Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

You are an honest and responsible civil servant. You often observe the following:

(a) There is a general perception that adhering to ethical conduct one may face difficulties to oneself and cause problems for the family, whereas unfair practices may help to reach the career goals.

(b) When the number of people adopting unfair means is large, a small minority having a penchant towards ethical means makes no difference.

(c) Sticking to ethical means is detrimental to the larger developmental goals

(d) While one may not involve oneself in large unethical practices, but giving and accepting small gifts makes the system more efficient.

Examine the above statements with their merits and demerits.

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EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2017	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Integrity; ethical dilemmas; personal and family welfare; collective responsibility; development and ethics; gift culture; conflict of interest; long-term public trust; accountability; ethical leadership

Model Answer

Introduction

A civil servant must balance professional responsibilities, personal pressures and public welfare. Ethical conduct may involve short-term costs, but normalising unfair practices undermines governance and public trust.

(a) Ethics versus Career and Family Welfare

Merit: Unethical practices may sometimes provide quick promotions or financial benefits.

Demerit: They risk disciplinary action, reputational damage and legal consequences, ultimately harming the family. Integrity builds lasting credibility.

(b) Ethical Minority Makes No Difference

Merit: Individual action alone may not immediately transform a corrupt system.

Demerit: Ethical conduct creates role models, protects citizens and can gradually influence institutional culture. Collective integrity begins with individuals.

(c) Ethics versus Development

Merit: Excessive procedural rigidity can delay urgent projects.

Demerit: Corruption produces unsafe infrastructure, leakage and inequality. Ethical flexibility within the law can accelerate development without compromising justice.

(d) Small Gifts Improve Efficiency

Merit: Modest customary gifts may express goodwill in certain social settings.

Demerit: Gifts to influence official decisions create conflicts of interest and may normalise bribery. Public servants should follow applicable gift rules and disclose potential conflicts.

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Conclusion

Ethics and efficiency are not opposites. Transparent procedures, timely decisions and accountability can deliver development while preserving integrity. A civil servant must resist rationalising misconduct as necessity.

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