

Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

“In looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence and energy. And if they do not have the first, the other two will kill you.” - Warren Buffett

What do you understand by this statement in the present-day scenario? Explain.

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SUBJECT

Ethics & Morality

MARKS

10

WORD LIMIT

~150 words

Answer Hint

Integrity as foundational virtue; intelligence; energy and initiative; ethical leadership; misuse of competence; recruitment; public trust

Model Answer

Introduction

Warren Buffett's statement emphasises that integrity is the foundation of trustworthy leadership. Intelligence and energy are valuable, but without moral character they can magnify the harm caused by an individual.

Meaning in the Present-Day Scenario

1. **Integrity builds trust:** An honest professional uses authority and resources responsibly. Without integrity, even technically sound decisions may serve private interests.
2. **Intelligence without ethics is dangerous:** A highly capable person can exploit legal loopholes, manipulate data or design sophisticated forms of corruption.
3. **Energy without integrity increases harm:** A dishonest but energetic employee can implement unethical schemes quickly and influence others.

4. **Leadership and Institutions:** Ethical leaders create a culture of transparency, fairness and accountability. Unethical leaders can normalise misconduct throughout an organisation.
5. **Civil services:** Officers need competence to solve complex problems, but integrity ensures that their skills are directed towards constitutional duties and public welfare.

Present-Day Examples

An intelligent financial officer who falsifies accounts may cause greater damage than an incompetent one. Similarly, a skilled administrator who manipulates beneficiary lists can systematically deny welfare to deserving citizens.

Way Forward

Recruitment and promotion should assess integrity alongside competence. Transparent procedures, conflict-of-interest rules, ethical training, whistle-blower protection and accountability mechanisms reinforce ethical behaviour.

Conclusion

Intelligence determines how effectively a person can act, and energy determines how vigorously. Integrity determines whether that ability is used for good. It is therefore indispensable to responsible leadership.