Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

“Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have the right to do and what is right to do.” — Potter Stewart

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2022	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

The quotation distinguishes legal entitlement from moral responsibility. An action may be legally permissible yet ethically questionable because of its consequences, fairness or effect on others. Ethical maturity requires going beyond minimum legal compliance while respecting the law and public interest.

Model Answer

Introduction

The quotation highlights the difference between exercising a legal right and choosing an ethically appropriate course of action.

Meaning

Law establishes enforceable limits and entitlements, whereas ethics also considers fairness, compassion, dignity and consequences. Something permitted by law may still be morally questionable if it harms others or exploits unequal power.

For example, a public official may legally possess discretion in allocating resources. However, using that discretion to benefit personal acquaintances, even within procedural loopholes, violates impartiality and public trust.

Similarly, a company may comply with minimum environmental standards yet voluntarily adopt cleaner technologies to reduce harm to local communities.

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This does not mean that personal morality should replace law. Ethical decisions must respect constitutional principles, legal obligations and the rights of others.

Conclusion

The quotation calls for moral courage and responsible use of freedom. Ethical individuals and institutions do not merely ask, “Can I do this?” but also, “Is it fair, responsible and in the public interest?”

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