

GENERAL STUDIES IV

Six Qualities of Success: Lessons from Indian Ethical Tradition

Faculty/Author: Faculty Editorial Board

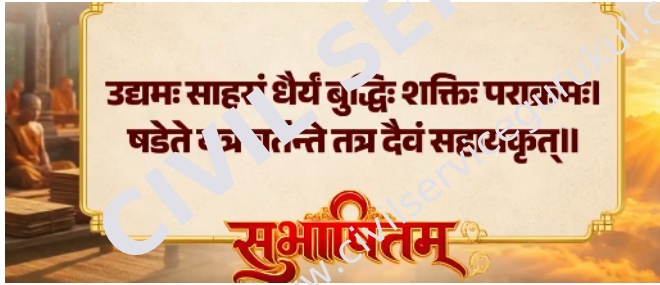
Date: 30 September 2026

Platform: Civil Service Gurukul Research Wing

Reading Time: 5 Mins

Six Qualities of Success: Lessons from Indian Ethical Tradition Sanskrit Subhashitam “सुभाषितम्”

“सुभाषितम्” सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम्
 सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम्
 सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम्
 ” Meaning: ‘Where six qualities—diligence, courage, patience, wisdom, strength and valour—exist in an individual, even destiny is said to support such a person. The Subhashitam reflects an important principle of Indian ethical thought: success is not merely a product of fortune; it is built through character, effort, courage and purposeful action.’



Six Qualities of Success: Lessons from Indian Ethical Tradition

Sanskrit Subhashitam

“सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम्
 सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम् सुभाषितम्”

Meaning:

Where six qualities—**diligence, courage, patience, wisdom, strength and valour**—exist in an individual, even destiny is said to support such a person.

The Subhashitam reflects an important principle of Indian ethical thought: **success is not merely a product of fortune; it is built through character, effort, courage and purposeful action.**

1. सुभाषितम् — Diligence / Initiative

Meaning: Willingness to work consistently and take initiative rather than remain passive.

Ethical significance

Diligence represents:

1. Commitment to duty
2. Hard work
3. Perseverance
4. Professionalism
5. Sense of responsibility

For a civil servant, diligence means going beyond routine compliance and actively finding solutions to public problems.

Administrative application

A district officer noticing high school dropout rates should not merely forward statistics to higher authorities. Ethical administration requires identifying causes, coordinating departments and initiating corrective action.

UPSC keywords:

Duty consciousness, work culture, commitment, initiative, public service orientation.

2. ■■■■■ — Courage

Courage is the ability to act according to one's convictions despite difficulty, opposition or personal risk.

In public administration, courage is not merely physical courage. It includes:

1. **Moral courage**
2. Courage of conviction
3. Courage to speak truth to authority
4. Courage to resist corruption
5. Courage to take difficult but lawful decisions

Example

An officer refusing political or administrative pressure to manipulate beneficiary selection demonstrates **moral courage and integrity**.

Ethical lesson:

Integrity has little practical value unless supported by courage.

3. ■■■■■ — Patience and Fortitude

Public administration frequently involves uncertainty, criticism, conflict and delayed results.

Therefore, civil servants require:

1. Emotional stability
2. Patience
3. Perseverance
4. Resilience
5. Tolerance of criticism

Example

Social reforms relating to sanitation, education, gender equality or behavioural change may take years. An administrator must remain patient while continuously improving implementation.

UPSC linkage:

Emotional intelligence, resilience, tolerance and perseverance.

4. ■■■■■ — Wisdom / Practical Intelligence

Knowledge alone is insufficient. Ethical governance requires the ability to apply knowledge appropriately.

Buddhi includes:

1. Rational decision-making
2. Ethical judgment
3. Foresight
4. Evidence-based policy
5. Ability to distinguish right from wrong

A competent civil servant must balance:

Law + Ethics + Public Interest + Practical Reality

Example

During a disaster, an administrator may face limited resources. Wisdom requires prioritising the most vulnerable while ensuring fairness and transparency.

5. ■■■■■ — Capacity to Act

Good intentions are meaningful only when supported by the capacity to translate them into action.

Administrative capacity includes:

1. Institutional capability
2. Competence
3. Coordination
4. Leadership
5. Resource mobilisation
6. Effective implementation

An ethical administrator therefore requires both **good intentions and administrative competence.**

Governance lesson

Ethics without capacity may remain idealism; capacity without ethics may become misuse of power.

Good governance requires both.

6. [] [] [] [] [] [] — Valour / Decisive Action

Parakrama represents determination and the ability to act decisively when circumstances demand it.

In administration, it can mean:

1. Decisiveness during crises
2. Standing firmly for constitutional values
3. Protecting vulnerable groups
4. Taking responsibility for difficult decisions

Example

During communal tension, an administrator must act impartially and decisively to protect life, liberty and public order while respecting the rule of law.

Six Qualities and Civil-Service Values

Sanskrit QualityAdministrative Value	
[] [] [] [] [] []	Dedication and initiative
[] [] [] [] [] []	Moral courage
[] [] [] [] [] []	Patience and resilience

□□□□□	Wisdom and ethical judgment
□□□□□	Competence and capacity
□□□□□□	Decisive leadership

Together, these qualities describe a model of an **ethical and effective public servant**.

Relevance to GS Paper IV

The Subhashitam can be used in answers related to:

1. Human values
2. Ethics and human interface
3. Attitude
4. Aptitude
5. Integrity
6. Courage of conviction
7. Dedication to public service
8. Emotional intelligence
9. Ethical leadership
10. Probity in governance
11. Civil-service values
12. Lessons from Indian philosophical traditions

Application in Ethics Case Studies

Consider a civil servant facing pressure to approve an environmentally harmful project.

The six qualities provide an ethical framework:

- → Study facts and environmental consequences.
- → Remain calm despite pressure.
- → Resist improper influence.
- → Search for viable alternatives.
- → Mobilise institutions and expertise.
- → Take a lawful and principled decision.

Thus, traditional ethical wisdom can be translated into a practical framework for modern governance.

Philosophical Insight

The deeper message of the Subhashitam is:

Destiny does not replace human effort; it complements purposeful action.

It promotes an **ethic of agency** in which individuals are expected to cultivate character, competence and courage rather than depend passively upon circumstances.

This idea is particularly relevant to public administration because governance outcomes depend substantially upon the quality of institutions and the character of those who operate them.

Ready-to-Use UPSC Conclusion

Indian ethical traditions emphasise that good governance requires more than technical competence. Diligence provides initiative, courage protects integrity, patience ensures perseverance, wisdom guides judgment, strength builds capacity and valour enables decisive action. Together, these qualities can transform a civil servant from a mere administrator into an ethical public leader.

One-line takeaway

“Ethical leadership is the combination of right intention, sound judgment, institutional capacity and the courage to act.”

CIVIL SERVICE GURUKUL

UPSC Preparation • Current Affairs • Mentorship • Test Series

Website: www.civilservicegurukul.com • Email: info@civilservicegurukul.com • Mobile: +91 9911020626