Geography · GS - IV

With regard to the morality of actions, one view is that means is of paramount importance and the other view is that the ends justify the means. Which view do you think is more appropriate? Justify your answer.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2018	GS - IV	Geography

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Ethics of means; consequences; deontological ethics; consequentialism; human dignity; proportionality; Gandhian philosophy; public welfare

Model Answer

Introduction

The morality of an action can be assessed through the ethical quality of its means and the consequences of its ends. Neither intention nor outcome alone is sufficient in every situation.

Means Are of Paramount Importance

This view emphasises duties, rights, honesty and moral principles. Unethical methods can violate dignity, weaken institutions and establish harmful precedents.

For example, manipulating examination results to select a supposedly better candidate remains unjust because it violates fairness and equal opportunity.

Ends Justify the Means

Consequentialism evaluates actions by their outcomes. In emergencies, difficult decisions may sometimes be necessary to prevent greater harm.

For example, prioritising evacuation of the most vulnerable during a disaster may require rapid decisions that depart from ordinary administrative routines, provided they remain lawful and proportionate.

Which View Is More Appropriate?

The primacy of ethical means is generally more appropriate in public administration because public power must respect rights, justice and the rule of law. However, consequences cannot be ignored. A rigid approach that disregards foreseeable harm may also be morally deficient.

A balanced approach should:

1. Respect fundamental rights and legal constraints.
2. Choose the least harmful lawful means.
3. Assess short- and long-term consequences.
4. Ensure transparency and accountability.

Conclusion

Ethical means should ordinarily constrain the pursuit of desirable ends. Public servants must seek beneficial outcomes without sacrificing human dignity, justice or constitutional principles.

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