

MAINS MASTERY 2026 · GS PAPER IV · QUESTION 6(B) · STUDENT EDITION

# Helping Those Who Suffer: Duty, Not Charity

THE QUESTION, AS SET IN UPSC CSE MAINS 2026

Some moral philosophers argue that spending some of your resources—without significantly affecting your financial stability—to help other people who badly suffer is our moral duty and not merely a matter of charity. Justify this claim by explaining the distinction between duty and charity.

Directive: Justify | 10 marks | 150 words | Ethics: moral thinkers

1 **PYQ Deep Decode**
Demand, hidden demand, structure, form

2 **PYQ Intelligence**
2013 to 2026: giving, wealth, compassion

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4 **Pitfalls and variations**
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6 **Other ways to write it**
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7 **Quick recall**
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8 **Write it yourself**
A seven-point self-check

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**Some moral philosophers argue that spending some of your resources—without significantly affecting your financial stability—to help other people who badly suffer is our moral duty and not merely a matter of charity. Justify this claim by explaining the distinction between duty and charity.**

# 1 PYQ Deep Decode

Read the question the way the examiner set it: the demand, the hidden demand, the structure that follows from both, and how the answer should be presented, opened and closed.

## 1.1 The demand

The question reports a claim made by "some moral philosophers": that spending part of our resources, **without significantly affecting our financial stability**, to help people who **badly suffer** is a **moral duty**, not merely charity. It asks you to **justify** the claim, and it names the method: **by explaining the distinction between duty and charity**. So the answer must first draw the distinction clearly, then show why this kind of help falls on the duty side of the line. The claim is to be defended, not merely described or debated.

| Words in the question | What they ask you to do | What goes wrong if you miss them |
|---|---|---|
| **Some moral philosophers argue** | Recognise a known philosophical position; the clearest source is Peter Singer's "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (1972). | Treating it as a personal opinion with no thinker behind it. |
| **without significantly affecting your financial stability** | Note the built-in limit, set by the question itself: help that does not significantly harm the giver's stability. It is close to, but not the same as, Singer's tests (no sacrifice of "comparable moral importance"; in his qualified version, nothing "morally significant"). | Arguing that everyone must give away everything. |
| **people who badly suffer** | The trigger is severe need: hunger, disease, disaster, destitution. | Extending the duty to every wish or want of others. |
| **moral duty and not merely a matter of charity** | Duty is required and its neglect is wrong; charity is optional and praiseworthy. | Using the two words as synonyms. |
| **Justify** | Give reasons that support the claim, drawn from ethical theory and tradition. | A "critically examine" answer that ends undecided. |
| **by explaining the distinction** | The distinction is the method of justification: define both, then place the act. | Justifying the claim without ever explaining the distinction. |

**THE DEMAND IN ONE LINE**

**Distinguish duty from charity clearly, then justify, through ethical reasoning, why modest help to people in grave need belongs to duty, noting the limits that keep the duty reasonable.**

## 1.2 The hidden demand

The question rewards an answer that **shifts the line, not erases it**. Singer himself wrote that the traditional distinction between duty and charity "cannot be drawn, or at least, not in the place we normally draw it". A strong answer keeps charity alive as a real category (giving **beyond** what is owed, the supererogatory),

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while showing that relieving grave suffering at little cost to oneself lies **inside** duty. It may also acknowledge, briefly, that such a duty can seem too demanding and that public institutions carry the first responsibility for welfare. These are supplementary points in a small final part; the weight stays on the distinction and the justification the question names.

Each point should name the reason, give its source, and say what it shows. The last column is where the hidden demand begins.

| Reason | Source | What it shows |
|---|---|---|
| **Low cost, high stakes** | Singer's drowning child: muddy clothes against a child's life. | Refusing would be wrong, not merely ungenerous. |
| **The line moves** | Urmson's "Saints and Heroes" (1958): supererogation is real. | Charity survives, beyond what is owed. |

**WEAK**

Helping the poor is very important. Charity is a duty of every citizen and we should all donate generously to make society better.

**STRONG**

Duty is what we are wrong to omit; charity is giving we are praised for but not blamed for withholding. When suffering is grave and the cost to us is small, refusal is a wrong, so such help is a duty; charity begins only where sacrifice goes beyond it.

## 1.3 The structure

The question names its own method, so the structure follows it: the distinction first, the justification second, and the limits as a small final part. The shares are of the body between the introduction and the conclusion; they are a teaching guide, not a UPSC rule.

**Introduction** | **1. Duty versus charity** about one-third | **2. Why this help is a duty** about half | **3. Limits** small | **Conclusion**

**Parts 1 and 2** **The distinction and the justification** about five-sixths

| | |
|---|---|
| **Distinction** | Status, blame for omission, and ground: justice or beneficence for duty, generosity for charity. |
| **Justification** | Singer's principle; Kant's duty of beneficence; Indian daana and trusteeship. |

**Part 3** **Limits** a small final part

| | |
|---|---|
| **Demandingness** | Eased, not settled, by the question's stability proviso. |
| **Institutions** | The state's primary role in welfare; private duty supplements it. |

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## 1.4 How to present it

The form follows the question. "Explaining the distinction" is a comparison, so a **two-column table** is the natural form for part 1; the justification reads best as **short headed points**, one thinker or tradition each; a small map of moral statuses (prohibited, obligatory, optional, with supererogatory acts inside the optional) is a quick diagram if time allows.

| Form | Fit here | Reason |
|---|---|---|
| **Table plus points** | **Best** | The table does the distinguishing; the points do the justifying. |
| **Spectrum diagram** | Good | Shows in one line where the claim moves the boundary. |
| **Paragraphs only** | Also valid | Works when each criterion of the distinction is stated explicitly. |

## 1.5 The introduction and the conclusion

**The introduction serves the whole question.** It sets duty against charity in one sentence each and states what the claim does: it places relief of grave suffering at modest cost within duty.

**The conclusion settles the demand.** It confirms the justification and says where charity still lives: in sacrifice beyond what is owed.

# 2 PYQ Intelligence 2013 to 2026

The question's context, its place in a steady line of GS IV questions on giving, wealth and compassion, and what to prepare next.

## 2.1 Why the subject was topical

Inequality, mandated corporate giving and global debates on aid keep the ethics of giving in view. UPSC never states why it sets a question, so treat this as **context, not cause**.

| When | What happened | Why it matters for this question |
|---|---|---|
| **1971 to 1972** | Singer wrote his essay in November 1971, as at least nine million refugees from East Bengal sheltered in India; it appeared in 1972. | The argument was born from a crisis on India's soil. |
| **2025 to 2026** | World Bank data: India's extreme poverty, at $3.00 a person a day (2021 PPP), fell from 27.1% in 2011-12 to 5.3% in 2022-23 and 2.6% in 2023-24, on household consumption surveys. | Grave need is shrinking but persists; the duty has real objects. |
| **2022-23, 2023-24** | Companies reported CSR spending of ₹30,932.08 crore in 2022-23 and ₹34,908.75 crore in 2023-24, based on annual filings (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Rajya Sabha reply, 10 February 2026). | Law has turned some corporate giving from charity into duty. |

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| When | What happened | Why it matters for this question |
|---|---|---|
| **2026** | The same GS IV paper asked about Gandhi's trusteeship (Q3(b)) and beneficence versus paternalism (Q4(a)). | Beneficence ran through the whole paper. |

## 2.2 The skill UPSC keeps testing

Questions on wealth, compassion and obligations to others recur in GS IV, often as quotations. The quoted wording follows UPSC's papers; for quotation questions, the shared instruction that UPSC printed above the quotations is given first, verbatim.

| Year | The question as UPSC set it | What it asked of you | What changed in 2026 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2013** GS IV · Q6(a) | Shared instruction: "Given below are three quotations of great moral thinkers/philosophers. For each of these quotations, bring out what it means to you in the present context :" Q6(a): "There is enough on this earth for every one's need but for no one's greed." Mahatma Gandhi | Need versus greed. | From restraint in taking to a duty in giving. |
| **2017** GS IV · Q7(b) | Increased national wealth did not result in equitable distribution of its benefits. It has created only some "enclaves of modernity and prosperity for a small minority at the cost of the majority." Justify. | Justify a claim on inequality. | Same directive; now the individual's obligation. |
| **2020** GS IV · Q6(a) | Shared instruction: "What do each of the following quotations mean to you ?" Q6(a): "Condemn none : if you can stretch out a helping hand, do so. If not, fold your hands, bless your brothers, and let them go their own way." Swami Vivekanand | Helping where one can. | "If you can" becomes "you must, if you can at modest cost". |
| **2022** GS IV · Q6(b) | In contemporary world, corporate sector's contribution in generating wealth and employment is increasing. In doing so, they are bringing in unprecedented onslaught on the climate, environmental sustainability and living conditions of human beings. In this background, do you find that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is efficient and sufficient enough to fulfill the social roles and responsibilities needed in the corporate world for which the CSR is mandated? Critically examine. | Mandated giving judged. | From corporate to personal duty. |
| **2023** GS IV · Q3(a) | Shared instruction: "Given below are three quotations of great thinkers. What do each of these quotations convey to you in the present context ?" Q3(a): "The simplest acts of kindness are by far more powerful than a thousand heads bowing in prayer." Mahatma Gandhi | Kindness as moral action. | Kindness reframed as obligation. |

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| Year | The question as UPSC set it | What it asked of you | What changed in 2026 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2026** GS IV · Q3(b), Q4(a) | Same paper, verbatim: Q3(b): "In what ways can an Indian Administrative Officer apply Gandhi's notion of 'trusteeship' to ensure fairness in governance?" Q4(a): "Citing the serious adverse effects of long-term medication, a doctor convinces the family of a female patient for surgery. This led the patient to reluctantly consent for the surgery, though her original choice was to opt for medication. Explain the concepts of paternalism and beneficence by analysing the doctor's action." | Trusteeship; beneficence and its limits. | Three angles on beneficence in one paper. |

**Also related, verbatim:** 2017 GS IV Q4(b): "Corporate social responsibility makes companies more profitable and sustainable. Analyse." 2021 GS IV Q3(c), under the shared instruction "What does each of the following quotations mean to you?": "Life doesn't make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, it is better for us all." (Erik Erikson). 2022 GS IV Q1(b): "Apart from intellectual competency and moral qualities, empathy and compassion are some of the other vital attributes that facilitate the civil servants to be more competent in tackling the crucial issues or taking critical decisions. Explain with suitable illustrations." 2023 GS IV Q1(b): "'International aid' is an accepted form of helping 'resource-challenged' nations. Comment on 'ethics in contemporary international aid'. Support your answer with suitable examples."

**CARRY THIS METHOD TO ANY "DUTY, VIRTUE OR OBLIGATION" QUESTION**

1. **Define both terms** by a clear criterion: is omission wrong?
2. **Name the thinker** behind the claim.
3. **Give two or three reasons** from different traditions.
4. **Respect the limit** the question builds in.
5. **Close on a principle** that keeps both concepts alive.

## 2.3 What to prepare next

**THINKERS**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Peter Singer** | "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (1972); The Life You Can Save (2009); effective altruism. |
| **Kant** | Groundwork (1785): perfect and imperfect duties; beneficence as a duty of virtue in The Metaphysics of Morals (1797). |
| **J.S. Mill** | Utilitarianism, chapter V: charity as a duty of imperfect obligation. |
| **J.O. Urmson** | "Saints and Heroes" (1958): acts beyond the call of duty. |
| **John Rawls** | A Theory of Justice (1971): the natural duty of mutual aid. |

**TRADITIONS AND INDIA**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Daana** | Bhagavad Gita 17.20: sattvic giving, given because it ought to be given. |
| **Trusteeship** | Gandhi: surplus wealth held in trust for society. |
| **Zakat, dasvandh** | Obligatory giving in Islam; the Sikh tenth of earnings. |
| **Article 51A** | Fundamental duties: common brotherhood (e); humanism (h). |
| **Section 135** | Companies Act, 2013: mandatory CSR. |

**Some moral philosophers argue that spending some of your resources—without significantly affecting your financial stability—to help other people who badly suffer is our moral duty and not merely a matter of charity. Justify this claim by explaining the distinction between duty and charity.**

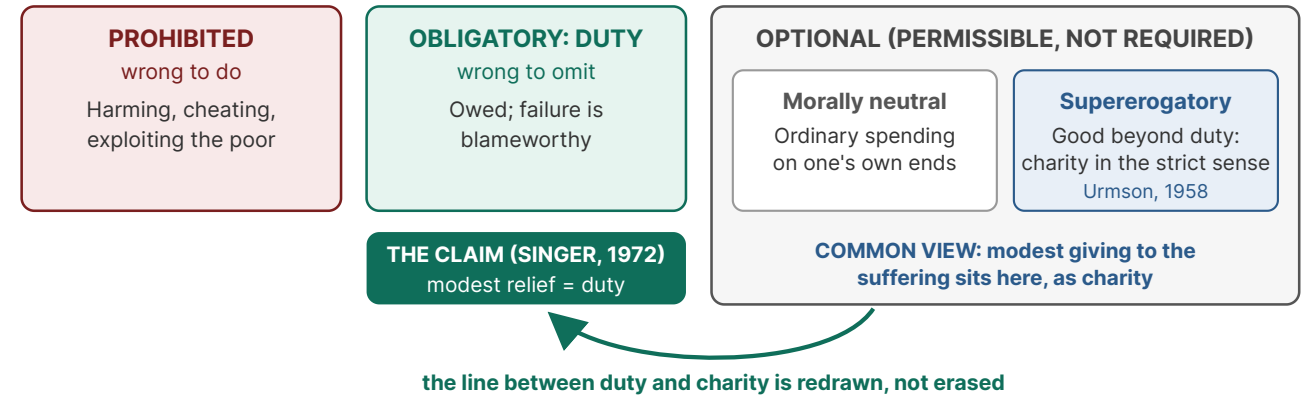
# 3 Additional information

Everything needed to answer this question well. Tier 1 holds what the demand needs; Tier 2 places it within the wider ethics of giving.

**TIER 1 · ESSENTIAL: THE DISTINCTION, THE JUSTIFICATION, THE LIMITS**

## Where the claim moves the line

### THREE MORAL STATUSES, AND WHERE THE CLAIM PLACES HELP




**Practical test: grave, preventable suffering + capacity to give effective help + no sacrifice of comparable moral importance = a strong case for duty (Singer). The question adds a financial-stability safeguard.**
Help beyond what duty reasonably requires may be supererogatory; yet ruinous giving is not automatically virtuous or effective, and the claims of dependants and other duties still count.

Simplified teaching map: supererogatory acts are a kind of optional act, not a separate fourth status.

| Subject | What it is | Why it matters for the answer |
|---|---|---|
| **THE DISTINCTION** | | |
| **Duty** | What morality requires of us; failing it is wrong and open to blame. Its ground may be justice (a right-holder's claim) or beneficence (a duty to help that leaves latitude). | The category the claim defends. |
| **Charity** | In this question's contrast: voluntary giving beyond what morality requires, whose omission is not wrong. The word is used more loosely elsewhere: Mill calls "charity or beneficence" an imperfect obligation, and many traditions name obligatory giving as charity. | The test is whether the act is morally required, not what it is called. |
| **Supererogation** | Acts "beyond the call of duty": praiseworthy, not required. J.O. Urmson, "Saints and Heroes" (1958). | Charity survives here, beyond what is owed. |
| **Perfect and imperfect duties** | Kant: perfect duties admit no exception (do not lie); imperfect duties leave latitude in when, whom and how (help others, develop talents). | Beneficence is a duty though flexible: latitude is not optionality. |

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| Subject | What it is | Why it matters for the answer |
|---|---|---|
| **Mill's version** | Utilitarianism, chapter V: charity or beneficence is a duty of imperfect obligation, which "we are indeed bound to practise, but not towards any definite person, nor at any prescribed time." | Even a utilitarian classic calls it binding. |
| **THE JUSTIFICATION** | | |
| **Singer's principle** | "If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it." His moderate version: something very bad, without sacrificing anything morally significant. | The core argument; the question's proviso echoes the moderate version. |
| **The drowning child** | A passer-by who could save a child in a shallow pond at the cost of muddy clothes ought to do so. | Shows refusal is a wrong, not a lapse of generosity. |
| **Distance and numbers** | Singer: proximity makes no moral difference, and the fact that millions could also help does not lessen one's obligation. | Answers "they are far away" and "others will give". |
| **Kant's fourth example** | Groundwork (1785): a prosperous person who refuses to help those in hardship cannot will that maxim as a universal law, since he too may need help. | Universalisability supports a duty to help. |
| **Rawls** | A Theory of Justice (1971): a natural duty of mutual aid, owed when one can help "without excessive risk or loss to oneself". | The same proviso, in a contractualist theory. |
| **Aquinas** | Summa Theologica II-II, Q. 66, Art. 7: "Whatever a man has in superabundance is owed, of natural right, to the poor for their sustenance." | Surplus as owed, not gifted; quoted by Singer. |
| **Indian traditions** | Gita 17.20: sattvic daana is given with the thought "it ought to be given" (datavyam iti), at the right place and time, to a worthy person, expecting no return. Gandhi's trusteeship: surplus wealth held for society's welfare. | Indian ethics frames giving as duty, not favour. |
| **Faith practice** | Zakat is obligatory, one of the five pillars of Islam; the widely cited rate is 2.5% of eligible savings and trade wealth above the nisab held for a lunar year, with different rates for some assets such as agricultural produce. Sadaqah is voluntary. Sikh dasvandh: a tenth of earnings, expressing vand chakna (sharing). | Many traditions already draw the duty and charity line where the claim draws it. |
| **THE LIMITS** | | |
| **Demandingness** | Singer's strong version could require giving until one is nearly as badly off as those helped; even his qualified version asks affluent people to change their spending substantially. Critics call this too demanding. | The question's financial-stability proviso eases the objection but does not settle it: dependants, competing duties and the effectiveness of help still count. |
| **Institutions** | Large-scale welfare is primarily the state's task, through taxation and public services; private giving supplements it. | A duty to help is not a substitute for public policy. |

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**Why "imperfect" does not mean "optional".** An imperfect duty leaves us free to choose the cause, the moment and the form of help; it does not leave us free never to help. A person who never helps anyone in grave need, though able, fails the duty.

**Why the recipient's standing changes.** Charity can carry a hint of favour and gratitude owed by the receiver; treating help as a duty recognises the sufferer's **equal moral standing**. Yet an imperfect duty of beneficence gives no particular person a claim on a particular giver (Mill's point); rights-based duties of justice are more determinate.

## TIER 2 · EXTENDED UNDERSTANDING: THE WHOLE TOPIC AROUND IT

### Strengths of the duty view

1. **Consistency:** we already blame those who walk past a drowning child.
2. **Dignity:** need commands a response; help is not a favour.
3. **Reliability:** duty sustains help beyond moods and publicity.
4. **Tradition:** giving has deep moral roots, though the obligations differ: zakat is obligatory in Islam; tzedakah (from tzedek, justice) frames giving as justice; dasvandh is disciplined sharing; the Gita's sattvic daana is giving done because it ought to be done.

### Objections to weigh

1. **Demandingness:** Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints" (1982), warns against a morality that crowds out every other good.
2. **Integrity:** Bernard Williams (1973) argues that personal projects carry moral weight.
3. **Fair share:** Liam Murphy (2000): one owes one's fair share, not what others fail to give.
4. **Effectiveness:** Angus Deaton, The Great Escape (2013), questions whether aid always helps.

### Giving well, not just giving

1. **Maimonides:** the highest level of giving helps a person become self-sufficient.
2. **Effective assistance:** ask whether help is appropriate, evidence-based, accountable and respectful of the recipient's agency. In flood relief, for instance, an affordable contribution to a verified, community-responsive food or medical programme is one way of fulfilling the duty and complements public relief; whether more is owed depends on continuing need, one's capacity, other obligations and what works. Good intention alone does not prove that suffering falls.
3. **Dignity:** anonymous, respectful help over display.

### India's institutional frame

1. **Article 51A(e) and (h):** common brotherhood and humanism as fundamental duties.
2. **Directive Principles:** Articles 38 and 39 assign welfare and justice to the state.
3. **Section 135(5), Companies Act 2013:** qualifying companies must spend at least 2% of average net profits of the three immediately preceding financial years on CSR; a company yet to complete three financial years uses the preceding years available.

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### Two debates worth knowing

#### Is mandatory CSR still charity?

Section 135 applies to companies with, in the immediately preceding financial year, net worth of ₹500 crore or more, turnover of ₹1,000 crore or more, or net profit of ₹5 crore or more; unspent sums for ongoing projects go to an Unspent CSR Account within 30 days of the year's end and must be spent within the next three financial years, failing which any remaining amount must be transferred to a Schedule VII fund within 30 days after completion of the third financial year; other unspent sums must be transferred to a Schedule VII fund within six months after the financial year's end. Law has converted a voluntary act into an obligation. The balanced reading: **a legal duty secures a minimum; the moral spirit of giving must still animate how it is spent**.

#### Individual duty or state responsibility?

Some argue that relief of poverty belongs to public institutions, not private conscience. Yet institutions are slow and gaps remain, especially in disasters. The balanced reading: **the state bears the primary duty; individuals hold a supplementary duty that institutions do not cancel**.

## 4 Pitfalls and variations

The mistakes that cost marks here, the claims never to make, and how the answer changes when the question changes.

### 4.1 Six pitfalls, each with its correction

#### No distinction

~~Duty and charity both mean helping others.~~

Duty: omission is wrong. Charity: omission is blameless.

#### Undecided ending

~~The claim has merits and demerits.~~

"Justify" asks you to support it, with limits noted.

#### Ignoring the proviso

~~We must give away all we have.~~

Only what does not significantly affect stability.

#### No thinker

~~Philosophers say helping is good.~~

Singer, Kant, Rawls, the Gita, Gandhi.

#### Erasing charity

~~Charity no longer exists.~~

It survives as giving beyond duty.

#### Moralising tone

~~People who do not donate are selfish.~~

State the principle calmly; judge acts, not people.

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## 4.2 Never write these

- "Kant held that helping others is optional."
  Beneficence is a duty for Kant, an imperfect one with latitude.
- "Singer says we must give until we are poor."
  That is the strong version; his moderate version asks for no morally significant sacrifice.
- "Zakat is voluntary charity."
  Zakat is obligatory; sadaqah is voluntary.
- "All companies must spend 2% on CSR."
  Only those meeting the Section 135 thresholds.
- "Supererogatory means forbidden."
  It means good but beyond what duty requires: a kind of permissible act, not a separate fourth status.
- "Every duty to help gives the poor a right against me."
  An imperfect duty of beneficence leaves latitude; rights-based duties are more determinate.
- "Zakat is always 2.5%."
  That is the common rate for savings and trade wealth; some assets, such as agricultural produce, have different rates.

## 4.3 If the question changes

| If it asks | The structure becomes | What must change |
|---|---|---|
| **Critically examine** the claim | Case for, objections, balanced judgment | Demandingness and institutions get equal weight. |
| Distinguish **perfect and imperfect duties** | Definitions, examples, beneficence as the case | Kant at the centre. |
| A **quotation** from Gandhi on wealth | Meaning, trusteeship, present context | Indian thinker first; Singer as support. |
| The same question for **15 marks** | Add Rawls, Aquinas and a CSR example | Room for depth. |

**Some moral philosophers argue that spending some of your resources—without significantly affecting your financial stability—to help other people who badly suffer is our moral duty and not merely a matter of charity. Justify this claim by explaining the distinction between duty and charity.**

5

## The model answer

One model answer of 153 words, within the UPSC Gurus house range of 150 to 153 (headings and table entries counted, section numerals not); UPSC specifies 150 words. It takes the form this question calls for: a comparison table for the distinction, headed points for the justification, and a small final part on limits. The introduction covers the whole question; the conclusion settles its demand.

**Model answer** ### Distinction, justification, limits **153 words**

Duty is morally required, so omitting it is wrong; charity is commendable giving beyond what is owed. The claim makes relieving grave suffering at modest cost a duty.

**1. The distinction**

| Basis | Duty | Charity |
|---|---|---|
| Status | Required | Optional |
| Omission | Wrong | Blameless |
| Ground | Justice or beneficence | Generosity beyond duty |

**2. Why help is owed**

- **Singer (1972):** if we can prevent something very bad without sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought to. Ignoring a drowning child to save one's clothes is wrong; distance changes nothing.
- **Kant:** beneficence is an imperfect duty: we choose whom and how to help, never whether.
- **Indian ethics:** Gita 17.20 commends giving because it ought to be given; Gandhi's trusteeship holds surplus wealth for society.

**3. Limits**

The stability proviso eases the demandingness objection; help must be effective, respect dependants and supplement state welfare.

Thus, proportionate help to people in grave need is a duty; sacrifice beyond reasonable obligation remains charity, admirable but not owed.

**DEMAND**
Distinguish duty from charity; justify why modest help to the gravely suffering is a duty

**HIDDEN DEMAND**
Redraw the line without erasing charity; keep justice and beneficence apart; limits stay brief

**STRUCTURE**
Distinction table, three justifications, small limits part, measured close

**BALANCE**
Introduction 28 words, conclusion 21 words; 153 words in all

**Why it works:** the introduction defines both terms by one criterion (is omission wrong?) and states what the claim does; the table makes the distinction the question asks for, and its last row keeps justice and beneficence apart; three justifications come from different traditions, with Singer's principle in his own terms; the limits part shows the proviso easing, not ending, the demandingness objection; the conclusion keeps charity alive beyond reasonable obligation.

**Some moral philosophers argue that spending some of your resources—without significantly affecting your financial stability—to help other people who badly suffer is our moral duty and not merely a matter of charity. Justify this claim by explaining the distinction between duty and charity.**

## 6 Other ways to write it

The model answer above remains the answer. These outlines show how a different, equally valid answer could be built, and when each choice works.

| Approach | How it is built | When it works |
|---|---|---|
| **Spectrum-led** | Draw prohibited, obligatory and optional (supererogatory inside optional); mark where the claim moves the line; then reasons. | When a diagram is quick for you. |
| **Example-led** | Open with the drowning child; draw the distinction from it; then Kant and Indian ethics. | When you want a vivid opening. |
| **Indian-led** | Gita's daana, trusteeship, dasvandh and zakat first; Singer as the modern statement. | When you know the traditions well. |
| **For 15 marks** | Add Mill, Rawls, Aquinas and the CSR debate. | When there is room. |

## 7 Quick recall and Prelims crossover

Facts for rapid revision and Prelims.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Singer**: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality", **1972**. | 9 | **Gita 17.20**: sattvic daana. |
| 2 | Written **November 1971**, on the East Bengal refugee crisis. | 10 | **Zakat**: obligatory; commonly **2.5%** of savings and trade wealth. |
| 3 | **Kant**: Groundwork, **1785**; Metaphysics of Morals, **1797**. | 11 | **Sadaqah**: voluntary giving in Islam. |
| 4 | Beneficence: an **imperfect duty** (Kant). | 12 | **Dasvandh**: one-tenth of earnings (Sikh). |
| 5 | **Mill**: Utilitarianism, **1861**; chapter V. | 13 | **Article 51A(h)**: humanism. |
| 6 | **Urmson**: "Saints and Heroes", **1958**. | 14 | **Section 135**, Companies Act **2013**: CSR. |
| 7 | **Rawls**: natural duty of mutual aid, **1971**. | 15 | CSR: at least **2%** of average net profits of the 3 immediately preceding years (fewer for newer companies). |
| 8 | **Aquinas**: Summa, II-II, Q. 66, Art. 7. | 16 | Any one, in the preceding year: **₹500** cr net worth, **₹1,000** cr turnover or **₹5** cr net profit. |

**THE ONE SENTENCE TO CARRY OUT OF THIS DOCUMENT**

When we can effectively relieve grave suffering without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance or significantly undermining our financial stability, helping is a duty; generosity beyond reasonable obligation remains charity.

**Some moral philosophers argue that spending some of your resources—without significantly affecting your financial stability—to help other people who badly suffer is our moral duty and not merely a matter of charity. Justify this claim by explaining the distinction between duty and charity.**

## 8 Write it yourself

Write the answer in 150 words without looking back, then check it against each line below.

| | Check | Yes / No |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Are **duty and charity** distinguished by a clear criterion? | |
| 2 | Is the **thinker** behind the claim named accurately? | |
| 3 | Are there **two or three reasons** from different traditions? | |
| 4 | Is the **financial-stability proviso** used, without claiming it ends every objection? | |
| 5 | Does **charity survive** as giving beyond duty? | |
| 6 | Does the conclusion give a **principle**, at about the length of the introduction? | |
| 7 | Have you aimed at UPSC's **150-word limit**, counting headings and table entries, with every claim accurate and relevant and none from section 4.2? (The model allows up to 153.) | |

## Sources


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- Constitution of India, Articles 38, 39 and 51A(e), (h); Companies Act, 2013, Section 135(1), (5), (6) and Schedule VII, read with the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rules, 2014, as amended; National CSR Portal, Ministry of Corporate Affairs; World Bank, Poverty and Equity Brief: India (2025), reporting the 2022-23 estimate of 5.3%; World Bank, India Development Update (April 2026), executive summary, reporting the 2023-24 estimate of 2.6%; World Development Indicators, poverty headcount ratio at $3.00 a day (2021 PPP), India, accessed November 2026; Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Rajya Sabha reply on CSR expenditure, 10 February 2026 (PIB).
- UPSC Civil Services (Main): official GS Paper IV question papers for 2017, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2026; for 2013, the official paper as archived (Internet Archive capture of the UPSC file).

**Some moral philosophers argue that spending some of your resources—without significantly affecting your financial stability—to help other people who badly suffer is our moral duty and not merely a matter of charity. Justify this claim by explaining the distinction between duty and charity.**

YOUR NEXT STEP

# Now write GS Paper IV 2026 again.

You now know what this question asked, what it expected without saying so, and how its answer is built. Write the whole paper under the clock, have it evaluated, and read the feedback against this document.



1 Write the full paper in three hours

2 Self-check this answer with section 8

3 Have the paper evaluated

4 Read the feedback against this document

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