Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Is conscience a more reliable guide when compared to laws, rules and regulations in the context of ethical decision-making? Discuss.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2023	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Conscience provides an internal moral compass, while laws and rules provide external standards of acceptable conduct. Conscience can guide beyond legal minimums, but because it may be subjective, ethical decisions require a balance of conscience, law, reason, public interest and constitutional morality.

Model Answer

Introduction:

Conscience is the inner sense that distinguishes right from wrong, whereas laws and regulations establish externally enforceable standards. Neither is universally sufficient by itself for ethical decision-making.

Why Conscience Matters:

Conscience can motivate individuals to act ethically even where law is silent. A civil servant may voluntarily disclose a potential conflict of interest despite there being no explicit requirement in a particular situation. It promotes integrity and moral courage.

Limitations of Conscience:

Conscience is shaped by upbringing, culture and personal beliefs and can therefore be biased. An individual may sincerely believe discriminatory conduct to be morally justified. Hence, personal conscience cannot become the sole basis of public decisions.

Role of Laws and Rules:

They provide uniformity, predictability, accountability and protection against arbitrary decisions. However, legal

compliance represents only a minimum standard; something may be legally permissible yet ethically questionable.

Conclusion:

The most reliable approach is **conscience guided by constitutional values, law, reason and public interest**. Conscience supplies moral sensitivity, while law provides an objective framework for responsible action.

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