Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

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.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2026	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Moral duty, charity, altruism, obligation, compassion, distributive justice, Peter Singer, social responsibility

Model Answer

Introduction

The distinction between duty and charity concerns whether helping others is merely voluntary generosity or an ethical obligation arising from our capacity to prevent serious suffering.

1. Charity

Charity is generally understood as voluntary assistance motivated by compassion or generosity. The giver retains discretion regarding whether, when and how much to contribute.

2. Moral Duty

A duty involves an obligation to act when a morally significant harm can be prevented at relatively low personal cost. Peter Singer's argument from avoidable suffering develops this reasoning.

3. Ethical Justification

If a person can significantly reduce another's severe suffering without sacrificing something of comparable moral importance, choosing not to help may raise an ethical concern. This reflects principles of beneficence, compassion and human solidarity.

4. Limits

Duty must remain proportionate; individuals cannot be expected to destroy their own basic security or meet every social need personally.

Conclusion

When helping others requires only a reasonable sacrifice while preventing serious suffering, assistance can reasonably be viewed as a moral duty rather than merely an act of charity.

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