



# ETHICS

**For UPSC, PSCs & Other Competitive Exams**

**Volume - 1**



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# 1

## CHAPTER

# Ethics and Human Interface

### Syllabus Covered:

- Essence, Determinants and Consequences of Ethics in Human Actions
- Dimensions of Ethics
- Ethics - in Private and Public Relationships
- Human Values - Lessons from the Lives and Teachings of Great Leaders, Reformers and Administrators
- Role of Family Society and Educational Institutions in Inculcating Values

### What is Ethics?

#### Etymology and Definition:

The word “**ethics**” originates from the Greek term ‘**ethos**’, which refers to character, habits, customs, or ways of behavior. Similarly, the term “**moral**” comes from the Latin word ‘**mores**’, signifying customs and behavior.

*Ethics is defined as the systematic study of human actions from the perspective of their rightness or wrongness.*

It is often referred to as “**moral philosophy**” because it involves philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems, and moral judgments. Essentially, ethics seeks to determine what is good and how to achieve it, and what is bad and how to avoid it.

#### Quoted Well

- “Ethics is the study of the moral law and our obligations to obey it” – **Aristotle**
- “Ethics is not about how things are, but about how they ought to be.” - **Immanuel Kant**
- “Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.” – **Potter Stewart**
- “Ethics means thinking about the consequences of our actions on others.” – **Peter Singer**

### Essence of Ethics

The essence of ethics lies in its ability to guide human actions, shape moral character, and promote harmony in society. It provides a framework through which individuals evaluate their decisions and act in a responsible manner.

#### • **Ethics as a moral compass:**

- ❖ Ethics enables individuals to determine whether a particular action is morally acceptable.
- ❖ **Example:** A government officer refuses to accept a bribe even when there is no chance of being caught. The decision is guided by ethical values rather than fear of punishment.

- **Ethics guides human behaviour:**

- ❖ Ethics encourages individuals to act responsibly and respect the rights of others.

- ❖ **Example:** A doctor treats all patients equally, regardless of their economic status. The doctor's conduct reflects professional ethics and respect for human life.

- **Ethics builds trust in society:**

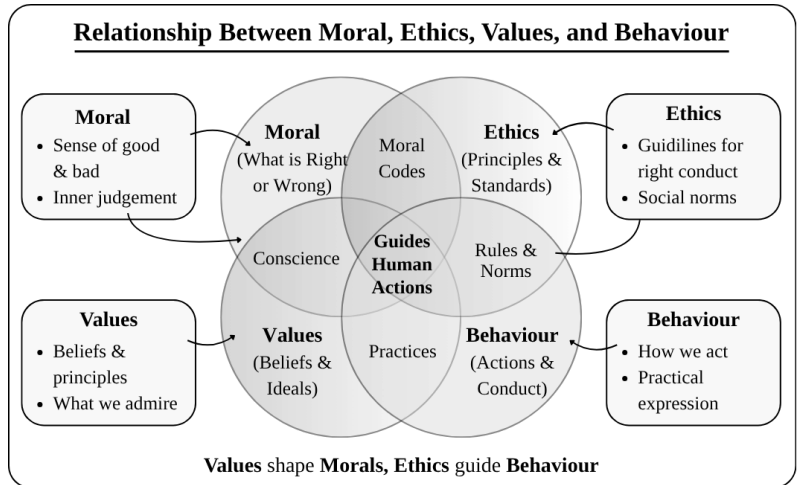
- ❖ Ethical behaviour strengthens trust between individuals and institutions. When people act honestly and fairly, social cooperation becomes easier.

- ❖ **Example: Transparent recruitment** in public services increases citizens' confidence in the fairness of the system.

- **Ethics develops moral character:**

- ❖ Ethics is closely related to virtues such as honesty, empathy, integrity, and responsibility. These virtues shape the character of individuals and influence their actions.

- ❖ **Example: Mahatma Gandhi** exemplified strong moral character through his unwavering commitment to **truth and non-violence**.



## Importance of Ethics

- **At the Individual Level**

- ❖ **Moral decision-making:** Ethics helps individuals distinguish between right and wrong.

- ❖ **Development of virtues:** It promotes values such as honesty, compassion, courage, and responsibility.

- ❖ **Self-discipline:** Ethical individuals follow moral principles even without external supervision.

- ❖ **Accountability:** Individuals take responsibility for their actions.

- **At the Level of Society**

- ❖ **Justice & Inclusiveness:** Ethics promotes fairness and the rule of law.

- ❖ **Fair Resource Distribution:** Ethical standards in governance promote the **equitable allocation of social benefits**, reducing the gap between the privileged and disadvantaged.

### Dr. Sathish Dhawan

During the 1979 SLV-3 launch failure, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam led the mission team at Indian Space Research Organisation.



When the mission failed, Chairman Satish Dhawan took responsibility publicly, while protecting the team. After the successful launch in 1980, Dhawan asked Kalam to address the press conference and take the lead.

**Lesson:** A true leader owns failure and shares success with the team.

- ❖ **Human Dignity:** Laws and social movements against untouchability and gender discrimination in India reflect ethical principles of equality and human dignity.
- **At the Level of Organisation**
  - ❖ **Ethical Conduct:** Ethical conduct promotes credibility and trust, as seen in institutions like TATA.
  - ❖ **Operational Transparency and Efficiency:** When an organization is ethical, there's less "office politics" and hidden agendas, which speeds up decision-making.
  - ❖ **Risk Mitigation and Legal Protection:** Strong ethics prevent internal fraud and keep the company out of costly legal battles with regulators like SEBI or the RBI.

### Practice Through PYQ

- Q. It is believed that adherence to ethics in human actions would ensure in smooth functioning of an organization/system. If so, what does ethics seek to promote in human life? How do ethical values assist in the resolution of conflicts faced by him in his day-to-day functioning? [UPSC CSE 2022]
- Q. "Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have the right to do and what is right to do." – Potter Stewart [UPSC CSE 2022]
- Q. Explain how ethics contributes to social and human well-being. [UPSC CSE 2016]

## Determinants of Ethics

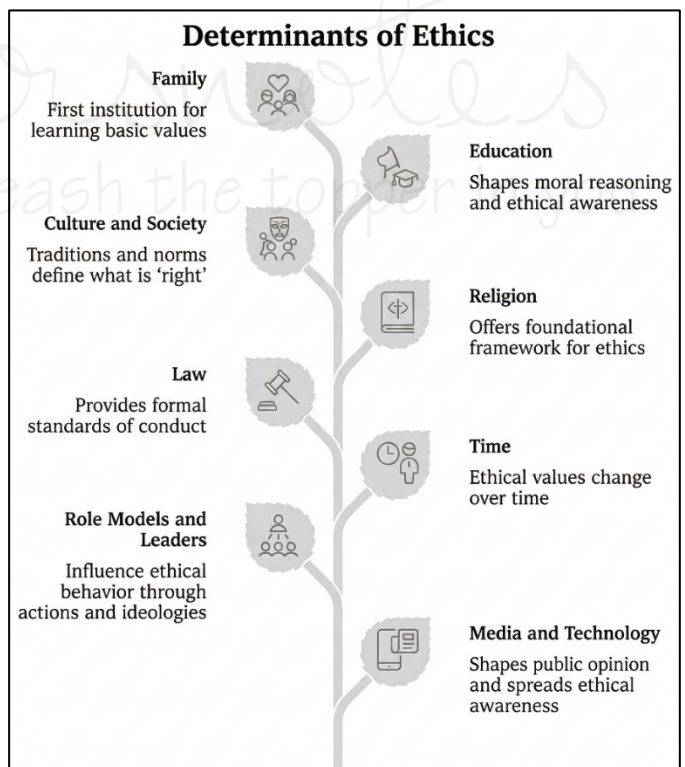
Determinants of ethics refer to the various influences that shape a person's moral values, beliefs, and behavioural choices.

### • Individual Factors (The Person)

- ❖ Every human is unique, absorbing values based on their specific life experiences.
- ❖ A **compassionate attitude** promotes moral behavior, while a **selfish mindset** may justify wrongdoing.
- ❖ **Conscience:** One's internal sense of right and wrong acts as a central guide for conduct.

### • Family

- ❖ The family is the first institution where we learn basic values like **honesty, compassion, and respect**.
- ❖ **Example: Bhuvaneshwari Devi**, mother of **Swami Vivekananda**, taught him **truthfulness, courage, and compassion** from childhood.



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- **Education**

- ❖ Education shapes moral reasoning and awareness of ethical duties.
- ❖ **Example: Swami Vivekananda** was deeply influenced by his teacher **Ramakrishna Paramahansa**, which shaped his values of service and spirituality.

- **Culture and Society**

- ❖ What is considered "right" often depends on the traditions and norms of the country or community where a person lives.
- ❖ **Example: Atithi Devo Bhava** – treating guests as God in Indian culture.

- **Religion**

- ❖ Religion provides a foundational framework, offering "dos and don'ts" through beliefs and sacred texts.
- ❖ **Example:** The concept of **Ahimsa** (non-violence) in Hinduism and Buddhism leads many to choose vegetarianism as an ethical lifestyle.

- **Law**

- ❖ Laws provide formal standards of conduct. While laws often reflect a society's ethics, they are not always the same thing—sometimes a law can be legal but ethically questionable.
- ❖ **Example: In Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018)**, the Supreme Court **decriminalized Section 377**, promoting equality, dignity, and individual rights while **granting legal recognition to the LGBTQ+ community**.

- **Time**

- ❖ Ethical values are not static; they **change over time**.
- ❖ **Example:** In the past, the **Custom of Sati and Untouchability** was practiced, but laws were eventually made to prohibit it because it was recognized as an ethical evil.

- **Role Models and Leaders**

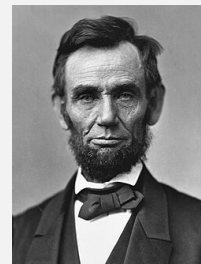
- ❖ Leaders and role models influence people's ethical behaviour through their actions and ideologies.
- ❖ **Example: Nelson Mandela** inspired millions with his values of **forgiveness, equality, and justice** after the end of apartheid.

- **Media and Technology**

- ❖ Media and technology shape public opinion and spread awareness about ethical issues.
- ❖ **Example:** The **#MeToo movement**, amplified through social media platforms, exposed cases of **sexual harassment** and encouraged ethical accountability and gender justice worldwide.

### Abraham Lincoln

When Abraham Lincoln was a young shopkeeper in New Salem, Illinois, he once realized after closing his shop that he had accidentally charged a customer six cents more than the correct amount. Lincoln walked all the way to the customer's house to return the extra money.



Because of his honesty, people in the town began calling him "**Honest Abe.**"

**Lesson:** Lincoln's actions reflect conscience-driven integrity, correcting even minor mistakes, building trustworthiness and ethical reputation.

### Through the Lens of a Civil Servant

A poor elderly woman approaches you for financial assistance from a welfare scheme. However, her documents are incomplete, and according to the rules she is not eligible to receive the benefit immediately. How would you balance compassion and rule-based governance in this situation?

## Dimensions of Ethics

To understand the full scope of moral philosophy, it is essential to explore the **Dimensions of Ethics**. While science deals with objective facts that remain the same everywhere, ethics deals with human behavior, which is inconsistent and varies across individuals and societies. The study of ethics is generally divided into four primary dimensions:

Dimension	Focus	Key Question
Meta-ethics	Nature/Origin	Where do moral values come from?
Descriptive Ethics	Observation	What do people believe is morally right or wrong?
Normative Ethics	Guidelines	How should I behave in this situation?
Applied Ethics	Specific Issues	Is [specific controversial act] ethical?

### Meta Ethics

*Meta-ethics (meaning "beyond ethics") explores the **origin and meaning** of ethical concepts themselves.*

Instead of asking "Is this action fair?", It asks:

- What are we actually doing when we use words like "**good**" or "**right**"?
- Where do moral values come from, and what is their **source**?
- Are some things **always wrong for everyone**, or does morality change based on **culture or context**?
- **Example:** When someone says "*Corruption is wrong,*" meta-ethics asks:  
*What makes corruption wrong—objective moral truth, social norms, or human feelings?*

It focuses on two main areas:

1) **Metaphysical Issues:** This looks at whether moral values are objective or subjective.

a) **Absolutism:** The belief that some moral rules are universal, like the laws of gravity. **Example:**

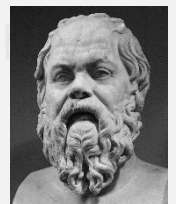
Principles like "**don't kill**" or "**don't tell a lie**" are seen as divine commands that apply to everyone, everywhere.

#### Socrates's Dialect

once questioned the nature of morality in a dialogue with Euthyphro, Socrates asked:

*"Is something good because the god approves it, or does the god approve it because it is good?"*

Through this question, Socrates was not deciding what action is right or wrong. Instead, he was examining the **foundation of morality itself**—whether moral values come from divine authority or exist independently.



b) **Relativism:** The belief that ethics are human inventions and vary by context. **Example: Cultural relativism** suggests that practices like **polygamy** may be considered ethical in one society but immoral in another.

2) **Psychological Issues:** This asks why humans choose to be moral.

a) **Egoism vs. Altruism:** Egoism suggests we act out of self-interest, while altruism claims we have an inherent capacity to care for others. **Example:** A stranger risking their life to save someone from a fire is an act of psychological altruism.

"In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others; in ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so."

- Immanuel Kant

b) **Emotion vs. Reason:** Philosophers like **David Hume** argued that ethics are driven by **emotions**, while others, like Immanuel Kant, believed true ethics must be guided by **reason**.

## Descriptive Ethics

Also known as **comparative ethics**, this dimension is a form of empirical research into what people or societies actually believe is right or wrong.

- It focuses on describing moral beliefs and practices without evaluating whether they are right or wrong.
- **Example:** Descriptive ethics would observe that Western societies generally view **same-sex marriages** as acceptable, whereas traditional societies like India may view them as immoral. It helps philosophers understand the "**ground reality**" of a society's moral compass at a specific point in time.

## Normative Ethics

Normative ethics is **prescriptive**; it provides the "rules" or frameworks for how one **ought to act** in a given situation.

There are four major branches:

### 1. **Virtue Ethics:**

- ❖ Focuses on the **character** of the person rather than the action itself.
- ❖ Aristotle believed that by practicing virtues like courage, wisdom, and honesty until they become a **habit**, a person becomes "good," and their actions will naturally follow it.

### 2. **Deontology (Duty-based):**

- ❖ It argues that an action is moral if it follows a universal rule or duty, regardless of the outcome.
- ❖ Under **Kant's "Categorical Imperative"**, we must always tell the truth, even if the truth causes harm.
- ❖ Similarly, the concept of **Nishkam Karma** teaches performing one's duty without attachment to the results.

### **Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse: 47**

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥

**Meaning:** You have the right to perform your duty (karma), but you are not entitled to the fruits (results) of your actions. Do not let the results of action be your motive, and do not develop attachment to inaction.

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### 3. Consequentialism (Outcome-based):

- ❖ Also called **teleology**, this theory claims the moral value of an action is decided by its **final outcome**.
- ❖ **Utilitarianism** suggests an action is right if it results in the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.

### 4. Ethics of Care (Relational Ethics):

- ❖ A perspective often associated with feminine morality, it emphasizes empathy and **interpersonal relationships** over rigid rules.
- ❖ A mother's decision to forgive a child's mistake to help them reform is a care-based ethical action.

#### King Solomon's Judgment

In ancient Israel, the king Solomon faced a dispute where two women claimed to be the mother of the same baby. With no evidence available, Solomon ordered that the child be cut in two so each woman could receive half.

One woman immediately begged the king to give the baby to the other rather than harm the child, while the second woman agreed to the division. Solomon then declared the compassionate woman the true mother.

Normative ethics concerns how people ought to act according to moral principles. Solomon's decision relied on the ethical reasoning that a true mother would choose the child's safety over her own claim, thus identifying the morally right outcome.



### Applied Ethics

*This dimension involves using ethical principles to examine **specific, controversial issues** in society.*

For example, it examines questions such as:

- Is euthanasia morally acceptable?
- Should governments allow surveillance for national security?
- Is it ethical for companies to exploit natural resources for economic advancement?
- Who should be held morally responsible when an Artificial Intelligence system causes harm—the developer, the user, or the machine itself?

Thus, applied ethics connects ethical theory with practical decision-making.

#### Practice Through PYQ

**Q.** 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.

[UPSC CSE 2018]

## 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	Ends-Based Morality
<p>This approach emphasizes the ethical nature of actions themselves. <b>Deontological ethics</b>, articulated by <b>Immanuel Kant</b>, holds that actions are inherently right or wrong, independent of consequences. It aligns with the Indian concept of <b>Dharma</b>, which stresses duty and righteous conduct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Intrinsic Value of Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Actions possess moral worth in themselves.</li> <li>❖ Example: Gandhi's <b>Satyagraha</b> upheld truth and non-violence despite personal suffering.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Predictability and Consistency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Ethical governance becomes stable when rules and procedures are followed uniformly.</li> <li>❖ Example: The Indian judiciary's adherence to due process ensures fairness and public trust.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Respect for Individuals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Means-based ethics safeguard human dignity, rights, and autonomy.</li> <li>❖ Example: Informed consent in medical procedures, as mandated by the Medical Council of India.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>This approach evaluates morality based on outcomes achieved. <b>Consequentialism</b>, particularly <b>utilitarianism</b> proposed by <b>John Stuart Mill</b>, seeks the greatest good for the greatest number. It resonates with <b>Kautilya's Arthashastra</b>, which emphasizes state welfare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Focus on Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Moral value lies in achieving beneficial results.</li> <li>❖ Example: Demonetization (2016) was justified as a measure to curb black money.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Flexibility and Adaptability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Allows pragmatic responses to complex and evolving situations.</li> <li>❖ Example: Extraordinary measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect public health.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Risk of Ethical Abuse</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Justifying ends without limits can violate rights and moral norms.</li> <li>❖ Example: Use of torture for national security violates ethical principles and human rights law.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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.

### Practice Through PYQ

Q. What is meant by environmental ethics? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics. [UPSC CSE 2015]

# Major Areas of Applied Ethics

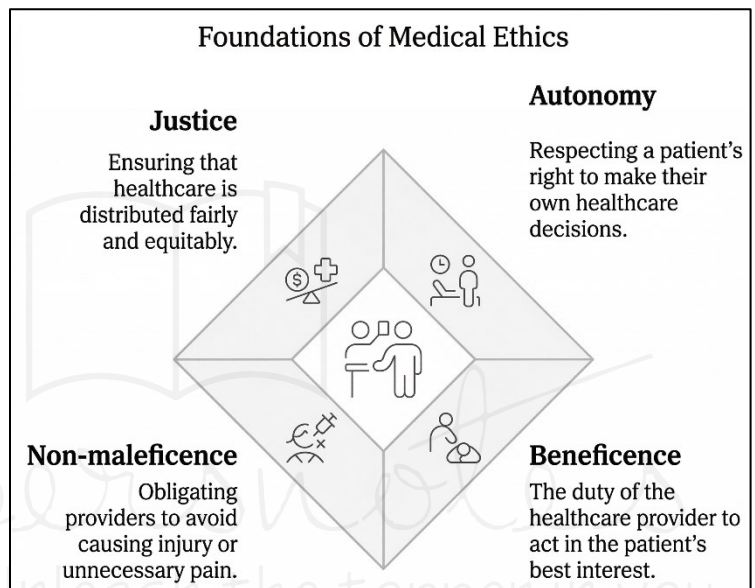
In contemporary society, rapid technological advancement, economic development, and complex social interactions have given rise to numerous ethical challenges. Applied ethics therefore, focuses on analyzing and resolving such real-world dilemmas by applying ethical principles and reasoning.

## Medical And Bio Ethics

**Medical Ethics** focuses on the moral conduct of medical professionals and the doctor-patient relationship. **Bioethics** is a broader interdisciplinary field that encompasses medical ethics but extends to ethical issues arising from advances in biology, biotechnology, and life sciences.

### Issues Involved:

- **Informed Consent:** Patients have the right to receive complete information about a medical procedure and voluntarily decide whether to accept or refuse treatment.
  - ❖ **Example:** A doctor explains surgery and obtains the patient's consent before performing it.
- **Patient Confidentiality:** Doctors must protect patients' private medical information.
  - ❖ **Example:** A physician cannot disclose a patient's HIV status without permission.
- **Boundaries of Life Decisions:** Ethical dilemmas arise while deciding the ethical limits on when life begins or ends.
  - ❖ **Example:** Abortion, euthanasia, surrogacy etc.
- **Allocation of Scarce Resources:** Limited medical resources must be distributed fairly.
  - ❖ **Example:** During COVID-19, hospitals had to decide who would receive limited ventilators and vaccines.
- **Genetic Engineering:** Altering human genes raises ethical concerns.
  - ❖ **Example:** CRISPR gene editing and "designer babies".
- **AI in Healthcare:** Use of AI raises issues of accountability and bias.
  - ❖ **Example:** If an AI system misdiagnoses a patient, responsibility becomes unclear.



## Euthanasia

*Euthanasia, or "mercy killing," is the practice of ending a patient's life to limit their suffering from incurable or terminal conditions.*

### Types of Euthanasia



**Active Euthanasia**

Active intervention to end life



**Passive Euthanasia**

Withholding life-sustaining treatments

### Classification by Consent:

- **Voluntary:** Performed at the specific request of a competent patient.
- **Non-voluntary:** Performed when a patient is mentally incapacitated (e.g., in a coma or PVS) and unable to consent.
- **Involuntary:** Performed against a patient's expressed wishes, which is legally considered murder.

### Legal Evolution in India:

**Constitutional Basis:** The SC holds that the "**Right to Die with Dignity**" is an intrinsic part of the **Right to Life under Article 21**.

**Aruna Shanbaug Case (2011):** It formally recognized passive euthanasia for the first time, permitting it in "extraordinary situations" under judicial scrutiny.

**Common Cause v. Union of India (2018):** It legalized passive euthanasia contingent upon a "**Living Will**" or Advance Medical Directive.

**Harish Rana Case (2026):** Marking the first **practical application** of the legal framework, the SC authorized passive euthanasia for a 32-year-old patient who had been in a persistent vegetative state (PVS) for 13 years.

### Ethical Considerations and Dilemmas:

- **Autonomy vs. Paternalism:** Respecting a patient's right to decide their own end-of-life care versus the state's or doctor's role in preserving life.
- **Sanctity of Life vs. Quality of Life:** The belief that life is an intrinsic good to be preserved at all costs versus the argument that life without cognitive function or with unbearable pain is not worth continuing.
- **Principle of Double Effect:** Ethically permitting a doctor to provide pain relief even if it unintentionally shortens the patient's life.
- **Beneficence vs. Non-maleficence:** "Doing good" (relieving pain) versus "doing no harm" (not ending a life).

### Arguments:

Arguments in Favor	Arguments Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dignity in Death:</b> Relieving patients from futile and unbearable suffering.</li> <li>• <b>Organ Donation:</b> Potential to save other lives through regulated donation after death.</li> <li>• <b>Financial Relief:</b> Preventing extreme financial and emotional strain on families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Religious Opposition:</b> In faiths like <b>Christianity and Islam</b>, life is viewed as a sacred gift from God that only God may take away.</li> <li>• <b>Potential for Abuse:</b> Concerns that non-voluntary euthanasia could be misused where consent is unclear.</li> <li>• <b>Medical Ethics:</b> The <b>World Medical Association (WMA)</b> generally opposes euthanasia as inconsistent with medical practice.</li> </ul>

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## Environmental Ethics

*Environmental ethics is a branch of philosophy that explores the moral relationship between human beings and their natural surroundings.*

### **Core Ethical Perspectives:**

There are two primary ways to view our moral obligations toward nature:

#### **1. Anthropocentrism (Human-Centered):**

- ❖ This view suggests that **only human beings have "moral standing"** or intrinsic value.
- ❖ In this framework, we protect the environment because it is necessary for human health, prosperity, and survival.
- ❖ This also includes duties to **future generations**, ensuring they have access to the same resources we exploit today.

#### **2. Non-Anthropocentrism (Extending Moral Concern):**

- ❖ These views argue that **moral standing** should be **extended to the non-human world** also.
- ❖ **Individual Organisms (Biocentrism):** This perspective suggests all living things, including trees and insects, have a **"good of their own"** and deserve respect regardless of their use to humans.
- ❖ **Holistic Entities (The Land Ethic):** This view focuses on the health of entire **"biotic communities,"** such as species and ecosystems, rather than just individuals.

### **Issues in Environmental Ethics:**

#### **• Anthropocentrism vs Ecocentrism:**

- ❖ Anthropocentrism prioritizes human needs and welfare whereas ecocentrism argues that nature has intrinsic value independent of human use.
- ❖ Construction of highways through forests (e.g., Char Dham Project) prioritizes human convenience over ecological balance.

#### **• Resource Depletion and Overexploitation:**

- ❖ Excessive use of natural resources such as forests, minerals, and fossil fuels has led to their depletion.
- ❖ This raises ethical concerns about **intergenerational equity**, i.e., whether present generations have the right to exhaust resources needed by future generations

### **Chipko Movement**



The Chipko movement, emerging in the 1970s in Uttarakhand, is a classic expression of environmental ethics, where villagers, especially women, hugged trees to resist commercial logging and affirm the intrinsic value of nature over mere utility. It highlighted core ethical concepts such as **ecological justice**, intergenerational responsibility, and the **moral duty to protect forests** as life-support systems for the marginalized. Framed by non-violence and care ethics, Chipko showcased an **eco-feminist moral stance** in which respect for nature and respect for human dignity are inseparable.

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- **Environmental Pollution:**

- ❖ Industrial and urban activities cause air, water, and soil pollution, affecting both human health and ecosystems.
- ❖ The ethical dilemma lies in balancing economic development with environmental protection.
- ❖ **Example:** Industrial waste in rivers like Yamuna and Ganga.

- **Rights of Animals and Non-Human Life:**

- ❖ The issue involves whether humans have the right to exploit other life forms or whether they deserve ethical protection and respect.
- ❖ **Example:** Ban on Jallikattu. Veganism movement advocating animal rights.

- **Consumerism and Lifestyle Choices:**

- ❖ Modern consumerist lifestyles lead to excessive resource consumption and waste generation.
- ❖ There is a need for ethical transformation toward a 'green lifestyle' that promotes harmony with nature.

### Environmental Justice

*Environmental justice refers to the principle that all individuals, irrespective of culture, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, are entitled to equal protection from environmental and health risks, along with fair and inclusive participation in environmental decision-making processes.*

#### Key dimensions:

##### 1. Distributive justice:

- ❖ It concerns the equitable distribution of environmental risks and benefits.
- ❖ Poor and minority neighbourhoods often host more landfills, factories, or highways than affluent areas.

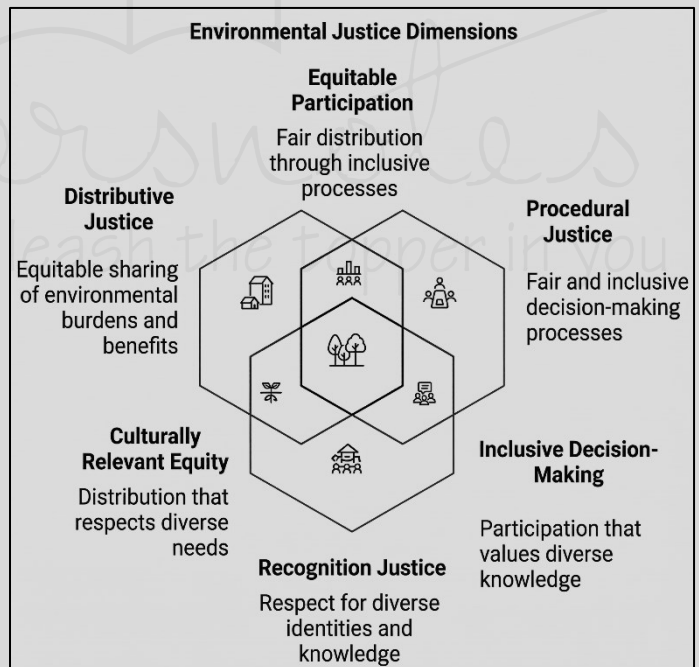
##### 2. Procedural justice:

It concerns fair and inclusive processes in planning and regulation (access to information, consultation, appeals, legal remedies).

Indigenous communities being excluded from environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes for mining or dams.

##### 3. Recognition justice:

It concerns recognition of oppression, identity, and difference, acknowledging that certain groups face cumulative disadvantages and their knowledge should be respected.



### Constitutional Provisions:

**Article 48A:** State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country.

**Article 51A(g):** Makes it the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures.

### Major Supreme Court Judgments:

#### 1. **M. C. Mehta v. Union of India (1986–87):**

- ❖ The SC Court expanded the right to life under Article 21 to include the right to live in a healthy environment.
- ❖ This judgment is a landmark of distributive environmental justice, shifting the cost of harm from the public to the polluter.

#### 2. **Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar (1991):**

- ❖ The Court held that citizens have the right to move the court if their right to life is threatened by pollution.

#### 3. **Virender Gaur v. State of Haryana (1995):**

- ❖ The Court held that environmental protection, ecological balance, and a pollution-free environment are integral components of Article 21 (Right to Life).

#### 4. **M K Ranjit Singh v. Union of India (2025):**

- ❖ The Court has recognized a right against adverse impacts of climate change under Article 21, supported by Article 14 (equality) and species-conservation duties.

Bringing environmental ethics into practice involves a combination of practical lifestyle changes, corporate responsibility, legislative action, and a fundamental shift in how we value the natural world.

#### • **Education & Awareness:**

- ❖ Incorporate environmental ethics into school curricula, teacher training, and public campaigns.
- ❖ Use case studies like Chipko Movement to teach stewardship and intergenerational equity.
- ❖ Mass media, social platforms, and community workshops build moral consciousness about anthropocentrism vs. non-anthropocentrism.

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed."  
- Mahatma Gandhi

- **Policy & Legal Framework:**

- ❖ Strict enforcement of Environment Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act, and Wildlife Protection Act.
- ❖ Update policies with ethical principles—precautionary principle in Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), polluter pays in National Green Tribunal (NGT) judgments.
- ❖ Constitutional provisions (Article 48A, 51A(g)) provide legal basis for ethical duties.


- **Community Participation:**

- ❖ Engage local communities in Joint Forest Management, sacred grove protection, and watershed committees. **Examples:** Chilika Lake restoration (community-led), Namami Gange (participatory cleaning). This embodies Land Ethic's biotic community focus.

- **Sustainable Practices:**

- ❖ Promote renewable energy (solar villages), organic farming, water harvesting, and zero-waste models.
- ❖ Corporate ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) frameworks and green public procurement institutionalize ethics in economic activity.

**Madhav Gadgil**



Madhav Gadgil, a pioneering Indian ecologist, emphasized democratic participation, environmental justice, and local community integration in conservation. As **chairman of the 2011 Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (Gadgil Commission)**, he proposed classifying large areas as ecologically sensitive and promoted bottom-up governance. His ethical framework linked conservation with human dignity, traditional knowledge and decentralized decision-making, influencing policies like the Biological Diversity Act and movements such as Save Silent Valley.

**Practice Through PYQ**

Q. What is meant by environmental ethics? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics. **[UPSC CSE 2015]**

**Media Ethics**

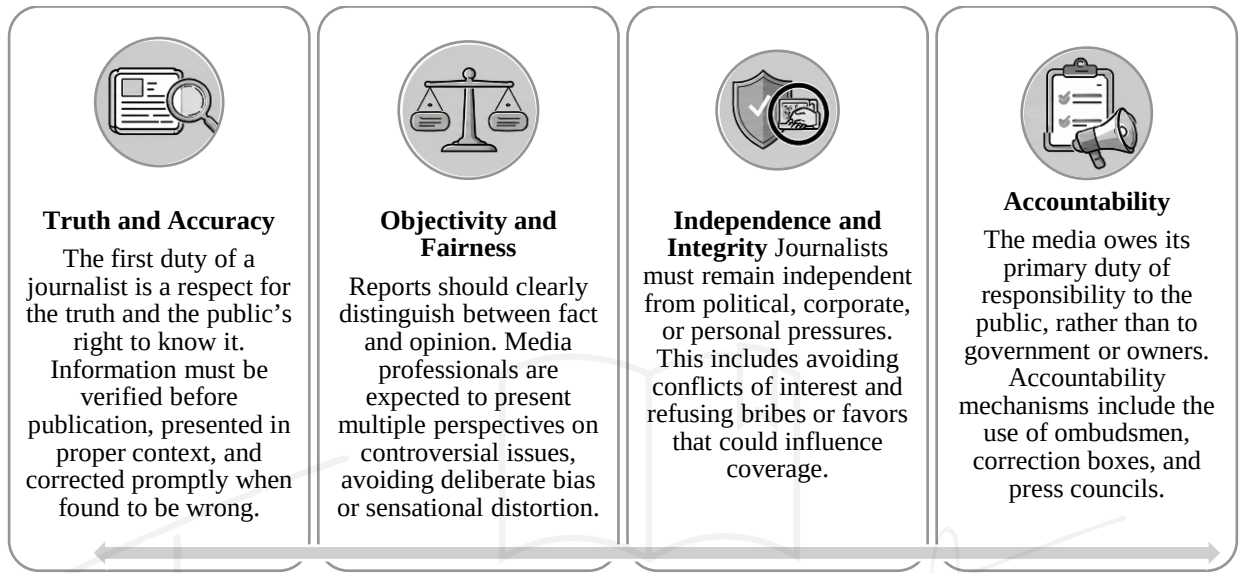
*Media ethics refers to the set of moral principles and professional standards that guide journalists and media organizations in how they gather, produce, and publish information.*

- It is fundamentally concerned with the question of what is right or wrong regarding the ways media presents news to the public.
- Media ethics is essential because the opinions, attitudes, and conduct of citizens depend heavily on the information provided by the media.



- In a democratic society, freedom of expression is a vital pillar, requiring governments to refrain from placing legal restrictions on the media so that citizens can remain informed.
- However, this freedom is not absolute; it carries corresponding responsibilities. Media ethics seeks to balance the right to impart information with the responsibility to avoid infringing upon the rights of others, such as the right to privacy and reputation.

### Core Principles of Ethical Journalism:



### Issues with 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).
- **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.