Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

“Falsehood takes the place of truth when it results in unblemished common good.” _ Tirukkural

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2018	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Truthfulness; public welfare; ethical relativism; consequentialism; integrity in public service; transparency; moral limits of deception; accountability

Model Answer

Introduction

The quotation from the Tirukkural raises an ethical question about whether falsehood can ever be justified when it appears to serve the common good. It highlights the tension between truthfulness and consequences.

Meaning in the Present Context

1. Public Welfare and Consequences: In exceptional situations, concealing sensitive information may appear necessary to prevent panic or protect lives. However, such decisions require strong justification.

2. Primacy of Integrity: Public servants must generally uphold honesty, transparency, and accountability. Routine deception undermines public trust and institutional credibility.

3. Ethical Evaluation: The intention, consequences, available alternatives, and proportionality of an action must be carefully assessed before considering any departure from truthfulness.

4. Protection of Rights: Authorities must not use the claim of public welfare to conceal corruption, suppress dissent, manipulate citizens, or violate legal rights.

5. Responsible Communication: During disasters or security emergencies, officials should share verified information, protect genuinely confidential details, and correct misinformation promptly.

6. Constitutional Morality: Decisions must remain consistent with the law, democratic accountability, and human dignity. Beneficial outcomes alone cannot legitimise every means.

7. Long-Term Trust: Truthful communication strengthens cooperation between citizens and institutions, making public welfare more sustainable.

Conclusion

The quotation invites nuanced moral reasoning, but it should not be interpreted as unrestricted permission to lie. Public welfare must be pursued through honest, lawful, and accountable means wherever possible.

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