



UPSC

Mains

Union Public Service Commission

Volume - 5

Ethics



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1

CHAPTER

Ethics and Human Interference

Previous Year Questions

Q.No.	Question	Year
1	In the present digital age, social media has revolutionised our way of communication and interaction. However, it has raised several ethical issues and challenges. Describe the key ethical dilemmas in this regard.	2025
2	“Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment but a product of civil education and adherence to the rule of law.” Examine the significance of constitutional morality for public servants, highlighting its role in promoting good governance and ensuring accountability in public administration.	2025
3	“Ethics encompasses several key dimensions that are crucial in guiding individuals and organizations towards morally responsible behaviour.” Explain the key dimensions of ethics that influence human actions. Discuss how these dimensions shape ethical decision-making in the professional context.	2024
4	“The concept of Just and Unjust is contextual. What was just a year back may turn out to be unjust in today’s context.” Examine the statement with suitable examples.	2024
5	In Indian culture and value system, equal opportunity has been provided irrespective of gender identity. Examine the gender-specific challenges faced by female public servants and suggest suitable measures to increase their efficiency and maintain high standards of probity.	2024
6	Differentiate ‘moral intuition’ from ‘moral reasoning’ with suitable examples.	2023
7	It is believed that adherence to ethics in human actions would ensure the smooth functioning of an organization/system. What does ethics seek to promote in human life? How do ethical values assist in resolving conflicts in day-to-day functioning?	2022
8	The current internet expansion has instilled a different set of cultural values which are in conflict with traditional values. Discuss.	2020
9	What is meant by constitutional morality? How does one uphold constitutional morality?	2019
10	With regard to the morality of actions, one view holds that means are paramount while another believes that ends justify the means. Which view is more appropriate? Justify your answer.	2018
11	Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor democratic government, nor even the market economy will function properly. Explain with contemporary illustrations.	2017
12	The crisis of ethical values in modern times is traced to a narrow perception of the good life. Discuss.	2017
13	Young people with ethical conduct are not willing to come forward to join active politics. Suggest steps to motivate them.	2017

14	Law and ethics are considered to be two tools for controlling human conduct. (a) Discuss how they achieve this objective. (b) With examples, show how they differ in their approaches.	2016
15	Explain how ethics contributes to social and human well-being.	2016
16	What is meant by environmental ethics? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics.	2015
17	Social values are more important than economic values. Discuss the statement with examples in the context of inclusive growth of a nation.	2015
18	The good of an individual is contained in the good of all. Explain the statement and discuss how this principle can be implemented in public life.	2013
19	Some people feel that values keep changing with time and situation, while others believe in universal and eternal human values. Give your perception with due justification.	2013
20	What do you understand by 'values' and 'ethics'? Why is it important to be ethical along with being professionally competent?	2013
21	It is often said that politics and ethics do not go together. What is your opinion? Justify your answer with illustrations.	2013

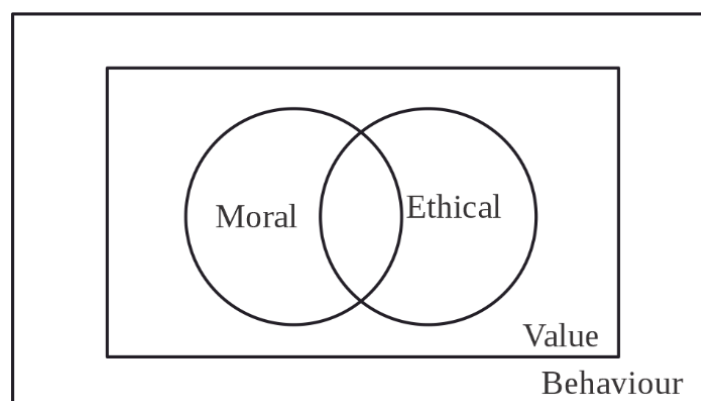
- The term Ethics originates from the Greek word 'ethos' and the Latin word 'mores', both meaning custom, ways of behaviour, or human character.
- According to **Mackenzie**, ethics is "the study of what is right or good in human conduct" or "the science of the ideal involved in human life".

"Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is the right thing to do" - **Potter Stewart**

"Ethics is the study of the moral law and our obligations to obey it" - **Aristotle**

- Ethics, therefore, is concerned with understanding and guiding human behaviour in accordance with principles of rightness, goodness, and the ideals that shape a meaningful life.

A. Consequences & Importance of Ethics



- ✓ Ethics plays a vital role in shaping both individual character and collective well-being.
- ✓ It is not merely a set of rules, but a compass that guides human behaviour towards what is right, fair, and beneficial for all. The consequences and importance includes:

1. At the Level of Individuals

- ✓ **Survival & Choice:** Ethical erosion under deprivation may lead to extremism, highlighting the need for ethical governance.
- ✓ **Decision-making:** Ethics ensures moral means over expediency, as seen in Gandhi's withdrawal after Chauri Chaura.
- ✓ **Moral Courage:** Ethics builds confidence, enabling whistleblowers to act against wrongdoing.
- ✓ **Social Capital:** Ethical consistency generates trust and acceptability, as with Gandhi during the freedom struggle.
- ✓ **Credibility:** Integrity enhances personal credibility, as exemplified by E. Sreedharan's leadership in metro projects.

2. At the Level of Society

- ✓ **Justice & Inclusiveness:** Ethics promotes fairness, rule of law, and equal opportunity.
- ✓ **Sustainability & Progress:** Ethical responsibility ensures resource conservation and long-term development.
- ✓ **Good Governance:** Transparency and accountability improve state legitimacy.
- ✓ **Harmony & Peace:** Ethical values foster tolerance and social cohesion.

Ethical Foundations of Inclusive Growth

Inclusive growth requires a balanced integration of **social values** such as justice, equality, and liberty with **economic values** like efficiency, productivity, and wealth creation. Sustainable national progress depends not on prioritizing one over the other, but on harmonizing both.

➤ **Role of Social Values:**

- ✓ Social values provide the ethical and constitutional foundation of inclusive development. Ideas such as **Rawls' justice as fairness** and provisions like **Article 14 of the Indian Constitution** ensure equality and dignity for all.
- ✓ Schemes like **MGNREGA** promote equity by guaranteeing livelihoods, while institutions such as **SEWA** and **NCSC** empower marginalized groups and strengthen social cohesion.

➤ **Role of Economic Values:**

- ✓ Economic values create the material base necessary for welfare and redistribution. As emphasized in **Kautilya's Arthashastra**, economic strength is essential for state stability.
- ✓ India's **1991 economic reforms** and the growth of the **IT sector** illustrate how wealth creation and employment generation can reduce poverty and expand opportunities.

➤ **Balancing Both:**

- ✓ Economic growth alone is insufficient without social inclusion. **Amartya Sen's capability approach** highlights that development must enhance human freedoms alongside income growth. Therefore, policies should combine economic efficiency with social justice to ensure broad-based benefits.

Inclusive growth is achieved when economic expansion operates within a strong framework of social values. This balance ensures equity, sustainability, and long-term national development.

Role of Ethics in Sustaining Social Institutions

Ethics provides the normative foundation that sustains social institutions such as law and democracy. In the absence of shared moral values, institutions lose legitimacy and public trust. Therefore, a strong ethical base is essential for social stability and effective governance.

Moral Foundations of Law

Although laws are formally codified, their legitimacy is derived from moral principles. **Kant's categorical imperative** emphasizes universality and fairness as the basis of just laws.

1. Equality before the Law

- ✓ Laws must be applied impartially, irrespective of social status.
- ✓ *Example:* Article 17 of the Indian Constitution abolishing untouchability reflects the ethical ideal of equality.

2. Protection of Fundamental Rights

- ✓ Legal safeguards arise from respect for human dignity and autonomy.
- ✓ *Example:* The *Puttaswamy* judgment recognized the right to privacy as a fundamental right.

3. Access to Justice

- ✓ Providing legal remedies to all is a moral obligation of the State.
- ✓ *Example:* NALSA's free legal aid services promote ethical justice delivery for marginalized groups.

Ethical Underpinnings of Democratic Governance

Democracy relies on ethical conduct by leaders and citizens. **Aristotle's virtue ethics** highlights character and moral responsibility in public life.

1. Accountability and Transparency

- ✓ Ethical governance requires openness and answerability.
- ✓ *Example:* The Right to Information Act, 2005 strengthens transparency and public trust.

2. Citizen Participation

- ✓ Ethical civic engagement enhances democratic functioning.
- ✓ *Example:* "Jaago Re" voter awareness campaigns encouraged informed electoral participation.

3. Respect for Dissent

- ✓ Democracies must accommodate diverse opinions within ethical limits.
- ✓ *Example:* The *Kedarnath Singh* judgment balanced freedom of speech with national integrity.

3. At the Level of Organizations

- ✓ **Efficiency & Effectiveness:** Ethics ensures optimal use of resources and achievement of outcomes.
- ✓ **Work Culture:** Transparency and participation improve morale and productivity.
- ✓ **Profitability & Credibility:** Ethical conduct enhances brand value and trust, as seen in institutions like TATA and UPSC.
- ✓ **Protecting Stakeholder Interests:** Ethical behavior protects the interests of all stakeholders.

4. Overall Importance of Ethics

- ✓ **Promotes Individual and Social Good:** Aligns personal welfare with collective interest (e.g., water-efficient farming).
- ✓ **Leads to the Highest Good:** Ethical living integrates personal fulfilment with societal welfare.
- ✓ **Provides a Moral Compass:** Guides choices in complex situations.
- ✓ **Resolves Moral Dilemmas:** Enables reasoned and balanced judgment.
- ✓ **Reduces Bias and Prejudice:** Encourages fairness and empathy.
- ✓ **Builds Character:** Develops integrity, courage, and self-control (e.g., honest tax officer).
- ✓ **Inspires Social Change:** Ethics drives transformative movements, as seen in Gandhi's satyagraha.

Ethics and Common Good: Individual vs Collective Welfare

The relationship between individual welfare and collective good forms the ethical basis of governance. A just and harmonious society emerges when personal aspirations are aligned with societal needs.

Intertwined Nature of Individual and Collective Good

Individual development and social progress are mutually reinforcing. This idea is reflected in **Gandhi's Sarvodaya**, **Kant's categorical imperative**, and the **Preamble of the Indian Constitution**, which emphasizes justice for all.

1. Shared Destiny

- ✓ Individual advancement is closely linked with overall societal progress.
- ✓ *Example:* Kerala's high literacy rates contribute to better health outcomes, strengthening collective well-being.

2. Collective Action

- ✓ Social problems require cooperative and participatory solutions.
- ✓ *Example:* Swachh Bharat Abhiyan succeeded through mass public participation in sanitation efforts.

3. Social Responsibility

- ✓ Individuals have a moral duty to contribute to the common good.
- ✓ *Example:* Ela Bhatt's SEWA empowered women economically, creating broader social benefits.

Implementation in Public Life

Applying this principle requires an ethical approach inspired by **utilitarianism** and guided by the **Directive Principles of State Policy**, which promote social welfare.

1. Inclusive Policies

- ✓ Governance should address the needs of all sections, especially the vulnerable.
- ✓ *Example:* MGNREGA provides guaranteed employment, reducing rural poverty.

2. Ethical Leadership

- ✓ Public leaders must prioritize collective interest over personal gain.
- ✓ *Example:* T. N. Seshan's electoral reforms strengthened transparency and fairness.

3. Community Engagement

- ✓ Citizen participation ensures shared ownership of development goals.
- ✓ *Example:* Platforms like Give India mobilize collective resources for social causes.

Prioritizing collective good creates conditions for individual potential to flourish. Ethical leadership, inclusive policies, and active citizenship uphold the Indian ideal of "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**", ensuring balanced and sustainable social development.

Crisis of Ethical Values

The rise in scams, scandals, and social discord reflects a deeper ethical crisis rooted in a narrow, materialistic understanding of the "good life."

When success is measured only by wealth, status, and self-interest, ethical conduct weakens and social well-being declines.

Materialistic Pursuits and Ethical Decline

Modern society often equates happiness with material accumulation, neglecting intrinsic values. **Aristotle's virtue ethics** emphasizes that true happiness lies in the cultivation of virtues, not wealth.

1. Consumerism

- ✓ Excessive focus on consumption encourages unethical and unsustainable practices.
- ✓ *Example:* Fast fashion industries exploiting cheap labour in developing countries.

2. Status Seeking

- ✓ Intense competition for prestige promotes unethical shortcuts.
- ✓ *Example:* The Vyapam scam (2013), involving bribery and fraud in professional admissions.

3. Hedonism

- ✓ Overemphasis on pleasure and self-gratification leads to moral compromises.
- ✓ *Example:* The US opioid crisis, driven by profit-oriented pharmaceutical practices.

Neglect of Intrinsic Values

A material-centric outlook sidelines empathy, justice, and responsibility. **Kant's categorical imperative** stresses adherence to moral principles irrespective of personal gain.

1. Erosion of Empathy

- ✓ Materialism can reduce sensitivity to others' suffering.
- ✓ *Example:* Instances of bystander apathy during the 2002 Gujarat riots.

2. Weakening of Social Bonds

- ✓ Self-interest over collective welfare undermines trust and cohesion.
- ✓ *Example:* Tax evasion by affluent individuals and corporations, reducing public resources.

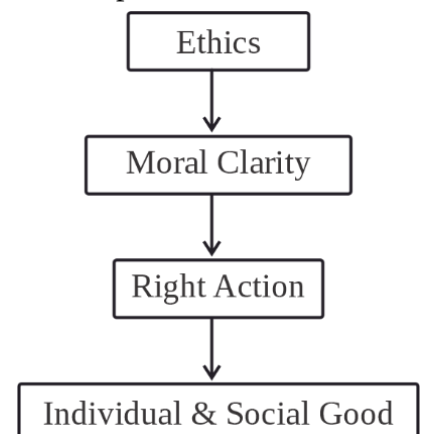
3. Environmental Degradation

- ✓ Growth-at-any-cost approaches ignore ethical responsibility towards nature.
- ✓ *Example:* The Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984), linked to cost-cutting and safety neglect.

B. Evaluation of Ethical Conduct

Ethical evaluation ensures protection of rights and reduction of harm. It can be assessed on these grounds:

- ✓ Consistency – Apply principles uniformly in all cases.
 - **Example-** If plagiarism is wrong for students, it is equally wrong for politicians copying speeches.
- ✓ Universality – An action is moral if it can be practiced by all without harm to the system.
 - **Example-** If everyone ignored traffic signals, road safety would collapse.
- ✓ Consequences – Actions with greater net benefit are morally preferable.
 - **Example-** Vaccination campaigns may cause mild side effects but save millions of lives.
- ✓ Intentions – Ethical worth depends on genuine motives.
 - **Example-** Helping an elderly neighbour out of care vs. doing so to gain social media followers.
- ✓ Respect for Autonomy & Dignity – Individuals must be treated as ends, not means.
 - **Example-** Allowing patients to refuse life-support treatment respects their autonomy.



C. Scope of Ethics

Ethics focuses on **free and voluntary human actions** - those performed knowingly, deliberately, and with a specific aim.

Human Actions	Actions of Humans
It is conscious and intentional acts aimed at achieving an objective. Example: Filing a false tax return, helping a stranger in distress.	It is performed without deliberate intent or moral consideration. Example: Sneezing during a meeting, tripping while walking.

✓ Areas of Concern

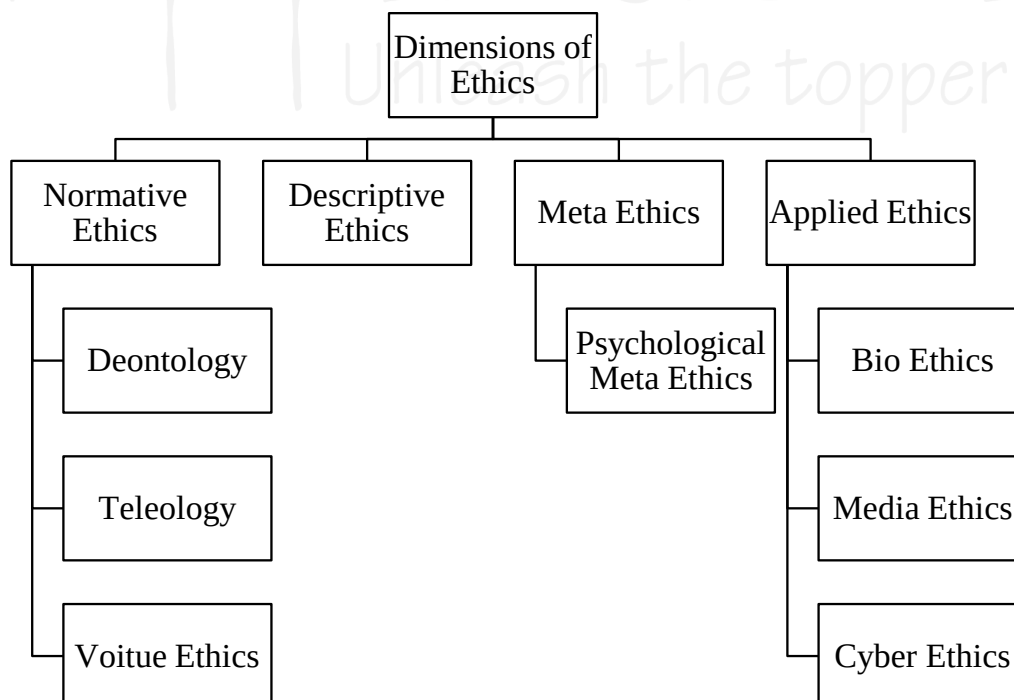
- Ethics applies to multiple spheres of life, including political, sociological, cultural, psychological, economic, environmental, and religious matters - always in pursuit of the **highest moral good**.
- **Examples-**
 - ☞ Political: Fair distribution of government resources.
 - ☞ Sociological: Eliminating caste-based discrimination.
 - ☞ Economic: Ensuring living wages for workers.
 - ☞ Environmental: Regulating industrial pollution.
 - ☞ Religious: Promoting interfaith harmony.

✓ Evolving Scope

With modern developments, new ethical issues have emerged, such as:

- Artificial Intelligence: Bias in facial recognition technology.
- Social Media: Spread of deepfake misinformation.
- OTT Platforms: Depiction of violence influencing minors.
- Gene Editing: Designer babies and genetic inequality.
- Data Privacy: Unauthorized tracking through mobile apps.

D. Dimension of Ethics



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1. **Normative ethics** is the systematic study of moral standards that prescribe how individuals ought to act, integrating principles of duty, consequences, and virtues to guide human conduct towards the ideal of a just, harmonious, and morally excellent life. It can be divided into:
- I. UTILITARIANISM-** An outcome-focused moral theory that considers an action ethical if it produces the greatest benefit for the greatest number.
- The core idea is to maximise overall well-being, even if some individuals face loss.
 - ☞ **Example-** Approving a renewable energy project that powers millions of homes, even if it requires relocating a small village.
 - The Limitations of this principle include:
 - ☞ It becomes difficult to measure and compare happiness or well-being.
 - ☞ It may overlook justice or individual rights when pursuing majority benefit.
- II. DEONTOLOGY-** A duty-based ethical theory that holds certain actions as inherently right or wrong, regardless of their outcomes.
- The core idea is to follow moral duties and rules consistently, without calculating consequences.
 - ☞ **Example-** A judge delivering a verdict strictly according to the law, even if public sympathy favours the accused.
 - **The** Limitations of this principle include:
 - ☞ The rigid adherence to rules can produce undesirable outcomes.
 - ☞ It ignores emotional and contextual factors in decision-making.
- III. VIRTUE ETHICS-** It is a character-centered moral approach, rooted in Aristotle, that stresses cultivating traits like justice, compassion, honesty, wisdom, and courage for human flourishing.
- Unlike rule-based systems, it doesn't give fixed instructions but encourages becoming a person who naturally chooses the right. Morality is judged not only by actions but also by character and intention.
 - ☞ **Example-** During a flood rescue operation, volunteers risking their lives to save stranded families embody courage and altruism.
 - The Limitations of this principles are:
 - ☞ **Lack of Clear Rules** – Provides general guidance on being virtuous but no fixed instructions for specific dilemmas.
 - ☞ **Cultural Relativity** – What is considered a virtue in one culture may not be seen the same way in another.
 - ☞ **Judgment Subjectivity** – Assessing whether an action is virtuous can depend on personal opinion or context.
 - ☞ **Conflict of Virtues** – Situations may demand choosing between virtues (e.g., honesty vs. compassion).
 - ☞ **Slow Development** – Building virtues requires time, experience, and consistent practice.

Ethical Theories in Conflict: Means vs Ends

The debate over whether **means** or **ends** hold greater moral significance is a central ethical question. It asks whether noble objectives can justify questionable actions, or whether ethical conduct must be upheld regardless of outcomes.

Means-Based Morality

This approach emphasizes the ethical nature of actions themselves. **Deontological ethics**, articulated by **Immanuel Kant**, holds that actions are inherently right or wrong, independent of consequences. It aligns with the Indian concept of **Dharma**, which stresses duty and righteous conduct.

1. Intrinsic Value of Actions

- ✓ Actions possess moral worth in themselves.
- ✓ *Example:* Gandhi's **Satyagraha** upheld truth and non-violence despite personal suffering.

2. Predictability and Consistency

- ✓ Ethical governance becomes stable when rules and procedures are followed uniformly.
- ✓ *Example:* The Indian judiciary's adherence to due process ensures fairness and public trust.

3. Respect for Individuals

- ✓ Means-based ethics safeguard human dignity, rights, and autonomy.
- ✓ *Example:* Informed consent in medical procedures, as mandated by the Medical Council of India.

Ends-Based Morality

This approach evaluates morality based on outcomes achieved. **Consequentialism**, particularly **utilitarianism** proposed by **John Stuart Mill**, seeks the greatest good for the greatest number. It resonates with **Kautilya's Arthashastra**, which emphasizes state welfare.

1. Focus on Outcomes

- ✓ Moral value lies in achieving beneficial results.
- ✓ *Example:* Demonetization (2016) was justified as a measure to curb black money.

2. Flexibility and Adaptability

- ✓ Allows pragmatic responses to complex and evolving situations.
- ✓ *Example:* Extraordinary measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect public health.

3. Risk of Ethical Abuse

- ✓ Justifying ends without limits can violate rights and moral norms.
- ✓ *Example:* Use of torture for national security violates ethical principles and human rights law.

Neither means nor ends alone provide a complete moral guide. Ends offer direction, but means define the ethical character of action. A balanced approach that upholds ethical means while assessing consequences is essential for just, humane, and sustainable governance.

2. Descriptive Ethics - Studies people's actual moral beliefs and practices without judging them as right or wrong. It observes what people do and why and focuses on:

- ✓ Objective observation – recording moral behaviour without evaluation.
- ✓ Research-based – using sociology, anthropology, psychology, and history.
- ✓ Cultural understanding – recognising moral variation across societies and time.

3. Meta Ethics-It is the branch of ethics that studies the **meaning, nature, and foundation of moral values**, focusing on what moral terms signify and whether moral statements can be true or false.

- ✓ **Example-**When someone says "Stealing is wrong", meta-ethics does not ask whether stealing should be punished (normative ethics) but instead asks: Does "wrong" mean an objective truth, a cultural norm, or just personal disapproval?

4. Applied Ethics - is the branch of ethics that uses moral principles and theories to address real-world problems and practical issues.

- ✓ It takes concepts from normative ethics (like utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics) and applies them to specific situations in personal, professional, and public life. The major areas include:

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- I. Bioethics/Medical Ethics-** It is the study of ethical issues in biology, medicine, and life sciences, ensuring scientific progress respects human dignity and rights. The important areas includes:
- ✓ **Boundaries of Life** – Deciding ethical limits on when life begins or ends.
 - **Example-** Abortion, euthanasia, surrogacy.
 - ✓ **Fair Use of Resources** – Equitable allocation of scarce medical resources.
 - **Examples-** Organ donation, healthcare rationing.
 - ✓ **Patient Autonomy** – Respecting a person’s right to choose or refuse treatment.
 - **Examples-** Religious refusal of blood transfusion.
 - ✓ **Emerging Technologies** – Regulating new scientific capabilities.
 - **Examples-** Cloning, genetic engineering, life extension, gene therapy.
- II. Business Ethics-** It refers to the application of moral principles in business practices to ensure fairness, honesty, accountability, and respect for all stakeholders. It aims to balance profit-making with social responsibility. The important areas includes:
- ✓ **Corporate Governance** – Upholding transparency and accountability in management.
 - **Example-** Independent audits to prevent financial misreporting.
 - ✓ **Consumer Protection & Fair Trade** – Providing safe products, truthful advertising, and fair pricing.
 - **Example-** Clearly disclosing all ingredients on food labels.
 - ✓ **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** – Voluntary contributions to social welfare.
 - **Example-** Funding healthcare camps in rural areas.
 - ✓ **Transparency with Stakeholders** – Openly sharing relevant information with employees, investors, and the public.
 - **Example-** Informing shareholders about potential business risks.
- III. Environmental Ethics**
- ✓ It is a branch of applied ethics that studies the moral relationship between human beings and the natural environment.
 - ✓ It asks how humans should interact with nature and what duties we owe to animals, plants, ecosystems, and future generations. The important areas includes:
- ```

graph TD
 A((Environmental Ethics)) --> B[Sustainable Development]
 A --> C[Conservation]
 A --> D[Holistic]
 A --> E[Co-Existence]

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- ✓ **Sustainable Development** – Meeting present needs without compromising future generations.
    - **Example-** Promoting renewable energy instead of overusing fossil fuels.
  - ✓ **Conservation of Biodiversity** – Protecting species, habitats, and ecosystems.
    - **Example-** Creating wildlife corridors to reduce human–animal conflict.
  - ✓ **Pollution Control** – Preventing air, water, and soil pollution to safeguard health and ecosystems.
    - **Example-** Strict regulation of industrial waste disposal.
  - ✓ **Climate Change Ethics** – Addressing responsibilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
    - **Example-** Developed nations funding clean energy projects in developing countries.
  - ✓ **Animal Rights & Welfare** – Recognising ethical duties toward non-human life.
    - **Example-** Banning cosmetic testing on animals.
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## Ethical Dilemmas in Environmental Clearance

- **Security vs. sustainability:** Strategic projects (e.g., Char Dham road widening) pit military access against fragile Himalayan ecosystems.
- **Intergenerational justice:** Kantian ethics questions whether short-term security gains justify long-term ecological loss to future generations.
- **Consequentialist vs. deontological ethics:** Utilitarian security benefits conflict with duty-based obligations to protect nature.
- **Democratic deficits:** Limited public consultation in sensitive projects undermines discourse ethics and inclusive decision-making.
- **Indigenous rights:** Border infrastructure may displace tribal communities, conflicting with constitutional and international protections.
- **Precautionary principle:** Environmental uncertainty clashes with urgent national security imperatives.

## Balancing Development and Environment

- **Strategic environmental assessments:** Integrate security and ecological impacts in planning (e.g., Norway's integrated model).
- **Adaptive management:** Use reversible or modifiable designs enabling post-security ecological restoration (e.g., Korea's DMZ).
- **Green technologies:** Deploy low-impact solutions such as solar-powered surveillance.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Institutionalize transparent platforms involving defence, environmental experts, and local communities. For example, Chipko movement in India, Great Wall in Africa.
- **Compensation and restoration:** Implement biodiversity offsets and community benefit-sharing mechanisms. For example, Patagonia donates a percentage of profits to environmental causes and focuses on sustainable production.
- **Regional cooperation:** Promote transboundary conservation to jointly advance ecological protection and security.
- **Sustainable Practices** by investing in clean technologies and adopting circular economy practices. For example, IKEA has committed to using only renewable and recycled materials by 2030.
- **Technology and Resource Sharing:** The Green Climate Fund assists developing countries in climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

## IV. Stewardship Ethics

- ✓ Stewardship ethics is the moral responsibility of individuals, leaders, or institutions to act as trustees or caretakers of resources (natural, social, financial, or organizational) for the benefit of present and future generations.
- ✓ It emphasizes responsible management, sustainability, accountability, and long-term welfare rather than short-term gains. The important principles include:
  - **Trusteeship** – Resources belong to society and future generations; one is only a custodian.
  - **Accountability** – Responsible reporting and transparency in use of entrusted powers.
  - **Sustainability** – Protecting ecological and human systems for long-term continuity.
  - **Intergenerational Equity** – Duty towards future generations.
  - **Community Orientation** – Decision-making for collective good, not just self-interest.
- ✓ Classical Roots of Stewardship Ethics
  - **Gandhiji's Trusteeship Theory** – Wealthy industrialists should act as trustees of societal wealth.
  - **Biblical Stewardship** – Humans as caretakers of God's creation.
  - **Public Administration** – Civil servants as “stewards of public resources.”

“Stewardship ethics upholds our duty to manage resources responsibly, balancing present needs with the rights of future generations.”

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✓ **Examples of Stewardship Ethics**

▪ **Environment & Climate Action**

☞ **Example-** New Zealand granting legal personhood to the Whanganui River; the state acts as steward to protect river rights.

▪ **Corporate Stewardship**

☞ **Example-** Infosys' ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) initiatives where profits are reinvested in education (Infosys Foundation schools, libraries).

☞ **Example-** Tata Group refusing to enter tobacco/alcohol businesses despite profitability, demonstrating ethical stewardship of corporate influence.

▪ **Public Service**

☞ **Example-** An IAS officer in Kerala introducing "Haritha Keralam" solid waste management program, ensuring sustainable urban development

▪ **Science & Technology**

☞ **Example-** ICMR developing vaccines and ensuring equitable access during COVID-19, acting as steward of public health.

▪ **Civil Society & Individuals**

☞ **Example-** A farmer in Andhra Pradesh preserving indigenous paddy varieties and distributing seeds free of cost, acting as steward of agrobiodiversity.

V. **INTERNATIONAL ETHICS-** It focuses on the moral responsibilities and principles that guide interactions among nations, international organisations, and global stakeholders. It relies on the principles of

✓ **Peace & Conflict Resolution** – Promoting diplomacy, non-violence, and disarmament.

▪ **Example-** UN-led peace negotiations in war-torn regions.

✓ **Environmental Responsibility** – Coordinated global action to address climate change.

▪ **Example-** Paris Climate Agreement commitments.

✓ **Humanitarian Assistance** – Aid during disasters, wars, or health crises.

▪ **Example-** International medical aid during the Ebola outbreak.

✓ **Ethics in Global Trade** – Ensuring fair and transparent international commerce.

▪ **Example-** WTO rules promoting fair trade without exploitation.

✓ International ethics guides nations towards peace, fairness, and sustainability, ensuring global cooperation rises above narrow interests to build a just and responsible world order.

VI. **MEDIA ETHICS:** These are the set of professional principles, standards, and moral guidelines that regulate how information is collected, produced, and disseminated by journalists, broadcasters, and digital media, ensuring accuracy, fairness, accountability, and respect for individual rights while serving the public interest.

✓ **Essence & Examples**

▪ **Truth & Accuracy** – Reporting facts without distortion.

☞ **Example-** Verifying sources before publishing breaking news.

▪ **Fairness & Impartiality** – Avoiding bias and giving balanced coverage.

☞ **Example-** Presenting all sides of a political debate equally.

▪ **Respect for Privacy** – Avoiding unnecessary intrusion into personal lives.

☞ **Example-** Not publishing private details of a victim without consent.

▪ **Avoidance of Harm** – Considering the potential negative impact of reporting.

☞ **Example-** Withholding sensitive military information that could endanger lives.

▪ **Accountability** – Admitting and correcting errors publicly

☞ **Example-** Publishing a correction notice after a factual mistake.

▪ **Social Responsibility** – Using media to promote public welfare and positive values.

☞ **Example-** Running awareness campaigns on health or environmental issues.

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## ✓ **Issues with Media / Social Media Ethics**

- **Sensationalism** – Exaggerating or dramatizing news to attract viewership, often at the cost of truth.
    - ☞ **Example-** Overhyping minor crimes as national crises.
  - **Fake News & Misinformation** – Publishing unverified or false information, leading to public confusion.
    - ☞ **Example-** Sharing unconfirmed social media posts as factual news.
  - **Invasion of Privacy** – Intruding into personal lives without consent.
    - ☞ **Example-** Revealing details about victims of crimes without their permission.
  - **Paid News & Bias** – Accepting money or favours to promote certain individuals, parties, or products.
    - ☞ **Example-** Political coverage skewed in favour of the highest bidder.
  - **Freedom of Expression vs Hate Speech:** Communal misinformation circulated on WhatsApp contributed to violence during the Muzaffarnagar riots (2013).
  - **Equality vs Digital Divide:** As per NFHS-5, only about 43 percent of rural households in India have internet access, restricting meaningful participation.
  - **Trial by Media** – Prejudging individuals before court verdicts, potentially affecting justice.
    - ☞ **Example-** Declaring a suspect guilty during ongoing investigations.
  - **Conflict of Interest** – Media owners or journalists having political or business interests that influence reporting.
    - ☞ **Example-** Avoiding negative stories about companies they have partnerships with.
  - **Lack of Accountability** – Failure to correct errors or retract misleading stories.
    - ☞ **Example-** Not issuing apologies after publishing false accusations.
- ✓ Media ethics ensures truth, fairness, and accountability in journalism. Despite challenges like sensationalism and fake news, adherence to ethical standards safeguards credibility. An ethical media is vital to uphold democracy and public trust.

## **Artificial Intelligence Ethics**

- It refers to the set of moral principles, values, and governance frameworks that ensure the design, development, and deployment of AI technologies serve humanity's interests while safeguarding fairness, accountability, transparency, and human dignity in a rapidly evolving digital world.
- **Some Core Ethical Issues of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
  - ✓ **Bias & Discrimination** – AI systems can reflect or amplify societal biases present in their training data, leading to unfair treatment.
    - **Example-** Recruitment AI favouring male candidates due to biased historical data.
  - ✓ **Privacy & Data Protection** – AI often relies on large datasets, risking misuse or unauthorised access to personal information.
    - **Example-** Facial recognition tools tracking individuals without consent.
  - ✓ **Transparency & Explainability** – Many AI models operate as “black boxes,” making it hard to understand how decisions are made.
    - **Example-** Loan rejection without a clear explanation from the AI system.
  - ✓ **Accountability & Liability** – Difficulty in determining who is responsible when AI makes harmful or incorrect decisions.
    - **Example-** Autonomous vehicle accidents with unclear legal responsibility.
  - ✓ **Job Displacement & Economic Impact** – Automation replacing human jobs without adequate reskilling measures.
    - **Example-** AI-driven manufacturing reducing demand for manual labour.

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- ✓ **Safety & Security Risks** – AI systems can be vulnerable to hacking, misuse, or dangerous malfunctions.
    - **Example-** Cybercriminals using AI for phishing or deepfake scams.
  - ✓ **Ethical Use in Sensitive Domains** – Need for strict regulation in healthcare, law enforcement, and politics.
    - **Example-** Predictive policing AI leading to wrongful targeting of communities.

### Way Forward

- **Adopt Ethical Frameworks**-Implement global standards like the Asilomar AI Principles (2017) - emphasizing transparency, shared responsibility, alignment with human values, and long-term safety.
- **Incorporate Asimov's Laws of Robotics**- Ensure AI systems follow the spirit of Isaac Asimov's Three Laws (protect humans, obey instructions, and safeguard their own existence without harming humans).
- **Responsible AI by Design**-Build fairness, accountability, inclusiveness, reliability, safety, privacy, and transparency (e.g., Microsoft's Responsible AI Principles).
- **Stronger Governance & Regulation**-Establish national and international AI regulatory bodies with clear liability mechanisms.
- **Human-Centric AI**-Keep human dignity, rights, and well-being at the center of AI innovation.
- **Capacity Building**- Promote digital literacy, reskilling, and ethical training for AI developers and users.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration**-Governments, tech companies, academia, and civil society must cooperate to ensure AI serves the global common good.
- Artificial Intelligence is a double-edged sword: a powerful servant but a dangerous master.
- Ethical frameworks like the Asilomar Principles and the guiding wisdom of Asimov's Laws of Robotics highlight the need to align AI with human values, safety, and accountability.
- By embedding ethics into design and governance, AI can remain a transformative force for innovation, equity, and human welfare, rather than a threat to dignity and justice.

**Ethical Relativism**- It is the belief that moral standards are not fixed or universal, but depend on cultural, societal, and historical contexts. It holds that what is considered "right" or "wrong" varies across societies and evolves over time.

### Examples of Ethical Relativism

- **Same-Sex Marriage** – Legal in countries like Canada and Spain, but still illegal or socially unacceptable in some others.
- **Alcohol Consumption** – Commonly accepted in many Western nations but prohibited in several Islamic countries.
- **Euthanasia** – Permitted in the Netherlands and Belgium, yet illegal in most parts of the world.
- **Polygamy** – Legal and culturally accepted in some African and Middle Eastern countries but prohibited in most Western nations.
- **Religious Dietary Laws** – Beef consumption acceptable in many countries but restricted or taboo in Hindu-majority regions; pork prohibited in Islamic cultures.
- It underscores the cultural diversity of moral standards and fosters tolerance by recognising that values evolve with context and tradition.
- However, when carried to extremes, it risks legitimising injustice and undermining universal human rights.
- Thus, the challenge lies in balancing respect for cultural plurality with adherence to core ethical principles that safeguard human dignity and justice across all societies.

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## Universal Ethics

- Universal Ethics is the belief that certain moral values and principles are binding on all human beings, regardless of culture, religion, geography, or historical time period.
- These principles are grounded in human dignity, justice, equality, and compassion, and serve as the foundation of global moral order.

### Important Aspects for Universal Ethics

#### ➤ Human Dignity as a Common Foundation

- ✓ Every individual, by virtue of being human, possesses inherent worth.
  - **Example-**The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**, which asserts dignity and rights as inalienable for all.

#### ➤ Moral Baseline for Global Governance

- ✓ Provides a common ethical ground for international laws and treaties.
  - **Example-**The **International Criminal Court (ICC)** prosecuting crimes against humanity and war crimes.

#### ➤ Protecting the Vulnerable Across Borders

- ✓ Universal ethics prevents cultural relativism from justifying harm.
  - **Example-**The global campaign against **child labour** and **human trafficking**.

#### ➤ Shared Responsibility in a Globalised World

- ✓ Problems like climate change, pandemics, and refugee crises require universal principles of cooperation.
  - **Example-**The **Paris Climate Agreement** rests on the shared duty of all nations to protect the planet.

#### ➤ Beyond Humans – Expanding Moral Circle

- ✓ Recognises that compassion and justice should extend to animals and nature.
  - **Example-** Growing global movement against **factory farming** and recognition of rivers as legal **persons**.

#### ➤ Technological Age Challenges

- ✓ Universal ethics provides guardrails in emerging areas like Artificial Intelligence, surveillance, and biotechnology.
  - **Example-** Global debate over **ethical AI use** and **data privacy rights**.

### Some Global Inferences

- **Ban on Slavery** – Universally condemned as a violation of human dignity.
- **Equality Movements** – From **Civil Rights Movement (USA)** to **Dalit rights in India**, affirming equality as universal.
- **International Refugee Protection** – Guided by UNHCR conventions, ensuring the right to safety for displaced persons.
- **Ban on Chemical Weapons** – The Chemical Weapons Convention reflects universal rejection of inhumane warfare.
- **Global Health Solidarity** – International cooperation during COVID-19 for vaccine distribution through **COVAX** initiative.
  - ✓ Universal ethics serves as a **moral compass for humanity**, transcending local customs to uphold dignity, rights, and justice for all.
  - ✓ It ensures that cultural diversity is respected, but not at the cost of basic human values that bind the global community together.

| Parameters | Ethical Relativism                                                                       | Ethical Absolutism                                                                          |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Definition | Belief that morality is relative to the norms of one's culture or individual perspective | Belief that there are universal moral standards that apply to all                           |
| Nature     | Contextual and subjective, varying with cultural or individual norms                     | Fixed and Objective, based on universal principles                                          |
| Strengths  | Promotes understanding and tolerance of different moral perspectives and practices       | Provides clear and consistent guidelines for moral behaviour, ensuring fairness and justice |
| Weaknesses | Can lead to moral ambiguity                                                              | Can be rigid and intolerant of cultural diversity                                           |
| Example    | Drinking Alcohol in Arab countries is considered as ethical wrong                        | Universal condemnation of practices like slavery, genocide and torture                      |

### Human Values: Continuity and Change

Human values provide the ethical foundation of individual behavior and collective life. They guide decision-making, social relations, and governance. These values exhibit both **change**, in response to societal developments, and **continuity**, rooted in universal human ideals.

#### Changing Values

Values evolve due to technological, economic, and cultural transformations. Ethical relativism, as proposed by **Ruth Benedict**, explains that moral standards are context-dependent.

##### 1. Impact of Technology

- ✓ Technological advancement reshapes ideas of privacy, communication, and relationships.
- ✓ *Example:* Social media platforms have blurred the boundary between public and private life.

##### 2. Economic Transformation

- ✓ Economic growth and liberalization influence aspirations and consumption patterns.
- ✓ *Example:* Post-1991 liberalization in India led to increased consumerism and material-oriented values.

##### 3. Cultural Exchange and Global Influence

- ✓ Interaction with global ideas leads to adaptation of social norms and attitudes.
- ✓ *Example:* Growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights in India due to global movements and legal developments.

#### Constant Values

Despite societal change, certain values remain timeless. **Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative** emphasizes universal moral principles applicable across contexts.

##### 1. Compassion and Empathy

- ✓ Fundamental to human relationships and social solidarity.
- ✓ *Example:* Public support during the Joshimath land subsidence crisis.

##### 2. Justice and Fairness

- ✓ Essential for social stability and moral order.
- ✓ *Example:* Ongoing struggles for reservations and effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act.

##### 3. Truth and Integrity

- ✓ Core to ethical conduct and public trust.
- ✓ *Example:* Whistleblowing by Satyendra Dubey against corruption.

Human values reflect a balance between continuity and change. While values adapt to technological, economic, and cultural shifts, core principles such as compassion, justice, and integrity remain constant. Recognizing this balance is vital for ethical policymaking and inclusive governance in a changing society.

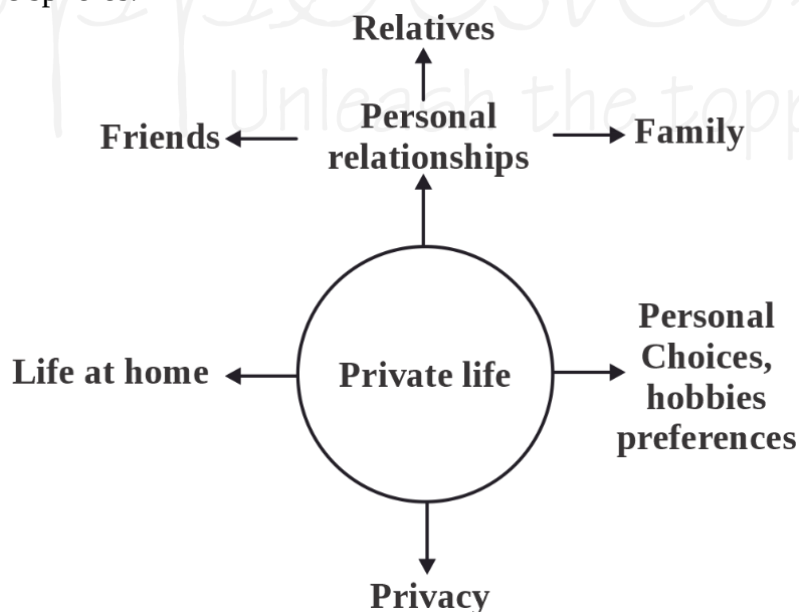
## E. Determinants of Ethics

These are the sources or factors that shape moral standards and help decide whether an action is right or wrong, just or unjust.

| Factor                        | Explanation                                                               | Example                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Religion &amp; Culture</b> | Traditions, beliefs, and sacred texts guide moral behaviour.              | Atithi Devo Bhava – treating guests as God in Indian culture.                                 |
| <b>Conscience</b>             | Inner moral sense that differentiates right from wrong.                   | Gandhiji called off the Non-Cooperation Movement after the Chauri Chaura incident.            |
| <b>Law</b>                    | Legal codes reflect ethical norms but can sometimes deviate from them.    | Misuse of sedition laws curbing free speech.                                                  |
| <b>Family &amp; Teachers</b>  | Early moral training through upbringing and education.                    | Parents/teachers teach honesty and empathy from childhood.                                    |
| <b>Role Models</b>            | Influential personalities inspire ethical conduct.                        | PM Modi picked up the national flag at the BRICS summit to show respect for national symbols. |
| <b>Time</b>                   | Ethics evolve with changing social values and awareness.                  | Abolition of slavery redefined human freedom and dignity.                                     |
| <b>Knowledge</b>              | Education and awareness challenge outdated or unjust norms.               | Scientific understanding led to decriminalising homosexuality.                                |
| <b>Society</b>                | Social norms shape ethics, though collective beliefs can also be immoral. | Nazi Germany's acceptance of unjust and inhumane policies.                                    |

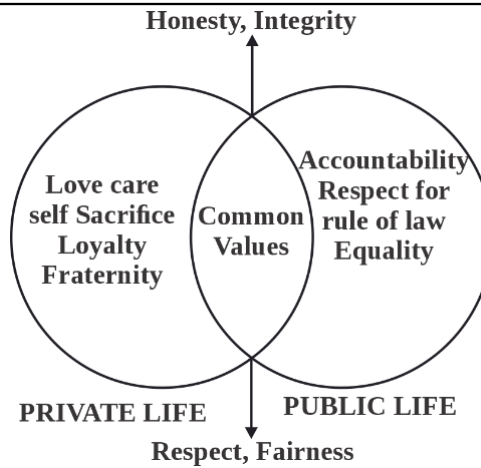
## F. Ethics in Private and Public Relationship

Ethics serve as a guiding compass for human behaviour, shaping how we relate to others in both personal and public spheres.



**Ethics in Private Relationship-** It refers to the moral values and principles an individual follows in their personal life while dealing with close relations such as family, friends, and other intimate connections.

- These ethical standards are generally informal, vary from person to person, and are shaped by personal beliefs and experiences.



### ➤ Some Essential Values in Private Relationships

- ✓ **Trust:** The foundation of any strong relationship; involves honesty, reliability, and keeping confidence.
- ✓ **Respect:** Treating others with dignity and consideration, respecting boundaries and differing opinions.
- ✓ **Honesty:** Being truthful, even in difficult situations, to build and strengthen trust.
- ✓ **Confidentiality:** Respecting privacy and not disclosing personal information without consent.
- ✓ **Compassion & Empathy:** Understanding and caring for others' feelings; offering support in times of need.
- ✓ **Tolerance:** Accepting diverse beliefs and values with an open mind and willingness to compromise.
- ✓ **Accountability:** Taking responsibility for one's actions and apologising when wrong.
- ✓ **Forgiveness:** Letting go of resentment or desire for revenge after being wronged.
- ✓ **Patience:** Giving others the time and space they need without frustration or pressure.
- ✓ **Equity:** Ensuring that emotional, financial and practical responsibilities are fairly shared.

### ➤ Determinants of Ethics in Private Relationships:

- ✓ **Personal Qualities:** Traits like sincerity, humility, and integrity influence ethical choices.
  - **Example-** Choosing not to gossip about a friend despite social pressure.
- ✓ **Religious Beliefs:** Faith-based teachings encourage moral conduct in personal life.
  - **Example-** Islamic principle of Zakat promotes generosity and care for relatives in need.
- ✓ **Social Influences:** Family traditions and community values shape ethical behaviour.
  - **Example-** A family tradition of resolving disputes through dialogue rather than arguments.
- ✓ **Legal Framework:** Laws and constitutional provisions reinforce ethical conduct.
  - **Example-** The Domestic Violence Act discourages abuse and promotes respect within families.

### ➤ Significance of Ethics in Private Relationship

- ✓ **Mutual Trust Building:** Creates a foundation of reliability and emotional security in personal bonds.
- ✓ **Strengthening Emotional Well-being:** Promotes a supportive environment that reduces stress and fosters happiness.
- ✓ **Conflict Prevention:** Encourages open communication and fairness, reducing misunderstandings.
- ✓ **Long-term Stability:** Sustains healthy and lasting relationships through respect and loyalty.
- ✓ **Fostering Mutual Growth:** Inspires personal development by learning from each other's strengths and values.