

Comprehensive Overview of Civil Servant Conduct Rules and the Controversy Surrounding IAS Probationer Puja Khedkar

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What's in today's article?

- Why in News?
- Rules on 'integrity of services'
- Rules for probationers

- Allegations against Khedkar

Why in News?

The Centre has set up a single-member committee under the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to review the documents submitted by IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, who secured a rank of 821 in the 2022 UPSC Civil Services Examination.

Khedkar was allotted the IAS under the OBC and Physically Handicapped quotas. Questions have been raised about her appointment under these categories.

It should be noted that Khedkar's actions as a civil servant are governed primarily by two rules: the **All-India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968**, and the **Indian Administrative Service (Probation) Rules, 1954**.

Rules on 'integrity of services'

• Rules

- All IAS, **Indian Police Service (IPS)** and **Indian Forest Service (IFoS)** officers are governed by the All-India Services (Conduct) Rules from the time they join their respective services, and begin their probation period.

• Integrity and Devotion to Duty

- **According to Rule 3(1)**, officers must uphold absolute integrity and dedication to their duties at all times.

• Gifts and Benefits

- **Rule 11(1)** regulates the gifts and benefits received by a civil servant.
- Acceptance of gifts is limited to those from near relatives, with strict reporting requirements for any gift exceeding Rs 25,000 to prevent influence on their duties.
- This rule also prohibits officers from engaging in any trade or business to maintain impartiality and prevent conflicts of interest.

• Unbecoming of an officer

- Rule 4(1) is more specific about what is unbecoming.
- It states that officers must not use their position or influence to secure employment for any member of his family with any private undertaking or NGO.

• Property details

- **Rule 13** of the All-India Services (Conduct) Rules mandates that officers must annually submit property returns.
- These returns must detail all immovable properties that officers or their family members own, inherit, acquire, or hold through lease or mortgage.
- This requirement ensures transparency and prevents illicit accumulation of wealth among civil servants.

• Sub-rules added in 2014

- In 2014, the government added a few sub-rules.
- This included that officers should maintain:

- high ethical standards, integrity and honesty;
- political neutrality;
- accountability and transparency;
- responsiveness to the public, particularly to the weaker sections;
- courtesy and good behaviour with the public.

Rules for probationers

• Rules

- There is an additional set of rules that govern the conduct of officers during their probation period, which lasts for at least two years after selection to the services.
 - IAS officers, in addition, are governed by the IAS (Probation) Rules during their probation period.

• Probation Conditions

- Officers undergo training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in Mussoorie.
- At the end of two years, they must pass an examination to be confirmed in their service.

• Salary and Allowances

- Probationers receive a fixed salary and travel allowance but do not have entitlements like an official car, official accommodation, or an official chamber with staff.

• Probationer Discharge

- **Rule 12** outlines circumstances under which probationers can be discharged, such as being found ineligible or unsuitable for the service by the central government, neglecting duties, or lacking essential qualities needed for the service.

• Enquiry Process

- If disciplinary action is initiated against a probationer, a summary enquiry is conducted by a committee appointed by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).
- The committee submits its report within two weeks to inform decisions regarding the probationer's status.

Allegations against Khedkar

- Puja Khedkar, despite her low rank, secured a position in the prestigious IAS through reservations meant for **OBC** and Persons with Disabilities (PH).
 - Since the batch of 1995, 27% seats in the services have been reserved for the OBC category.
 - The PH reservation was introduced with the batch of 2006 — 3% seats in every category (General, OBC, SC, and ST) are reserved for the differently abled.
- However, allegations have surfaced regarding the validity of her OBC and PH certificates.
 - If these allegations are proven true — that she falsified these certificates — Khedkar faces potential discharge from service.
 - Probationers are discharged, while confirmed officers are dismissed.
- The issue is compounded by a legal battle over her PH status, where she failed to attend a medical examination required by the UPSC, citing reasons including a Covid-19 infection.

- Critics have raised questions about her eligibility for **OBC (non-creamy layer) benefits**, highlighting her family's background in politics and her father's former government service.
 - For those whose parents work in the private sector, the current threshold to qualify for the non-creamy layer status is an **income of under Rs 8 lakh annually**.
 - For those with parents who work in the public sector, income is not taken into account.
 - Rather, as per DoPT rules, what qualifies people to be in the creamy layer is either parent becoming a Group-A official before the age of 40, or both being Group-B officials with similar ranks.
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Q.1. What is Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)?

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is India's premier central recruiting agency responsible for conducting examinations and selecting candidates for civil services and various government positions, ensuring merit-based selection and adherence to constitutional provisions.

Q.2. What is Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)?

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) is a key department under the Government of India responsible for personnel management, training, and administrative reforms, overseeing policies related to recruitment, service conditions, and career development of civil servants.

Source: [Puja Khedkar controversy: What are the rules governing civil servants](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/comprehensive-overview-of-civil-servant-conduct-rules-and-the-controversy-surrounding-ias-probationer-puja-khedkar/>

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