

MQEP

MAINS QUALITY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

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ETHICS NOTES

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ETHICS IN PUBLIC AND PERSONAL LIFE

What is Ethics?

Ethics is the study of moral values, focusing on what is good and bad, right and wrong.

Ethics and Values

While all ethics are values, not all values are considered ethical. Ethics refers to moral principles that govern behaviour, while values are personal or societal beliefs that guide actions.

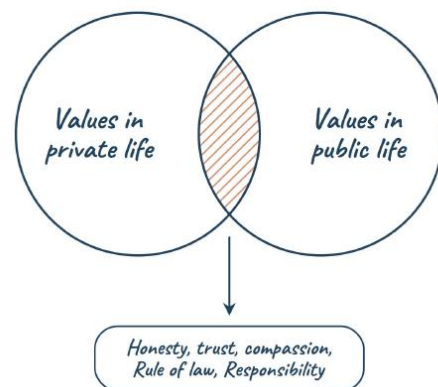
For example, values like Honesty, justice, integrity, compassion are part of ethics. However, there are values which might conflict with ethics. For example, sometimes the value of profit can conflict with the ethics of environmental protection.

Ethics in public and private life

“A Person Cannot Do Right in One Department, While Attempting to Do Wrong in Another. Life Is One Indivisible Whole”. - Gandhiji.

Private or personal relationships refer to close connections between individuals, formed through emotional bonds and interactions, such as between a husband and wife, parent and child, or friends.

Public relationships involve interactions in the public sphere, such as between colleagues or employer and employee.



Commonalities in public and personal life

1. Both are grounded in core ethical values like honesty, trust, respect, loyalty.
2. Ethical behaviour in both spheres fosters **mutual trust and cooperation**.
3. In both relationships, individuals are expected to be accountable for their actions.
4. Ethical conduct involves fulfilling one's roles dutifully, whether as a public servant or family member.
5. Moral behaviour in both domains contributes to stability in society.

Differences in public and personal life

Aspect	Public Relationships	Private Relationships
Nature of Duty	Impersonal, rule-based, institutional	Personal, emotion-driven, informal
Accountability	To law, constitution, public interest, and organizational ethics	To family expectations, cultural values, and personal conscience
Transparency Requirement	High - subject to public scrutiny and RTI	Low - protected by privacy and social boundaries
Impartiality	Must maintain neutrality and fairness in decision-making	May involve favouritism or emotional bonding
Professional Boundaries	Governed by code of conduct, service rules	Governed by personal emotions, cultural norms
Scope of Influence	Affects large groups and society at large	Affects individuals and close groups
Conflict of Interest	More frequent; requires strict avoidance	Less formal; sometimes managed personally

Impact of disharmony between public and private values

Disharmony arises when an individual's private moral beliefs conflict with the ethical standards required in public life (especially in roles like civil services, leadership, or public trust).

- 1. Crisis of Conscience:** Internal psychological friction occurs when official duties directly violate an individual's private moral convictions. *Eg.* Whistleblowers like Edward Snowden.
- 2. Institutional Corruption:** *Eg.* Former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar faced criminal charges for prioritizing private family business over public banking duties.
- 3. Erosion of Public Trust:** *Eg.* UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson resigned following public fury over hosting private parties during public COVID-19 lockdowns.
- 4. Cognitive Dissonance:** *Eg.* Bureaucrat Shah Faesal resigned from the IAS due to deep friction between his personal political views and state actions.
- 5. Culture of Nepotism:** Substituting universal institutional rules with private sectarian, caste, or religious biases.
- 6. Paralysis in Decision-Making:** Personal prejudices cause administrative delays when managing urgent, diverse public welfare mandates.
- 7. Subversion of Constitutional Morality:** Personal biases override public values of secularism, equality, and equal protection.
- 8. Loss of Leadership Authority:** Managers lose the professional moral right to command when they violate their own rules.

9. Misappropriation of Public Resources: Treating state properties as private entitlement rather than as a sacred public trust.

Way Forward

1. Ethical Training and Moral Education - Moral education from early schooling to build foundational values that align with social responsibility.

2. Development of Emotional Intelligence (EI) - Cultivating EI helps individuals navigate emotional conflicts, manage biases, and make balanced decisions.

3. Clear Codes of Conduct

- Enforcing **strict ethical codes and service rules** ensures that private interests do not influence public duties.
- Regular **declarations of conflict of interest** should be mandated for transparency.

4. Leadership by Example - Role models (Eg. E. Sreedharan, T.N. Seshan) serve as living examples of balancing personal integrity with public ethics.

5. Institutional Mechanisms

- Strengthen internal oversight mechanisms such as **vigilance cells, ethics committees, and ombudsmen.**
- Encourage **whistleblower protection** to report unethical blending of private interest and public function.

6. Promote the idea of "servant leadership", where duty to public good is central.

Values

Values are fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes and actions. They help us determine what is important and influence judgments about what is right or wrong for individuals or groups.

How Values shape actions

1. Guiding Behaviour - Values serve as internal standards that guide individuals in making ethical choices. Eg. A person with the value of honesty is likely to avoid cheating, even if they could escape detection.

2. Shaping Attitudes and Beliefs - Values influence how individuals perceive situations, react to challenges, and form opinions. Eg. A person valuing equality will support inclusive policies and oppose discrimination.

3. Motivating Action - Values provide reasons for action and determine life choices such as career, relationships, and civic engagement. Eg. A person who values service may choose a career in civil services or NGOs.

4. Building Character and Integrity - Consistent adherence to values like honesty, responsibility, and empathy helps build trustworthy and principled personalities.

5. Promoting Social Cohesion - Shared values help build common understanding within communities and nations. Eg. Democratic societies often share values of freedom, justice, and equality.

6. Influencing Decision-Making - In ethical dilemmas, values help prioritize competing interests and arrive at justifiable choices.

7. Supporting Role Performance - Values define how individuals fulfill their roles and responsibilities in families, professions, and society.

8. Driving Change and Reform - Values such as justice, human rights, and compassion drive social reforms and activism. **Eg.** abolition of untouchability or women's rights movement are rooted in changing value systems.

Scholar and Thinker Suggestions on Values

1. Mahatma Gandhi - Advocated for Nai Talim (Basic Education) to combine learning with character building.

2. Swami Vivekananda - Advocated education for "man-making and character-building." Stressed on service, strength, and moral courage as pillars of national development.

3. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar - Emphasized constitutional morality - loyalty to justice, equality, and liberty above social customs. "Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated."

4. Lawrence Kohlberg (Moral Development Theory) - Ethics evolve through stages: obedience, conformity, law and order, and finally universal ethical principles. Education systems should guide students from rule-following to principled moral reasoning.

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HONESTY, INTEGRITY AND FAIRNESS

Honesty

It is the quality of being trustworthy and free from deceit

Examples:

1. Personal Life Based – When I noticed that I was awarded extra marks by mistake, I brought that to notice of teacher
2. History based- Abraham Lincoln, who was also called as Honest Abe, while working as store clerk he mistakenly took 6 cents too much from a customer and later walked 3 miles to return that money
3. Administration based- Satyendra Dubey, an IES officer who exposed corruption involved in Golden Quadrilateral Highway Construction project
4. Current based – Mission Satyanishtha launched by Indian Railways to sensitize employees about the need to adhere to high ethical standards

How honesty helps civil servants?

Honesty in civil service goes beyond just refusing bribes—it is the bedrock of **intellectual and professional integrity**. In daily administration, a steadfast commitment to honesty helps a civil servant function effectively in these key ways:

- **Fosters Fearless and Objective Advising:** Civil servants must advise political executives daily. Honesty ensures they provide "truth to power"—presenting facts, data, and potential risks as they are, rather than tailoring advice to please superiors or align with political convenience.
- **Creates a Culture of Transparency and Accountability:** An honest officer ensures that official records, data, and financial expenditures are accurate and unmanipulated. This transparent functioning minimizes systemic leakages and makes it seamless to face internal audits or public scrutiny.
- **Streamlines Administrative Efficiency:** When a leader operates with absolute honesty, it eliminates the hidden agendas and double-dealing that slow down bureaucratic machinery. Communication becomes direct, instructions are clear, and project implementations face fewer artificial delays.
- **Builds Incorruptible Moral Authority:** Day-to-day enforcement of laws (like clearing illegal encroachments or checking tax evasion) requires immense moral leverage. An honest civil servant commands the respect necessary to enforce rules strictly without being accused of hypocrisy.
- **Inspires Subordinates and Minimizes Collusion:** Honesty at the top acts as a powerful deterrent against corruption throughout the rank and file. It creates an environment where honest subordinates feel protected, while wrongdoers find no systemic cover or collusion.
- **Provides Peace of Mind and Mental Resilience:** Bureaucratic life is highly stressful. Maintaining honesty eliminates the psychological burden of covering up misdeeds or fearing whistleblowers and anti-corruption probes, allowing the officer to focus entirely on public service with a clear mind.

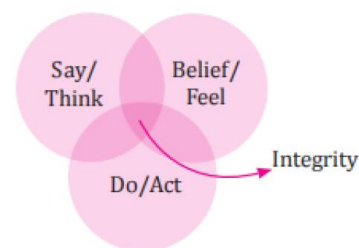
Integrity

Integrity is the alignment of Manasa (Thought), Vacha (Word), and Karmana (Action).

"Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching." - **C.V. Raman**

"Integrity is the soul of the character." - **Mahatma Gandhi**

"Integrity is making sure that the things you say and the things you do are in alignment"



Examples:

- 1. Mahatma Gandhi:** Led India's freedom struggle with truth, nonviolence, and moral integrity.
- 2. S. R. Sankaran:** An ICS officer and **chief secretary of Tripura**, known for enforcing the **Abolition of Bonded Labour Act, 1976**.
- 3. Abraham Lincoln:** He famously said, "I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live by the light that I have."
- 4. Satyendra Dubey (Professional Integrity):** Exposed corruption in the Golden Quadrilateral project, sacrificing his life for transparency.
- 5. T.N. Seshan:** Reformed India's electoral process as CEC, ensuring free and fair elections.
- 6. E. Sreedharan (Professional and Financial Integrity):** Led Delhi Metro with transparency, accountability, and timely completion.
- 7. Ashok Khemka (Professional Integrity):** Exposed corruption despite repeated transfers.
- 8. Narayanan Krishnan:** A chef-turned-social worker, he dedicated his life to feeding and caring for the homeless and destitute in Madurai.

Importance of integrity

1. Empowerment at the Personal Level

- a. Inner Peace-** Integrity eliminates the "**cognitive dissonance**" and provides the mental energy needed to focus on goals.
- b.** Integrity ensures **predictability and reliability** in behavior - Key qualities of a **natural leader**. Eg. Mahatma Gandhi's adherence to Ahimsa in personal life
- c. Integrity** acts as a foundation of genuine **self-esteem** and **confidence**. Eg. Sachin Tendulkar refusing advertisement of Tobacco and Cigarettes brands.

2. Empowerment at the Family Level

- a.** Parents with integrity empower children with a living blueprint of "**The Good Life**".
- b.** Integrity creates an environment of **emotional safety** and **trust** within the family.
- c.** "The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home." - **Confucius**

3. Empowerment at the Social Level

- a. **Builds Social Capital**- Integrity is the "**currency**" of social trust.
- b. **Inspiration to Others** ("ripple effect" of goodness). Eg. **Babasaheb Ambedkar** inspiring generations of Dalit leaders
- c. **Catalyst for social change** - Eg. **Rosa Parks's** refusal to give up her bus seat led to the Civil Rights Movement.

4. Empowerment at the Professional Level

- a. **Moral Courage**- the "**inner transparency**" empowers a person to speak truth to power. Eg. Satyendra Dubey
- b. Integrity builds a **reputation** and **trust** that acts as a multiplier for one's influence and opportunities. Eg. Metro man **E. Sreedharan**
- c. Gives **moral authority** to lead. Eg. **Captain Vikram Batra** leading from the front in Kargil War.
- d. Integrity helps in **objective decision making**. Eg. T. N. Seshan as CEC
- e. **Knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful**. Eg. developing of nuclear bomb

The Erosion of Integrity in Public Service

1. **Historical Factors**: Corruption in India has roots in **colonial rule**, where **low salaries** for Indian officials led to the normalization of corrupt practices. Eg. "**Baksheesh**" system.
2. **Shifting Values and Aspirations**: Rapid **urbanization** and **industrialization** have made **material wealth** a key determinant of **social status**.
3. **Article 311** of the Indian Constitution - **overprotection** of officials, allowing inefficiency or corruption to persist.
4. **Conflict of Interests**: Corruption is often facilitated by **collusion** between **business magnates** and **officials** for mutual gain. (Vohra committee)
5. **Political Interference**: Public servants often face undue pressure from political leaders to prioritize personal or political interests over public welfare.
6. **Societal Tolerance of Corruption (sanskritization of corruption)**: Public acceptance of minor unethical practices normalizes integrity breaches.
7. **Lack of Ethical Training**: Absence of regular ethics training for public servants weakens their moral decision-making.
8. **Pressure to Meet Targets**: Unrealistic goals may push civil servants to cut corners or compromise ethics. Eg. Manipulating data to show higher performance.
9. **Peer Influence and Organizational Culture**: Eg. Honest officials like Ashok Khemka being marginalized in a corrupt workplace.
10. **Inadequate Compensation**: Low salaries can tempt public servants to seek additional income through unethical means.
11. **Complex and Ambiguous Rules**: Overly complex regulations create loopholes that are exploited for personal gain.
12. **Fear of Retaliation**: Whistleblowers often face threats, transfers, or isolation, discouraging others from acting with integrity.

13. Lack of Exemplary Leadership: Absence of ethical leaders at the top discourages integrity at all levels.

14. Inadequate Legal Enforcement: Weak legal systems and prolonged trials fail to deter unethical practices. Eg. Corruption cases dragging on for years without resolution.

Knowledge without Integrity

- **Sophisticated Fraud-** A smart individual can bypass internal controls and audit trails. Eg. **Bernie Madoff** running ponzi scheme.
- High energy without integrity leads to "**winning at any cost**," resulting in a toxic "**cut-throat**" culture that destroys team morale.
- **Reputational damage-** Eg. manipulation of financial data to show "**paper profits**," in **Enron case**
- **Erosion of Stakeholder Trust - Eg. The NSE Co-location Case (Chitra Ramkrishna).**
- **Systemic Exploitation** by finding loopholes in laws or company policies. Eg. Nirav Modi - PNB Fraud
- **Corrosive Leadership-** "If ethics are poor at the top, that behavior is copied down through the organization." - **Robert Noyce** (Intel Co-founder)
- **Legal risks-** Eg. **Subrata Roy's (Sahara India)** massive "shadow banking" empire
- **The "Smart Criminal" Effect-** intelligent and high energy do the wrong things faster and higher in scale. Eg. Harshad Metha

Way forward

OECD Public Integrity Recommendations

1. Mandatory Pre-Employment Integrity Vetting - Incorporate objective psychometric and behavioural integrity screenings directly into the civil services recruitment phase.
2. Transition to Risk-Based Internal Auditing - Shift internal public sector audits from passive rule-checking to data-driven risk-mapping of corrupt practices.
3. Automated Asset and Interest Disclosures - Build digital systems to continuously submit, track, and algorithmically cross-verify asset statements of public servants.
4. AI-Powered Fraud Prevention in Procurement - Deploy Machine Learning algorithms to analyze public bidding data and instantly flag artificial price-inflation or collusion.
5. Interactive Ethical Dilemma Simulation Training for addressing real-world administrative gray areas.
6. Systematic De-politicization of Internal Investigations - Insulate internal disciplinary bodies from executive control to guarantee fair, timely corruption inquiries and trials.

2nd ARC Recommendations (Ethics in Governance)

1. Implementation of a Statutory Code of Ethics - Supplant negative, traditional "Conduct Rules" with a statutory, values-driven Code of Ethics emphasizing public service values.
2. Institutionalizing the "Cooling-Off" Period for retired officials taking private corporate jobs.
3. Citizen Charters - statutory status to Citizen's Charters with automatic financial compensation if public service deadlines are missed.
4. Independent Protection for Whistleblowers from systemic workplace harassment or physical threats.

5. Independent Civil Services Boards to manage bureaucratic transfers
6. Enact laws holding public officials personally and financially liable for intentional damage or neglect of state property.

Integrity Pact

- Integrity Pact is a vigilance tool that involves an agreement between prospective vendors/bidders and the buyer. Both parties commit to not engaging in corrupt practices or exerting undue influence in any part of the contract process.
- The implementation of the Integrity Pact is overseen by Independent External Monitors (IEMs), ensuring that the agreement is upheld and transparency is maintained.

Difference between Honesty and Integrity

Aspect	Honesty	Integrity
Definition	Being truthful, sincere, and free from deceit.	Adherence to strong moral and ethical principles consistently.
Moral Depth	Surface-level truthfulness .	Deep-rooted moral character and consistency .
Scope	More about telling the truth and not lying or cheating.	Broader concept involving doing the right thing , even under pressure.
Dependency	Can exist in isolation (Eg. being honest in one instance).	Encompasses honesty but also includes courage, accountability, and ethics .
Example	Admitting a mistake truthfully when asked.	Taking responsibility for the mistake even if no one noticed .
Public Service Relevance	Needed in reporting facts and data accurately.	Needed for ethical governance, decision-making, and resisting corruption .

Fairness

It is the quality of making judgments that are free from discrimination.

Examples:

1. Personal life based - I treat transgenders with respect and without any discrimination.
2. History based - PM Shastri, before asking to nation to have a one day fast to save food due to hunger crisis, he asked his family to adopt the fasting for a day. Which shows his fairness in administration.
3. Administration based - Justice Khanna who was judge of SC during emergency has passed his judgement in Keshavanand Bharti case, his judgment has controlled parliament from

making changes to basic structure of constitution for which he was praised for his fairness and courage.

4. Current based – Australia Cricket Board cancelled series with Afghanistan on ban on women cricket team by Taliban to show non-discrimination towards gender.

How fairness helps civil servants?

For a civil servant, **fairness** is not just an abstract moral virtue; it is an essential operational tool. In their day-to-day administration, practicing fairness helps them navigate complex, high-pressure environments in the following ways:

- **Ensures Objective Decision-Making:** Day-to-day administration involves allocating scarce resources (like funds, subsidies, or tenders). Fairness ensures decisions are based strictly on merit, established criteria, and legal rules rather than personal biases, nepotism, or arbitrary whims.
- **Builds Public Trust and Credibility:** When citizens see a civil servant acting impartially, it enhances the legitimacy of the administration. This trust becomes crucial during crises, law-and-order situations, or when implementing tough policies, as the public is more likely to cooperate with an official perceived as fair.
- **Defuses Conflicts and Resolves Grievances:** Civil servants constantly mediate disputes—whether land conflicts, community grievances, or labor issues. A reputation for fairness ensures that all feuding parties feel heard, making the final resolution acceptable and sustainable.
- **Boosts Internal Morale and Team Efficiency:** Within the department, a fair leader handles postings, transfers, promotions, and work allocation transparently. This eliminates workplace politics, reduces resentment, and motivates subordinates to perform at their best.
- **Guarantees Inclusive Governance:** Fairness prevents the marginalization of vulnerable sections (like minorities, women, or the economically weak). It ensures that the benefits of welfare schemes reach the "last mile" without discrimination or elite capture.
- **Acts as a Shield Against Pressure:** Civil servants routinely face political or external pressure to grant undue favors. Adhering strictly to the principle of fairness gives an official a firm legal and ethical ground to refuse arbitrary demands, protecting their professional integrity.

COMPASSION AND EMPATHY IN GOVERNANCE

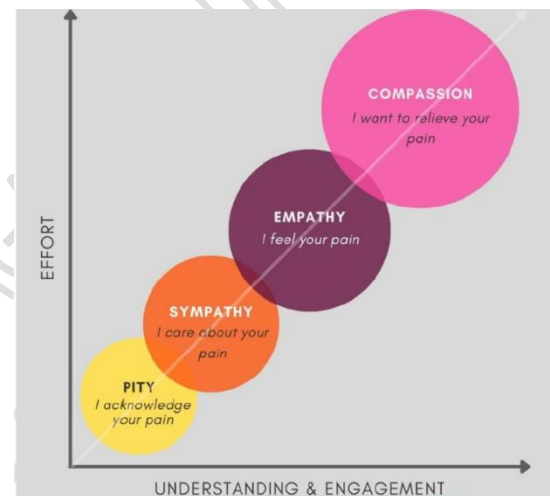
EMPATHY

It is the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation.

It includes both **cognitive** and **emotional** aspects, providing a **deeper understanding** of the problem. **Empathy** is more **sustainable** than sympathy and a **stronger indicator of behavior**.
Eg. Feeling deeply moved by a road accident, **crying** out of shared **pain** and urging others to **help** the victim.

Examples:

1. Personal Life Based – Stopping by to visit a friend in hospital
2. History based- To stand with the people and to support the people; Mahatma Gandhiji visited the violence affected areas after partition
3. Administration based- When the disabled person was unable sit on chair, IAS Kaustubh Diwegaonkar himself sat on floor along with him
4. Current based – Donations by Bollywood actors for flood hit Assam and Bihar



Compassion

Compassion involves allowing ourselves to be moved by suffering of others with an active desire to alleviate them.

Compassion is the combination of **empathy and action**. Unlike empathy, compassion often leads to an active desire to alleviate suffering, making it a deeper form of "**co-suffering**."

Examples:

1. **Nelson Mandela** said, "A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination." He dedicated his life to fighting apartheid and uplifting the people of South Africa.
2. **S. R. Sankaran (1934-2010)**, known as the "People's IAS officer," showed deep compassion for socially disadvantaged groups. He played a key role in enforcing the Abolition of Bonded Labour Act, 1976 and mentored Safai Karamcharis, advocating for pro-poor policies throughout his career.
3. **IAS Jitendra Kumar Soni**, upon seeing underprivileged kids attending school barefoot in winter, initiated the Charan Paduka Abhiyan, distributing shoes to them.
4. **Baba Amte's** work towards leprosy patients

5. **Kailash Satyarthi's** 'Save The Children' campaign.
6. **Sindhutai sapkal** took care of more than 8000 orphans.

Significance of Compassion and empathy for Weaker Sections

1. **Understanding the needs of marginalized populations:** Compassion enables policymakers to grasp the unique challenges of disadvantaged communities, promoting tailored solutions.
2. **Encourages responsiveness to citizens in distress:** Compassion-driven governance leads to swift and effective support for those facing hardships.
3. **Enables perspective-shifting:** Compassion helps leaders view issues from the perspective of the marginalized, fostering inclusive policies.
4. **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 38):** Compassion aligns with DPSP's mandate to establish a welfare state that minimizes inequalities, promoting social and economic justice.
5. **John Rawls' Theory of Justice:** Compassion mirrors Rawls' veil of ignorance concept, advocating for policies that uplift the least advantaged in society.
6. **Amartya Sen's Capability Approach:** Compassion encourages enhancing individuals' capabilities for a dignified life, focusing on equality of opportunity rather than mere economic metrics.
7. **Gandhiji's Talisman:** Compassion fulfills Gandhi's vision to consider the needs of the poorest in every decision, reinforcing moral responsibility toward the vulnerable.
8. **Addressing Rampant Poverty and Inequality:** Compassionate governance tackles systemic poverty and inequality, ensuring resources and opportunities reach all sections equitably.
9. **Navigating Weak and Complex Governance:** Compassionate leaders foster transparency and accountability, making governance accessible and empowering weaker sections in navigating complex administrative systems.