023, EXPECTED	1
19	Utilization of public funds	1 — 2019, 2025	1

POPULAR TERMINOLOGIES (2013-2025)

Rank	Terminology	Years Asked	Times Asked
—	Public Servant / Civil Servant / Public Service	12 — every theory year except 2023	ubiquitous (see note)
1	Accountability	5 — 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2021	5
2	Probity	5 — 2014, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024	5
3	Conflict of Interest	4 — 2015, 2017, 2018, 2022	5
4	Integrity	4 — 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021	4
5	Constitutional Morality	3 — 2019, 2022, 2025	3
6	Crisis of Conscience	3 — 2013, 2019, 2021	3
7	Good Governance	2 — 2016, 2022	2
8	Impartiality & Non-partisanship	2 — 2016, 2021	2
9	Empathy & Compassion	2 — 2013, 2022	2
10	Devotion to Duty	2 — 2022, 2025	2
11	Public Interest	2 — 2017, 2018	2
12	Whistleblower	1 — 2022	1
13	Social Audit	1 — 2021	1
14	Voice of Conscience	1 — 2013	1
15	Environmental Ethics	1 — 2015	1
16	Bureaucratic vs. Democratic Attitude	1 — 2015	1
17	Moral Intuition vs. Moral Reasoning	1 — 2023	1
18	Moral Integrity	1 — 2023	1

Most Asked Moral Leaders & Philosophers (2013–2025)

Rank	Name	Count	Years
1	Mahatma Gandhi	6	2013, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2023
2	Swami Vivekananda	5	2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, 2025
3	A.P.J. Abdul Kalam	3	2017, 2019, 2022 (2017 & 2022 reuse the identical quote)
4	Abraham Lincoln	2	2013, 2018
4	Socrates	2	2019, 2020
4	Dalai Lama	2	2021, 2022
4	Thiruvalluvar / Tirukkural	2	2018, 2025
8	Aristotle	1	2013

Rank	Name	Count	Years
8	Kautilya	1	2016
8	John Rawls	1	2016
8	Max Weber	1	2016
8	Napoleon Bonaparte	1	2017
8	Warren Buffett	1	2018
8	Buddha	1	2020
8	Savitribai Phule	1	2020
8	Erik Erikson	1	2021
8	Potter Stewart	1	2022
8	Jawaharlal Nehru	1	2023
8	Guru Nanak	1	2023
8	Sardar Patel	1	2024
8	Immanuel Kant	1	2024
8	Mahavir	1	2025
8	William James	1	2025
8	Carl von Clausewitz	1	2025

Expected Moral Leaders & Philosophers for 2026

This is necessarily more speculative than the frequency-based rankings above — UPSC introduces 1-3 previously-unused names most years, so past frequency alone under-predicts the field. The list below combines 'due for a repeat' figures with 'notable gap' figures who fit the syllabus but have never been used.

- **Mahatma Gandhi** — *[Very High]* Most-quoted figure in the paper's history (6/13 years, ~46%); last appeared 2023, historically never absent for more than 2 consecutive years.
- **Swami Vivekananda** — *[Very High]* Appeared in 3 of the last 4 years (2023-2025), including 2 years running; the single most 'in-form' figure in recent papers.
- **A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** — *[Moderate-High]* Reused an identical quote once already (2017→2022); popular for integrity/youth-focused questions, a natural fit for 2026's civil-service-reform theme.
- **B.R. Ambedkar** — *[High (overdue)]* Has never been directly quoted in GS-IV despite being a towering constitutional-ethics figure — a striking 13-year gap, especially notable given ongoing constitutional-morality discourse in the courts.
- **Rabindranath Tagore** — *[Moderate]* Never used; fits the Human Values/nationalism theme and is a natural 'fresh name' choice given UPSC's pattern of introducing 1-3 new figures each year.
- **Chanakya / Kautilya** — *[Moderate]* Used once (2016); statecraft-ethics crossover fits the recent pattern of geopolitics-tinged theory questions (e.g., 2025's Clausewitz).
- **Confucius or Plato** — *[Moderate]* Neither has ever appeared despite being canonical moral philosophers; UPSC has drawn on Aristotle, Socrates, Kant and Rawls from the Western canon but left this pair untouched.

- **Subhas Chandra Bose / Sarojini Naidu** — *[Low-Moderate]* Freedom-struggle figures not yet used; fit the Human Values sub-topic UPSC returns to almost every year in some form.

MAJOR THEMES

Rank	Theory Topic Cluster	Qs (2013–25)	Share
1	Public/Civil Service values & Ethics in Public Administration	43	26.7%
2	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers	37	23.0%
3	Probity in Governance (RTI, Codes, Citizen's Charters, corruption)	27	16.8%
4	Aptitude & foundational values (integrity, impartiality, empathy)	15	9.3%
5	Ethics and Human Interface (dimensions, private/public relationships)	11	6.8%
6	Emotional Intelligence	10	6.2%
6	Human Values (lessons from leaders/reformers)	10	6.2%
8	Attitude (content, structure, function, persuasion)	8	5.0%

Most Expected Topics for 2026, in Order of Priority

This priority order blends the 13-year frequency pattern above with concrete 2025–26 developments (see Section 6) most likely to be shaped into 2026 Mains questions, across both Section A (Theory) and Section B (Case Studies).

Priority	Expected Topic	Section
1	Public/civil service values & ethics in public administration — the heaviest theory bucket	Theory (A)
2	Moral thinkers and philosophers — near-universal, quote-based questions	Theory (A)
3	Probity in Governance — RTI, Citizen's Charter, corruption, work culture	Theory (A)
4	Aptitude & foundational values — integrity, impartiality, empathy, compassion	Theory (A)
5	Constitutional morality — recurring Supreme Court theme	Theory (A)
6	AI ethics and governance — new Ethics & Accountability Bill, 'Seven Sutras' framework	Theory (A)
7	Ethics and Human Interface — dimensions of ethics, private vs. public relationships	Theory (A)
8	Emotional Intelligence — quote-based, application in governance	Theory (A)
9	Human Values — lessons from leaders and reformers	Theory (A)
10	Attitude — content, structure, function, persuasion	Theory (A)
11	Probity/corruption-specific dilemmas — MGNREGA, PWD, PSU procurement scenarios	Case Study (B)
12	Development vs. environment/displacement dilemmas — Ken-Betwa, Great Nicobar, tribal rights	Case Study (B)
13	Public/civil-service general dilemma — honest officer facing pressure/punitive transfer	Case Study (B)
14	Personal life/private-sector dilemmas — conflict of interest, work-life balance	Case Study (B)

Priority	Expected Topic	Section
15	Women's safety and workplace-harassment dilemmas — POSH jurisdiction, ICC accountability	Case Study (B)
16	Disaster/emergency-response dilemmas — floods, landslide rehabilitation, cloudburst response	Case Study (B)
17	Ethics in international relations/border-crisis dilemmas — refugee and security scenarios	Case Study (B)
18	Whistleblower protection and retaliation dilemmas	Case Study (B)
19	Attitude and interpersonal-relations dilemmas — workplace conflict, toxic superiors	Case Study (B)
20	Technology/AI-driven governance dilemmas — algorithmic bias, deepfakes, data privacy	Case Study (B)

Most Expected Questions for Mains 2026

Section A — Theory

1. "Constitutional morality is the fulcrum which acts as an essential check upon the high functionaries and citizens alike." Discuss. *[10 marks]*
2. Examine the relevance of emotional intelligence for a civil servant working in a high-stress crisis environment. *[10 marks]*
3. "Probity in governance is not merely the absence of corruption but the presence of a culture of accountability." Comment. *[10 marks]*
4. Discuss the ethical challenges posed by the use of Artificial Intelligence in public administration and welfare-scheme delivery. *[15 marks]*
5. "Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful." Elucidate in the context of civil service values. *[10 marks]*
6. Examine the role of moral exemplars from India's freedom struggle in shaping the foundational values of the civil services today. *[10 marks]*

Section B — Case Studies

Ranked in descending order of frequency across 2013–2025, with approximate percentage share of all Section-B case studies.

Rank	Case-Study Theme	Qs (2013–25)	Share
1	Probity/corruption-specific dilemmas	27	34.6%
2	Development vs. environment/displacement dilemmas	13	16.7%
3	Personal life/private-sector dilemmas	10	12.8%
4	Public/civil-service general dilemma	9	11.5%
5	Women's issues (harassment, patriarchy, violence)	8	10.3%
6	Disaster/emergency-situation dilemmas	6	7.7%
7	Attitude and interpersonal-relations dilemmas	3	3.8%
8	Ethics in international relations/foreign-posting dilemmas	2	2.6%

Section B — Case Studies

7. You are a District Collector overseeing rehabilitation after a major flood. Senior political leaders pressure you to prioritize relief work in their constituency ahead of more severely affected areas. Discuss the ethical issues involved and the course of action you would adopt. *[20 marks]*
8. As Project Officer of a river-linking project, you discover that displacement of tribal families has proceeded without complete rehabilitation as mandated by law, but halting the project would delay a nationally important scheme. Discuss the ethical dilemmas involved and suggest a way forward. *[20 marks]*
9. You are a newly-posted officer and discover that a welfare scheme under your charge has been plagued by ghost beneficiaries for years, implicating your predecessor and politically influential local leaders. Discuss the ethical issues and outline your response. *[20 marks]*
10. A woman employee in your department complains of harassment by a senior officer from another department during an inter-departmental assignment. Discuss the ethical and procedural issues involved and how you would address the complaint. *[20 marks]*

Current-Affairs: August 2025 – August 2026

Corruption & Integrity Cases

- **Mar-Aug 2025** — Justice Yashwant Varma cash-at-residence scandal — burnt currency found at a sitting High Court judge's home; in-house inquiry, impeachment motion, eventual resignation. Raises questions on judicial accountability and 'who guards the guardians.'
- **Jun-Jul 2025; Apr 2026** — Haryana IAS officer arrested on his retirement day for alleged misappropriation of ~₹169 crore from the State Pollution Control Board — a symbolically stark integrity case.
- **Oct 2025** — Punjab IPS officer (DIG rank) arrested by CBI in a ₹5-crore bribery case — rank offering no shield from accountability.
- **Sept 2025** — SEBI issues a 'clean chit' to the Adani Group in the Hindenburg matter, reviving debate on regulatory independence and conflict of interest in oversight bodies.

- **2025-26** — Parliamentary Committee flags Lokpal's institutional weaknesses — non-appointment of its Inquiry Wing, no special courts, and a sharp fall in complaints (2,469 in 2022-23 to 233 in 2025).

Civil Service Ethics & Administrative Dilemmas

- **2025-26; SC verdict Apr 2026** — Mass IAS/IPS transfers ordered by the Election Commission ahead of West Bengal elections — Supreme Court examines whether EC can override state-cadre postings without state-government consultation.
- **Retired Apr 2025** — Ashok Khemka, the famously incorruptible Haryana IAS officer, retires after 57-66 transfers in a 34-year career — textbook material on the 'cost of integrity.'
- **2025** — A 2023-batch IAS officer who had fought welfare-scheme corruption was shot six times in retaliation — a stark illustration of the personal risk of whistleblowing.
- **2024-26 (ongoing)** — Lateral-entry scheme controversy continues — UPSC's 2024 advertisement withdrawn amid reservation concerns; debate over merit vs. social justice and accountability of contractual specialists continues.
- **Through Feb 2026** — Mission Karmayogi/iGOT platform scales to 1.48 crore users and 7 crore+ course completions, marking a shift from 'rule-based' to 'role-based' HR management in the civil services.

Probity in Governance

- **2025** — CAG report on PMKVY (Skill India) finds 94.53% of beneficiary bank accounts fake and 96% fake mobile numbers across ₹10,000+ crore of spending — a textbook probity/ghost-beneficiary case.
- **Apr 2025; Dec 2025** — MGNREGA fund leakage — a ₹61-crore scam in Gujarat's Dahod villages, and allegations of ~10,653 embezzlement cases across schemes in Punjab.
- **Through 2025-26** — Central Information Commission vacancy crisis — functioning with just 2 of 11 sanctioned posts, ~30,000 appeals backlogged, raising questions on the deliberate 'starvation' of transparency institutions.
- **2025-26; SC verdict May 2026** — Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls controversy — ~6.5 crore names dropped from draft rolls; Supreme Court upholds SIR's legality while flagging due-process concerns.
- **2025-26** — CAG flags ₹22.61 crore of irregularities in Himachal Pradesh's State Disaster Response Fund utilization — probity failures compounding disaster-governance failures.

Development, Disaster & Gender Dilemmas

- **Apr 2026** — Ken-Betwa river-linking project — tribal women stage a 'pyre protest' against forced displacement of 7,000+ families across 22 villages, including submergence of Panna Tiger Reserve.
- **2025-26** — Great Nicobar mega-project — Tribal Council alleges administration 'falsely certified' community consent for environmental clearance; NGT declines to intervene despite ecological concerns.
- **Aug 2025** — Punjab's worst floods in nearly four decades — ~1,400 villages affected, blamed on extreme rainfall combined with poorly timed dam releases, raising administrative-coordination questions.
- **Jul 2026 (2nd anniversary)** — Wayanad landslide rehabilitation lags two years on — promised township still under construction; survivor loans only 'rescheduled,' not waived, after a legal provision permitting waivers was removed.
- **Dec 2025; Sept 2025** — Supreme Court POSH rulings — one broadening Internal Complaints Committee jurisdiction across departments, another imposing strict limitation periods on harassment complaints, drawing criticism as regressive.
- **2026** — POSH Amendment Rules extend workplace sexual-harassment protection to men and transgender employees for the first time — evolving conception of dignity and equal protection.

AI Ethics & Notable Quotes

- **Feb 2026** — IT (Amendment) Rules, 2026 on deepfakes — India's first operational deepfake framework, mandating labelling and a 3-hour takedown window for certain content.
- **Dec 2025** — Artificial Intelligence (Ethics and Accountability) Bill, 2025 introduced in the Lok Sabha — proposes a statutory AI Ethics Committee and mandatory review for 'high-risk' AI systems.
- **Nov 2025** — India AI Governance Guidelines released — a 'Seven Sutras' framework built on fairness, accountability and 'understandable by design,' underpinning India's light-touch 'Responsible AI' approach.
- **Apr 2025** — PM Modi's Civil Services Day address — 'Wherever we are in the system, our prime responsibility is the unity and integrity of the country. There cannot be any compromise.'
- **2025** — President Murmu to newly-inducted IAS officers — calls ethics and governance 'two sides of the same coin,' urging 'integrity, neutrality, transparency and compassion.'
- **Mar 2026** — Supreme Court extends 'right to die with dignity' jurisprudence (Harish Rana v. Union of India) — strong theory-question material on autonomy vs. sanctity of life.

Current-Affairs-Pegged Expected Questions

Section A — Theory

11. "The strength of society lies in morality, not in law." Examine this statement in the context of recent debates on institutional integrity in India. *[10 marks]*
12. Discuss the ethical principles that should guide the regulation of Artificial Intelligence and deepfakes in India, with reference to the IT Rules Amendment, 2026. *[15 marks]*
13. Discuss the ethical concerns raised by mass transfers of civil servants ahead of elections, with reference to recent developments in West Bengal. *[10 marks]*
14. "An honest officer often pays a heavier price than a corrupt one." Discuss this statement with reference to the challenges faced by upright civil servants in India. *[15 marks]*

Section B — Case Studies

15. You are the District Collector of a hilly district hit by a sudden cloudburst. While coordinating rescue operations, you receive news that a close family member has been critically injured elsewhere and needs your presence. Discuss the ethical dilemma and the course of action you would take. *[20 marks]*
16. As Secretary in a state Public Works Department, you discover that a contract has been awarded to a firm in which a senior minister's relative holds a stake, and your own subordinate (who happens to be your child) has flagged irregularities in the file. Discuss the ethical dimensions and your response. *[20 marks]*
17. You are a Divisional Commissioner in a border district facing a sudden influx of refugees along with reports of armed personnel crossing over from a conflict-affected neighbouring country. Discuss the ethical and administrative dilemmas you would face and how you would respond. *[20 marks]*
18. As an officer newly posted to a skill-development training scheme, an audit reveals that the vast majority of beneficiary records are fabricated, implicating a chain of officials over several years. Discuss the ethical issues involved and outline a corrective course of action. *[20 marks]*