Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Law and ethics are considered to be the two tools for controlling human conduct so as to make it conducive to civilized social existence. (a) Discuss how they achieve this objective. (b) Giving examples, show how the two differ in their approaches.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Law and ethics; social order; legal enforcement; moral conscience; rights and duties; voluntary compliance; justice; examples; complementary mechanisms

Model Answer

Introduction

Law and ethics regulate human behaviour and help maintain peaceful, just and orderly social life. Although they overlap, they operate through different mechanisms.

(a) How They Control Conduct

Law establishes enforceable rules, protects rights and prescribes penalties for violations. Ethics guides individuals through values such as honesty, compassion, fairness and responsibility. Together, they discourage harmful behaviour and promote social cooperation.

(b) Differences in Approach

- **Source:** Law is established through recognised legal institutions; ethics draws upon moral reasoning, social values and conscience.
- **Enforcement:** Law uses courts, regulators and penalties; ethics relies largely on conscience, social expectations and professional standards.
- **Scope:** Law sets minimum enforceable standards, while ethics may demand higher conduct.
- **Example:** A public servant may legally disclose information when required, but ethical responsibility also demands respectful communication and protection of vulnerable individuals' dignity.

An action can be legal yet ethically questionable, such as exploiting a loophole to avoid a fair obligation. Conversely, a morally motivated action may still require legal authorisation.

Conclusion

Law provides enforceable boundaries, while ethics encourages responsible conduct beyond minimum compliance. Their complementary operation is essential for civilised and trustworthy society.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP