

# Crisis of Conscience : Ethical Decision Making

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Crisis of Conscience and Voice of Conscience are two terms related with Ethical Decision Making. We are discussing this topic as UPSC Mains 2013 had a direct question related to this under GS4 (Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude) Paper.

Qn : **[A]** What do you understand by the term ‘voice of conscience’? How do you prepare yourself to heed to the voice of conscience? **[B]** What is meant by ‘crisis of conscience’? Narrate one incident in your life when you were faced with such a crisis and how you resolved the same.

So let's start with the term conscience.

## What is meant by Conscience?

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Conscience is the part of your mind that tells you whether what you are doing is morally right or wrong. In short, conscience is a term which we use to denote the inner mind.

Why conscience is of importance? Because, if we pause and listen to our conscience we often get answers for the questions which troubled us. Answers based on conscience are generally ethical.

## Crisis of Conscience

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Crisis of conscience is a situation in which it is very difficult to decide what is the right thing to do. The term is also used when someone is worrying because they think that they have done something unfair or morally wrong.

It is a case of ethical dilemma, but often in a more strong sense. When there is a crisis of conscience, the individual fear that his action may be against the voice of conscience and hence ethically wrong.

So, then, what is voice of conscience?

## Voice of Conscience

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Voice of conscience corresponds to an inner voice that judges your behavior. Voice of conscience is the source of ethical decision making for many. A famous example is Mahatma Gandhi.

Also read: Public Service Values : Important Terms

Gandhi says : “The human voice can never reach the distance that is covered by the still

small voice of conscience.”

How do you prepare yourself to heed to the voice of conscience?

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- Pause and think about the dimensions of issue.
- Practice the power of silence.
- Meditation and prayer.
- Free yourself from external influences and selfish interests.

Quotes related to conscience :

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1. In matters of conscience, the law of the majority has no place. – Mahatma Gandhi.
2. There is a higher court than courts of justice and that is the court of conscience.  
It supersedes all other courts. – Mahatma Gandhi.
3. Never do anything against conscience even if the state demands it. – Albert Einstein.

