

Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

(At the end, we have presented a few sample questions and their suggested answers)

Lesson # 3: Ethics

Lesson # 3: Syllabus Areas

Human acts and values were covered in the previous lesson. Their understanding has provided a foundation to learn the nature and purpose of Ethics.

Various perspectives and thoughts relating to Ethics have been discussed in this lesson.

Our aim is to make the candidates understand the fundamentals of Ethics crystal clear so as to enable them to apply the concepts to real life situations.

Theme 3: Ethics

Contents:

- Why Ethics? (Rationale)
- Meaning
- Characteristics
- Determinants of Ethics
- Consequences of Ethics
- Branches of Ethics
- Dimensions of Ethics
- Perspective on Ethics in Public Policy
- Ethics in Public and Private Relationship
- Differences with some other terms
- Concluding Thoughts: Do Ethics Help?

Surprises in store . . .

Candidates always come across surprising or unexpected questions in the Mains. UPSC will always remain ahead of the candidates and their coaches.

However, if the candidates' basic understanding is clear, they can co-relate the concepts to the unexpected questions and work out their line of answer.

The key is to master the basics right – our ELP Notes would help you achieve that goal.

Why do we need ethics?

Rationale behind Ethics

Why do we need ethics? Why is the world so concerned about ethical conduct? The very fact that thinkers give importance to ethics points towards its utility. Let's understand the rationale behind the adoption of ethics.

Ethics is a bond of trust between the State and the citizens. The Government belongs to the people and those in charge of governance act on behalf of the people, as their trustees. The trustees always have to act in the interest of the people, for the common good. If they do so in practice, there will be no problem in the world. The reality, however,

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Why Ethics? (Rationale)

- Rationale behind ethics
- Building ethics – causes & way forward

is different – particularly in the developing countries. Corruption, misconduct and pursuance of vested interests by public servants is all pervasive. The result is a casualty of socio-economic development. People suffer.

Therefore, in order to achieve proper economic development and social justice, and to build a just, fair and free society, we need ethics to be practiced by all.

Building Ethics**Causes and way forward**

Why don't people behave ethically? In India, among other things, our education system has to take a part of the blame. What is inculcated among young children today is a spirit of competition rather than values. Our education system has become competition oriented and has ignored the role of values in the life of human beings. We do talk about values, more often to pay lip service rather than make serious efforts to inculcate them. It is probably in this background of eroding value system that the much-needed paper on 'Ethics' was introduced in the Civil Services Examination.

We cannot keep lamenting about what we do not have – a course correction is always in order. We need to make public servants aware of their obligations and the expected ethical conduct. This is imperative to serve public interest and discharge the relationship as trustees.

Recognising the importance of ethics in public life, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission in its report of 2007 had recommended that 'Public Service Values' be defined and made applicable to all tiers of the Government. Any transgression of these values be treated as misconduct, inviting punishment.

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Meaning (Definition)

- Meaning of ethics
- Code of conduct for ethical behaviour

Definition of Ethics**Meaning of Ethics Restated**

Ethics can be defined from a broad as well as a narrow perspective. From a broad perspective, Ethics are standards used to judge whether a particular human act is right or wrong. When we talk of honesty as an ethical value, we regard corruption as bad or wrong. Ethical values such as integrity, loyalty, compassion, empathy, etc. form the standards or parameters against which human acts are evaluated to determine their correctness and incorrectness or simply, their acceptability or otherwise.

Code of conduct for ethical behaviour

In a narrow sense, Ethics are standards and rules formulated by an organisation for its members, prescribing their rights and obligations. While there are values accepted and professed by society, in any organisation with a formal set-up, these have to be formally prescribed in the organisation's code of conduct. An organisation needs a specific reference point - this is provided by its 'Code of Ethics' which is mandatory for its employees. The conduct of the employees is assessed against this code of ethics which invariably contains the accepted values of integrity, loyalty, fair business practices, etc. All major private sector firms have their codes of ethics. Governments also prescribe the codes of conduct for their employees. A breach of the code of ethics or conduct invites punishment.

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Characteristics of Ethics

- Drawn from values
- Standards to judge human acts
- Influenced by context
- Evolve over time
- Present contradictions
- Represent abstract qualities
- Circumstances decide their application

Characteristics of Ethics

Let's list the characteristics of ethics which, as mentioned in the previous lesson, are more or less similar to that of the values. Therefore, we will only list the characteristics and discuss some subtle differences.

- Ethics are drawn from values.
- Ethics are comprehensive standards used to judge whether a particular human act is right or wrong. They are comprehensive and include the environment and animal life. In respect of organisations, they acquire a form of rules or codes of conduct.
- Ethics are influenced by the context in which they are taking place. Hence, they vary according to place, person and time.
- Ethics evolve over time and ultimately reach towards the supreme goal of freedom and justice. Apartheid was not illegal in South Africa for a long time. It is now outlawed.
- Ethics also present contradictory positions, i.e., ethical dilemmas as in the case of abortion or euthanasia. In such contentious issues, there are two opposing sides; some argue in favour of a particular position while others oppose it.
- Ethics represent abstract qualities like honesty, compassion, loyalty, etc. which are difficult to measure. However, with several studies and research, the assessment parameters have evolved over time.
- Circumstances decide the application of ethics but such cases are rare. Torture is not permitted of captured soldiers according to an international convention. However, a captured soldier might be tortured to seek the details of landmines laid by the enemy. Barring a few extreme exceptional cases, ethics must be followed in all other circumstances.

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Determinants of Ethics

- Person
- Place
- Time
- Circumstances

Determinants of Ethics

Determining what is ethical is a challenging task. It is further complicated by the fact that all actions can't be judged by the same yardstick. Ethics may vary according to three determinants, i.e., person, place and time:

- **Person** – The mind-set of a person influences his behaviour. The value that he holds shows in his actions. Ardent followers of a vegetarian diet consider 'vegetarianism' a value whereas others don't. Thus, the yardsticks may change from person to person but such instances are minimal. This is because we have evolved certain amount of consensus as to what can be considered acceptable and what cannot be. Therefore, the values of liberty, justice and honesty hold good across persons and continents.
- **Place** – This refers to the external environment. A specific action can be considered as ethical in one place but unethical in another. This may be due to the differences in culture or ideology. The merger of the American company, Chrysler, with the German company Daimler resulted in a poor understanding of cross-cultural management. The Germans believed in collectivism and stability whereas the Americans gave importance to individualism and risk-taking. This resulted in friction among the two groups due to the differences in values. Such a friction is also seen in the rural-urban lifestyles. A villager may casually drop into the house of another villager uninformed but this may not be welcome among the city dwellers.
- **Time** – Ethics keep evolving as time progresses. Certain issues may be acceptable at a given point in time but may be considered as unethical later. The practice of Sati was not considered unethical until the reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy stood against it. They enlightened the masses as to why it was unethical and pushed the government to abolish this evil custom.

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Determinants of Ethics

- Person
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- Circumstances

Though there are differences in values across persons and places, such differences are minor. On the major value issues, there are agreements. Globalisation also helps in synthesizing our values.

Generally, the discourse on ethics is restricted to three determinants as above. However, we can add the fourth determinant – 'Circumstances'. A soldier believes in truthfulness. However, when captured by an enemy, he will try not to reveal secrets and hence, would resort to telling lies. This is obvious as the life and security of fellow citizens is more important than his practice of truthfulness. While truthfulness is an ethical value in the normal situations, in certain special circumstances it may become unethical.

Therefore, we may regard the determinants of ethics to be FOUR – Person, Place, Time and Circumstances.

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**Consequences of Ethics
(If practiced well)**

- Order & social harmony
- Accountability & transparency
- Common good
- Just, free & fair society

Consequences of Ethics

Governments, organisations and societies try to inculcate values and promote ethical conduct. However, the benefits accrue to both – organisations and individuals. Ethics, thus, benefit at an individual level as well as the societal level.

At an individual level, ethics inculcate the importance of integrity and loyalty or trusteeship among public servants. Practising ethics makes them good human beings who care for their fellow human beings and nature. They also try to inculcate these values among their children.

The benefits are immense at the societal level. If practiced well, collectively, ethics achieve the following:

- Maintain order and social harmony
- Ensure accountability and transparency
- Promote public interest and common good (i.e., economic development and social justice), and
- Help build society on the principles of justice, fairness and freedom which are the highest ideals sought after by an enlightened humanity.

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Branches of Ethics

- Descriptive
- Normative
- Meta
- Applied
 - Bioethics
 - Business
 - Military
 - Political
 - Environmental

Branches of Ethics

There are four main branches of ethics, viz., Descriptive, Normative, Meta and Applied. The last one (Applied Ethics) has several distinct streams. Let's study these branches one by one.

Descriptive Ethics – This branch of ethics studies people's beliefs about morality. It attempts to answer what is considered right and wrong by the people. It is based on the real-life decisions taken by people. It helps us to understand the overall ethical standards of society prevalent at a particular point of time. Untouchability was not illegal in the olden days; it is a crime today.

Descriptive ethics state what people consider right at a given point of time and not what should be the right thing to do. During the French revolution, it was normal to get rid of the aristocrats by punishing them with execution. This describes what existed at that time – 'the aristocrats exploit the poor, so they must be punished with execution'. When we consider what should be the right thing to do, it becomes a subject matter of the next branch of ethics, i.e., normative ethics.

Normative Ethics – In our example of the French revolution, someone could argue from a normative point of view that the process adopted was not fair; some aristocrats may not have behaved exploitatively with their employees. If at all they were to be punished, a fair trial should have been given to them. This is the normative aspect of ethics – what design and prescription the ethics should have. The branch of normative ethics, thus, deals with setting the moral standards or principles that determine the right behaviour and the wrong one. It is prescriptive in nature in the sense that it describes the manner in which people ought to act. For instance, capital punishment is not acceptable in the advanced ethical thinking. This is a normative part of ethics, which is compared with the descriptive part or the ground realities to find out how far the ethical standards of society have evolved.

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Meta Ethics – ‘Meta’ means after or beyond. It studies the theoretical aspects of ethics. We have seen what the first two branches of ethics mean. Descriptive ethics describe what people think is right. Normative ethics prescribe what behaviour should be considered right. This branch of Meta-Ethics raises a fundamental question as to why a particular right behaviour should be considered right in the first place. Normative ethics prescribe that the capital punishment should not exist as human beings have no right to take the life of others. Meta-ethics would look into as to why human beings should have or not have that right; and what is the rationale behind it.

Though meta-ethics deal with what is good, the normative ethics also deal with that question before prescribing something. To that extent, they overlap with each other. But meta-ethics go a step beyond and try to inquire into the very existence of morality or goodness.

Applied Ethics – This branch deals with the contemporary moral issues that people face. Today, we are confronted with several dilemmas such as abortion, human cloning, euthanasia, capital punishment and animal rights. This branch has been sub-divided into various groups such as business ethics, bioethics, environmental ethics, etc. For the issue to fall under applied ethics, apart from being moral in nature it must also be controversial. This means that there must be a significant number of people for and against the issue. There is no single way to decide on the morality of the issue.

Bioethics deal with the issues concerning our biological aspect. It can even be a situation of life and death such as in the case of abortion. Pro-abortionists or pro-choice want to save the mother’s life or give her the right to decide about her own body while anti-abortionists or pro-life hold the view that the foetus needs to be protected as it is a life-form and vulnerable as it can’t defend its own rights. There is no easy solution to this dilemma and ethics need to keep evolving to address the same.

- Other issues of morality under this head include Surrogacy - It puts forth questions such as whether taking money for a child is ethical

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in nature; if the surrogate mother becomes attached to the baby after the birth then should she be allowed to keep the baby; who is responsible for the child if the parents' divorce before the delivery? These are some of the complex issues involved in surrogacy.

- Designer babies pose questions as to whether we should tamper with the DNA and is it acceptable if such modification is for a disease prevention and not for other purposes?
- Euthanasia is the act of intentionally ending a person's life to relieve pain and suffering. Whether we humans have the right to decide to take our or others' lives even if the bona fide aim is to stop the suffering or is it a prerogative of God or Nature is a query to which we don't have an answer yet. Only a few countries allow euthanasia and that too with certain restrictions.

Business Ethics look into various issues such as corporate social responsibility, insider trading, whistle blowing, false advertising, reservations and discrimination.

Military Ethics deal with issues such as application of force on a person, torture, treatment of Prisoners of War.

Political Ethics examine the method by which the funds are obtained and used, black money, etc. Politicians should investigate controversial issues such as capital punishment, gun control, war, caste and racism.

Environmental Ethics go a step further and deal with the ecological world. A plethora of issues fall under it – animal rights, sustainable development, climate change, environmental justice and environmental racism. Addressing these issues has become a priority in our lives as we understand more and more about the harmful effects of over-exploitation of resources.

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Dimensions of Ethics

- Utilitarianism
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- Consequentialist Theory
- Virtue Theory
- Justice Theory

Dimensions of Ethics

Ethics, as we know, are standards used to judge whether a particular human act is right or wrong. But what exactly are these standards? How are we to determine which standard is good and which is not? As the thinking evolved, the standards also evolved. The standards point towards certain maxims which are considered to be desirable or true, for example, a duty for the duty's sake. These maxims represent various dimensions of ethics. Thus, ethics are not one dimensional, i.e., they don't just have a single standard or theory to judge every conduct; rather there are multiple theories or dimensions that exist.

Each dimension deals with a part of ethics. Therefore, a particular dimension may hold true in particular circumstances or apply to particular conducts. However, the justice dimension holds true in almost all cases and hence we can say that it is a near perfect dimension of ethics. There are five main dimensions or approaches or theories of ethics that provide yardsticks for ethical behaviour:

- Utilitarianism
- Deontological Theory
- Consequentialist Theory
- Virtue Theory, and
- Justice Theory

Let's discuss these dimensions one by one.

Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham, a philosopher of the 18th Century, is regarded as the founder of the theory of utilitarianism. He argued that a human action produces benefit or happiness or prevents pain or unhappiness. This property of production of happiness and prevention of pain is called utility. The basic idea of utilitarianism is to maximise utility from a

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Dimensions of Ethics

- Utilitarianism
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human action. If an action derives maximum utility, it is considered as ethical.

Jeremy Bentham argued in favour of quantitative pleasures, such as clothes, money, etc. If each one tries to attain his pleasure, society will succeed in attaining the greatest good of the greatest number of people. This can be termed as the quantitative utilitarianism.

John Stuart Mill, another proponent of utilitarianism, made a distinction between the quantity and the quality. He contended that some kinds of pleasures are more desirable than others. He considered the intellectual pleasures, like reading, better than the sensuous pleasures. Therefore, according to Mill, both quantitative and qualitative utilities be taken into consideration to see whether the actions achieve a social utility, i.e., the well-being of many persons.

This dimension of ethics focuses on the material well-being and goes on to include the intellectual pleasures. But it fails to answer two crucial issues: (a) If a poor person steals from a rich one, it should, according to this theory, lead to achieving utility as a positive utility of avoiding starvation outweighs a negative evil of stealing. But this can create anarchy and lawlessness. (b) Some people do not aim for the material pleasures but instead promote the well-being of society and in the process make sacrifices. Such instances do not exactly fit into this theory though one may argue that a person making sacrifices derives pleasure in his sacrifice.

Deontological Theory

Deontology means duty. It is concerned with the rightness of an action and not its consequences. **Immanuel Kant** is a principal proponent of this theory. He argues that an action must conform to the moral law. Thus, an action is to be considered moral or good if the good will or motive behind the action is good. This motive comes from the higher self. One need not consider the consequences of the action – sometimes

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they may be bad. Kant opposed telling a lie even in the adverse circumstances to achieve good.

This theory advocates a duty for the duty's sake. In a few cases, it may lead to adverse consequences and a greater harm to society. This theory is flawed in the sense that it considers only one dimension of an activity and ignores other dimensions. When Kant argues telling truth even in adverse circumstances (according to this line, a captured soldier must speak truth and reveal all the secrets to the enemy), he considers only one dimension of an act, i.e., truthfulness and, thereby, ignores the higher dimensions of justice, protection of life, well-being of society, etc.

Thirukural argues that in the adverse circumstances, the falsehood becomes the truth – a pragmatic approach to attain the well-being of society. Bhagavad Gita teaches us to do our karma without expecting the fruits – the karma has to adhere to the test of righteousness (or Dharma). Thus, there is a comprehensive thinking behind this principle which would, therefore, attain the societal well-being.

Consequentialist Theory

This theory is the opposite of the Deontological theory. It holds that the consequences of one's conduct is the ultimate basis to determine whether that conduct is right or wrong. If the net consequences are good, a conduct is considered to be moral and vice versa. As an action can have both good and evil consequences, this theory conducts a cost-benefit analysis of the action to be taken. The action is given the green light if the good consequences outweigh the bad ones. Such an action is considered moral in nature. Pros and cons must be evaluated before taking any action. This theory is also known as the teleological theory as the word 'telos' means 'end' and the theory focuses on the end results.

(FYI: Teleological ethics consider a human act to be moral if it produces intrinsic value. Its two main branches are consequentialism and virtue theory).

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This theory is not concerned about the purity of means. A dictatorial regime may produce a higher economic progress but can it be rated above a democratic regime which may be a little slower? In an enlightened society, unfair means are used only in rare cases when no other alternative is available.

Virtue Theory

Virtues are desirable qualities or traits. This theory is derived from **Greek Philosophy**. Socrates propounded virtue ethics which were further developed by Plato and Aristotle. Plato argues that a man should lead a life full of virtues. Here, our free will is used to acquire virtues and convert them into habits so that those occur automatically. He enumerated four virtues: wisdom (i.e., knowledge, reason and foresight), courage, temperance (including self-control) and justice.

Aristotle regarded character to be important and held that a virtuous conduct consisted of avoiding extremes of anything – not to eat too much and also not to starve. Thus, for him, a virtue represented a mean between the two vices. He listed several virtues.

This theory, however, doesn't help us when two virtues find themselves in a conflict state, such as justice and non-violence. Further, it lists several virtues but doesn't provide a coherent and comprehensive approach to evaluate a human conduct as do the other theories. Like Deontology, it also suffers from one-dimensional thinking. This theory, therefore, has remained in the background.

Justice Theory

Philosopher John Rawls advocated a theory of Justice. It is based on several other theories such as the deontological theory of Kant and an idea of a social contract. John Rawls has defined justice as fairness. He proposed two principles of justice – (a) liberty for all and (b) equality of opportunity coupled with social justice.

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The first principle of liberty gives equal rights to all and also requires everyone to be equal before the law or follow the rule of law. The second principle has two parts – equality of opportunity and social justice. There should be an equality of opportunity to compete for the public offices. However, some are in a disadvantaged position. Rawls wants the Government to provide them training to acquire the skills required to compete for the public offices. The second part of the second principle pertains to social justice, i.e., providing help to those who are in a disadvantaged position. Provision of social security is an example of it.

Rawls' two principles lead to the attainment of justice. Human acts should promote justice, not subvert it.

Evaluation of Dimension Theories

We have discussed five dimensions of ethics. The first one – utilitarianism – is materialistic by nature. The second one, deontology, improves upon it but still cannot provide a comprehensive tool to evaluate ethical behaviour as good means may at times lead to bad consequences. The third one – consequentialist theory – is the opposite of deontology and has an issue with the purity of means. The virtue theory merely gathers several virtues but cannot offer a coherent and comprehensive solution. The justice theory synthesizes the good points of all the theories in one single theory and tries to aim for the highest goals of mankind – liberty, fairness and justice. That is why the justice theory is the most respected and often quoted theory in the modern world.

Dimensions of Ethics

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- Deontological Theory
- Consequentialist Theory
- Virtue Theory
- Justice Theory

Evaluation of Dimension Theories

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Ethics in Public Policy

- Colonial mind-set of everything Western superior
- Ineffective, inefficient and unfair systems
- Western systems – rigged at higher level (favour vested interests, not justice)
- Ethical deficit in public policy prescriptions (Western ethics deficient at organisational level)
- Issue of ethical conduct not restricted to developing countries

Public Policy: Ethical Perspective

The subject 'Ethics' is profound and needs an objective and comprehensive insight to evaluate human acts (including organisational or governmental acts) and reach an appropriate conclusion. Unfortunately, we still suffer from the colonial mind-set of considering everything Western as superior. Such an approach prejudices our outlook and thinking.

We are facing several issues on the ethical front. People lack a civic sense, there is a large-scale corruption and as a result, the systems have become ineffective, inefficient and unfair. Quality is a casualty. There is no denying the fact that we have enormous problems on hand. But at the same time, the Western systems are not as flawless as we tend to think. Let's get deeper into the issue of ethics.

We find a tremendous civic sense, punctuality and honesty among the Westerners. This happens so far as the conduct of individuals is concerned. However, at a higher level, i.e., at the public policy level, we notice that the systems are rigged and have become unfair and unethical. Scores of examples prove this.

Private corporates in the West set obscenely high pay and bonuses for the top executives at the expense of the consumers. Rich are taxed lower on the capital gains and wealth. Patent laws keep the prices high making essential medicines and other products unaffordable to those at the bottom. Higher education and healthcare are exorbitantly priced which puts a majority of people under pressure or in distressful conditions. Credit card companies use unfair practices. Banks practice usury in the event of a default. Trade terms of the developed nations are unfair to the developing countries. What do these realities point out? A significant ethical deficit in the public policy prescription. Relatively, the developing countries do show some sensible approach. Reservation policy, provision of almost free education and food ration, social upliftment schemes, debt-waiver in distressful cases, free access to public healthcare (in spite of quality issues) are some such examples of the ethical public policy prescriptions.

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To conclude, the Western countries have succeeded in practicing ethics at the individual/lower levels but have serious issues at the organisational/higher levels. The shortcomings affect the public life. The inequalities are growing; social unrest and personal tensions (drug addiction, divorce, crime, etc.) are noticeable. In short, ethical conduct is not an issue restricted to the developing countries; it is present, perhaps in an equal magnitude, among the developed nations as well.

Ethics in Public Policy

- Colonial mind-set of everything Western superior
- Ineffective, inefficient and unfair systems
- Western systems – rigged at higher level (favour vested interests, not justice)
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UNIQUE ACADEMY

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Ethics in Public Private Relationship

- Ethics apply to both
- Concept of private life ethics
- Concept of public life ethics
- Synthesis and parallel between the two
- Impact of unethical private life on public life

Ethics in Public & Private Relationship

Ethics are not decorative ornaments that are to be worn in public. Practising ethics is a way of life, to be followed in both the private as well as the public relationships. Recall the DoPT module on 'Indian Insights' or what Plato had said about ethics or virtues. A man should lead a life full of virtues. He should use his free will to acquire virtues and convert them into habits which occur automatically. Therefore, a person must practice ethics in both the spheres – private and public.

In the private life, the ethical conduct includes (a) discharging the family responsibilities, i.e., providing for the family's material needs, (b) displaying & practising trustworthiness towards family members and friends, and (c) mentoring children so that they grow up as good human beings.

In the public life, the conduct is considered ethical if it is based on (a) professionalism, i.e., completing the assigned work correctly, completely & on time and keeping focus on the targeted output, (b) practising integrity, i.e., honesty and trustworthiness, and loyalty to owners, profession and society, and (c) practising other foundational values like compassion towards the weaker sections and empathy to become an effective agent of change. We will study these aspects in the subsequent units.

Though the nature of ethical values slightly varies in these two relationships, there is a synthesis and parallel between the two. Taking care of the family becomes professionalism in the public life. Both the relationships are based on honesty, trustworthiness and loyalty. Mentoring children parallels with practising other values of compassion and empathy in the public life.

A good ethical practitioner in the private life becomes a good public servant. But if the personal life is unethical, it will have an impact on the public life and performance. Therefore, public servants have to take care of both the relationships and practice ethics with equal intensity everywhere. They should also avoid a conflict of interest. Public servants

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- Why Ethics? (Rationale)
- Meaning
- Characteristics
- Determinants of Ethics
- Consequences of Ethics
- Branches of Ethics
- Dimensions of Ethics
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- Ethics in Public & Private Relationship
- Differences with other terms
- Do Ethics help?

Differences in Two Terms

- Beliefs and Values
- Values and Ethics
- Law and Ethics
- Ethics and Morality

in the positions of authority should be impartial and not try to favour their private interests.

Differences in Two Terms**Beliefs & Values**

- All values are beliefs but all beliefs are not values, for example, a belief that number 13 is unlucky.
- A belief is a faith or feeling that something is true. Values are the basic beliefs that are considered to be true and desirable for the well-being of society. There is a qualitative difference between them in terms of their desirability and positive trait. All values are desirable but all beliefs may not be, such as a belief that all public servants are corrupt. Similarly, values are positive notions or traits as they are meant to take the societies forward.
- Beliefs can change with an additional input or convincing. The values are filtered beliefs and have more acceptability. Hence, values do not change so easily.
- As values have more acceptability, an element of voluntariness in practising values reduces vis-à-vis beliefs.

Values and Ethics

- Values are the basic beliefs that are considered to be true and desirable for the well-being of society. Ethics are standards used to judge whether a particular human act is right or wrong. Ethics come from values and make them mandatory.
- Not all values are ethics. For example, there are vegetarians and non-vegetarians. Both profess their values. They concede space to each other and are not adversaries. This, however, is not true of the organizational ethics. In the organizational code

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of ethics, a particular conduct is either acceptable or not acceptable.

- When they gain more acceptability, values are converted to ethics. Thus, values lead and ethics follow.
- Values are both ideal and practical, such as courage, honesty and non-violence. It is possible for most to observe non-violence but not all can demonstrate courage. Ethics are practical – they see what values can be implemented. Therefore, honesty can be a practical value and hence ethics but not courage.

Law and Ethics

- Maintenance of law & order and social harmony is a pre-requisite for economic development. This is attempted by enacting laws, i.e., rules for the people to follow. Ethics are standards used to judge whether a particular human act is right or wrong. Ethics evolve as the thinkers contemplate to build a fair and just society.
- Though both aim for harmony and justice, laws are mandatory and come with a punishment for a breach. Ethics, though desirable, are discretionary by nature when used in the sense of values, except in the case of code of ethics of an organisation.
- Ethics decide what is good and the laws try to achieve that good. Ethics state that the lifesaving drugs should be affordable and the laws prescribe a price cap on them.
- Thinkers aim for a just society and agitate against what is unjust. Thus, ethics lead and the laws follow to provide sanctity to ethics. On the flip side, we are witnessing a tendency to enact a law for every small ethical prescription. This needs to be curbed as it increases the cost of compliance and retards development.

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Ethics and Morality

- Ethics are society's standards for determining what is right and what is wrong. Moral principles, on the other hand, are an individual's standards for deciding the same. A vegetarian may disapprove of the non-vegetarianism and regard consuming non-veg/meat as an undesirable conduct. But society may not consider it so.
- A person may think it to be morally right to indulge in violence against prosperous communities but society will disapprove of it.

Thus, ethics are always desirable but some individuals may hold certain principles which may not be acceptable to many others such as say vegetarianism. Highly acceptable moral principles of individuals become ethics.

With this, we are concluding our discussion on the differences between the two terms. The candidates tend to write the differences based on the terms' characteristics. They tend to miss out an important point – the interdependence between the two terms, like say 'ethics lead and the laws follow'. You will convey a deeper understanding of the subject matter if you write about their interdependence or relationship. Therefore, make it a habit to state the interdependence between the two terms.

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- **Do Ethics help?**

Do ethics help?

- Benefits at individual and societal level
- Public servants become accountable if transparency is established
- Ethical behaviour is intrinsically rewarding
- Need to rebuild the system

Do ethics help progress?**What do ethics promote in public life?**

Ethics benefit at an individual level as well as societal level. At an individual level, ethics inculcate the importance of integrity and loyalty or trusteeship among public servants. If practiced well, collectively, ethics achieve the following:

- Maintain order and social harmony
- Ensure accountability and transparency
- Promote public interest and common good, i.e., economic development and social justice, and
- Help build a just, fair and free society

In such a society justice prevails, everyone is equal before the law and there is order and social harmony. An ethical code of conduct holds public servants accountable for their actions and, thereby, keeps pressure on them to remain on the right side of the law. But such an accountability is imperfect without transparency. Modern Governments have enacted laws providing the Right to Information to their citizens. Unhindered access to information makes it difficult for the public servants to behave unethically.

Various programmes of the Government try to build infrastructure and promote common good. The Government also ensures social justice by protecting and helping the weak. Pursuit of compassion is a foundation of a fair society. With freedom, individuals pursue their vocations and make life fulfilling and enriching.

Indispensability of Ethics

It is said that there is often no economic incentive to encourage ethical behaviour. The dishonest individuals get ahead in life. That's the reality. But there is also another reality. In spite of no gain in sight, many people

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do behave ethically. This is because the ethical behaviour is intrinsically rewarding. It elevates human beings to a higher plateau.

Nevertheless, the environment around is frustrating. Corruption is rampant and abuse of power ubiquitous. It then falls upon the civil servants to provide the leadership and rebuild the ethical system. The task is difficult, the goal is distant; but they must pursue it - in the interest of society and for the sake of humanity. The beginning has to be made from the self. Resonating the words of Mahatma Gandhi who once observed – 'Be the change you want to see in the world'.

Do ethics help?

- Benefits at individual and societal level
- Public servants become accountable if transparency is established
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Question: 2018

"Falsehood takes the place of truth when it results in unblemished common good." – Tirukkural

Understanding the Question

Ancient scriptures have propounded truth to be the supreme goal of mankind. However, sometimes the circumstances force us to adopt falsehood to achieve the common good. In that situation, Tirukkural contends, the falsehood becomes the truth. We will begin by explaining this position. In the next step, we will provide a hypothetical example to support the contention of the quote.

Our next task is to relate the quote to the present context. Here we can mention a major issue. We know the Government funds are not used properly. What would happen if the taxpayers start evading the taxes contending that they can use the funds better to serve the poor? And if the policemen begin indulging in fake encounters to get rid of anti-social elements? Everything will become arbitrary and there would only be chaos which may lead to anarchy. This is not acceptable. Then, how would we correlate it to the quote?

To correlate, we have to unearth the subtle meaning hidden in the quote. We know that the ancient scriptures value the truth the most. If that is the case, then, when they talk about something contrary, it has to apply in rare or extraordinary circumstances and not to routine matters. How would one decide when to use falsehood and when not to? We notice an element called 'discretion'. If a person has a choice between the two courses of action, he should choose one that serves the common good. But if the discretion to behave differently is not available, as in the case of a taxpayer who must pay the taxes or policemen who must not engage in fake encounters, the falsehood is not to be practised even if it may result in common good. This is how we will relate the quote to the present context.

Setting the Context

Explain the meaning of the quote.

Main Body

This will contain the following:

- Explain the meaning and give an example
- Consequences of practising falsehood
- Subtle message of the quote – use falsehood in extraordinary circumstances

Value Addition

Already done by explaining the subtle message of the quote.

Answer

Ancient sages have propounded truth to be the supreme goal of mankind. However, sometimes the circumstances force to adopt falsehood to achieve the common good. In that situation, Tirukkural contends, the falsehood becomes the truth.

Robbers arrive at a hermitage and ask the hermit about the route taken by the trader, who had just passed by the hermitage. If the hermit tells the truth, it would harm the trader. Therefore, he resorts to falsehood and misleads the robbers.

What would happen if everyone starts practising falsehood in the name of common good principle? For instance, a businessman evades taxes to help poor, or policemen engage in a fake encounter. Such arbitrary actions would lead to indiscipline and anarchy.

Ancient scriptures value the truth most. Therefore, if they preach something contrary, it applies to extraordinary circumstances where the discretion to behave falsely is available. In our examples, the hermit has such discretion but not the trader and policemen who are bound by the laws.

(163 Words)

Question: 2018 – Case Study Question

The question presents a case of an ethical dilemma. A doctor has committed certain irregularities in the maintenance of records and payment of the income tax. He is ready to pay the tax. He is also planning to open a multi-speciality hospital in the area. However, if the technical irregularities are pursued, it may hamper his hospital project. As the head of the tax office, you have been presented with two options – Take a broad view and ignore the technical irregularities or be strict and take action as prescribed.

This case presents an ethical dilemma. The issue pertains to a breach of integrity and loyalty to society.

Again, as we pointed out during our discussion on the past questions, a right course of action or solution is hinted at in the question itself. As the locality needs a hospital, it is better to take a broad view and not be after the doctor. However, we need to present this solution logically and systematically, basing it on the ethical principles. This is what we have attempted in our answer.

We begin by providing the background and the ethical principles that we use in the case. Thereafter, we will discuss them one by one to show what the right stand should be. The officer has an administrative discretion here. He needs to justify it if he uses one. We have provided the justification in our answer. Our analysis will lead us to choosing the right course of action.

As you would notice, the answer is known to us but we need to present it systematically so that the conclusion emerges at the end naturally.

Approaching the ethical dilemma question:

Question category: Integrity and Loyalty to society

Feature breached/would be breached: Integrity will be breached if the officer takes bribes from the doctor. Loyalty to society will get compromised if the doctor decides not to pursue his hospital project due to the officer's action in this case.

Extreme Constraints: None.

Stand taken in Answer: Take a broad view and ignore the technical irregularities.

Consequences and mitigating measures: Justify the administrative discretion on the file by recording the reasons for the same so that no one can blame the officer later.

Conclusion: Summarise the action.

UNIQUE ACADEMY

Answer

A doctor has short paid the tax dues out of ignorance of law and has undertaken to pay up immediately. There are other minor technical errors for which I, in my capacity of an investigating officer, have an administrative discretion to pursue or ignore.

The basic principles of ethics are (a) integrity; and (b) loyalty to owners, profession and society in a hierarchical order with the loyalty to society placed at the top. I will not seek any personal gratification from the doctor.

My loyalty to owners (Government) requires me to protect the fair interests of the Government. By choosing to ignore the technical irregularities, the Government's fair interests (mainly financial) do not get compromised materially.

My next consideration would be loyalty to my profession. It requires me to observe the rules and justify my discretion. For the tax short paid by the doctor, I would issue a recovery notice with interest payable as per the rules. Regarding ignoring the minor technical irregularities, I will justify my administrative discretion stating that (a) the doctor has committed the irregularities out of ignorance and not deliberately, and (b) Government's revenue interests will not be affected.

The principle of loyalty to society requires me to uphold public interest. In the instant case, it will be served if I do not pursue the technical irregularities as that would free the doctor of his time and energy that can be better devoted to the hospital project that the region needs so desperately.

In view of the above, I will take a broader view in the matter and ignore the technical defaults.

(262 Words)

Case Study Question: 2020

Rajesh Kumar is a senior public servant, with a reputation of honesty and forthrightness, currently posted in the Finance Ministry as Head of the Budget Division. His department is presently busy in organising the budgetary support to the states, four of which are due to go to the polls within the financial year.

This year's annual budget had allotted 78300 crores for National Housing Scheme (NHS), a centrally sponsored social housing scheme for the weaker sections of society. 775 crores have been drawn for NHS till June.

The Ministry of Commerce had long been pursuing a case for setting up a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in a southern state to boost exports. After two years of detailed discussions between the centre and state, the Union Cabinet approved the project in August. Process was initiated to acquire the necessary land.

Eighteen months ago, a leading Public Sector Unit (PSU) had projected the need for setting up a large natural gas processing plant in a northern state for the regional gas grid. The required land is already in possession of the PSU. The gas grid is an essential component of the national energy security strategy. After three rounds of global bidding the project was allotted to an MNC, M/s XYZ Hydrocarbons. The first tranche of payment to the MNC is scheduled to be made in December.

Finance Ministry was asked for a timely allocation of an additional 6000 crores for these two developmental projects. It was decided to recommend re-appropriation of this entire amount from the NHS allocation. The file was forwarded to Budget Department for their comments and further processing. On studying the case file, Rajesh Kumar realized that this re-appropriation may cause inordinate delay in the execution of NHS, a project much publicized in the rallies of senior politicians. Correspondingly, non-availability of finances would cause financial loss in the SEZ and national embarrassment due to delayed payment in an international project.

Rajesh Kumar discussed the matter with his seniors. He was conveyed that this politically sensitive situation needs to be processed immediately. Rajesh Kumar realized that diversion of funds from NHS could raise difficult questions for the government in the Parliament.

Discuss the following with reference to this case:

1. Ethical issues involved in re-appropriation of funds from a welfare project to the developmental projects.
2. Given the need for proper utilization of public funds, discuss the options available to Rajesh Kumar. Is resigning a worthy option? (250 words) 20

Understanding the Question

Re-appropriation is neither permitted by the rules nor ethical as it would deprive adequate funds to a welfare scheme which is for the benefit of the people at the bottom. The Parliament-sanctioned funds belong to these people and it is unfair to deprive them of the benefits.

The position may be explained on the basis of clear ethical principles. We should take a stand that Rajesh Kumar should stick to the ethical position. However, he should also suggest a way out so that the developmental projects do not suffer.

The question has a few traps and the candidates should steer clear of them. The first trap is the mention of four states going to the poll. You may think that funds will not be used there due to the Election Model Code of Conduct. However, there is no bar on transferring the budgeted funds to the states. Rather, the Central Government would like to show that it has transferred the funds. Of course, their utilisation may get slightly delayed (by 2 months or so). But these funds cannot be re-appropriated – further, since the grants are different, the Finance Ministry has no powers of re-appropriation.

The second trap is that one of the developmental projects is at the land acquisition stage and hence it may take time for the funds to be expended. In an SEZ project, the major expenditure is on land compensation. The money has to be deposited with the land acquisition officer in advance. Even if we presume that the actual funding requirement may not be Rs 6,000 crore but less, it still does not address the basic issue of irregularity of re-appropriation proposal. Therefore, this aspect is best ignored in answering the case.

Setting the Context

None

Main Body

- Ethical issues in re-appropriation
- Options available to Rajesh Kumar and alternative ways to tackle the situation

Value Addition

Suggesting a way out is our value addition.

Answer**Ethical Issues in Re-appropriation**

The relevant ethical principle involved in the proposal for re-appropriation of funds from a welfare scheme of NHS to the developmental projects is 'Loyalty to Society' which requires one to ensure 'Public Interest' and 'Fairness and Justice' in governance.

Both – NHS and the Developmental Projects – satisfy the criterion of 'Public Interest' but the re-appropriation is unfair to the poor beneficiaries of NHS as they would be deprived of their rightful entitlement. Therefore, the re-appropriation should not be done.

Options Available to Rajesh Kumar

He has two broad options (unethical and ethical): Either to agree to the re-appropriation proposal or oppose it but suggest a way out. The first option is unethical being against the principle of 'Loyalty to Society' as well as the principle of 'Loyalty to Profession' which requires Rajesh Kumar to follow the rules of profession/governance:

- Re-appropriation is permitted within a grant. As NHS grant is different from the grants of Ministries of Commerce & PNG, the Finance Ministry has no power of re-appropriation.
- Even within a grant, re-appropriation to a new service or item is not permitted.

However, Rajesh Kumar needn't have to consider resigning as other alternatives to provide funds for the developmental projects are available:

- Contingency Fund of Government of India has a balance of Rs 8,000 crore. Rajesh can propose to draw money from this fund and re-coup it later after the sanction by the Parliament.
- The concerned ministries' PSUs may be asked to borrow from a nationalised bank upon the guarantee by the Government of India till the budgetary allocations are approved by the Parliament.

Rajesh Kumar, in his submission, should argue against the re-appropriation proposal and suggest the above alternatives to address the issue.

(286 Words)

With this, we conclude our sample lesson and model answers' presentation.