Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

What is meant by ‘crisis of conscience’? How does it manifest itself in the public domain?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2019	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Conflict of moral values; inner ethical struggle; duty versus personal interest; integrity; whistle-blowing; moral courage; ethical decision-making

Model Answer

Introduction

A crisis of conscience occurs when an individual experiences an inner conflict between competing moral values, duties or interests. It arises when a decision appears legally permissible but ethically questionable, or when two legitimate obligations conflict.

Manifestations in the Public Domain

1. Political Pressure versus Rule of Law

An officer may be pressured to approve an unlawful decision despite knowing that it violates established rules.

2. Loyalty versus Integrity

A public servant may discover corruption involving a colleague or superior and struggle between personal loyalty and the duty to report wrongdoing.

3. Public Interest versus Personal Benefit

An official may have to choose between a lucrative personal opportunity and an impartial decision benefiting citizens.

4. Confidentiality versus Public Accountability

A person may confront a conflict between protecting legitimately confidential information and exposing serious wrongdoing.

5. Compassion versus Legal Obligation

An administrator may need to enforce rules while considering the humanitarian circumstances of affected individuals.

Ethical Resolution

A crisis of conscience should be addressed through constitutional values, impartial reasoning, legal advice, transparency and consideration of consequences. Where wrongdoing exists, lawful reporting mechanisms should be used.

Conclusion

A crisis of conscience tests moral courage. Resolving it through reason, integrity and public-interest considerations strengthens ethical leadership and institutional trust.

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