ETHICS & HUMAN INTERFACE

Topics:
- Ethics & Human Interface
- Dimension of Ethics
- Role Of Family, Society & Educational Institutions In Inculcating Values
- Ethics in Public & Private Relationship
- Lessons we learn from great Leaders, Social Reformers & Administrators
- Aptitude & Foundational Values of Civil Services
- Attitude
- Emotional Intelligence
- Moral Reasoning
- Basic Ethics Terminology
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The word “Ethics” is derived from the Greek word ‘ethos’ (character). Ethics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with human conduct. It consists of a code of conduct of human beings living in a society. Ethics examines the rational justification for our moral judgments; it is a study of what is morally right or wrong, just or unjust. Together they combined to define how individuals choose to interact with one another. Ethics may be defined as the systematic study of human actions from the point of view of their righteousness or wrongfulness, as means for the attainment of the ‘ultimate happiness’.

The social importance of ethics doesn’t simply extend to addressing major social problems and reforming society, however. The study of morality is important because morality itself is important. In fact, without morality, human society itself would not be possible. Imagine, for instance, what it would be like if everyone constantly ignored their moral duty to tell the truth. What would result? The pursuit of business and government would immediately collapse, for no one could depend upon any deals or agreements. Education and news reporting would become useless, for no one could rely on the accuracy of anything they might be told. Science and the general pursuit of knowledge would obviously be precluded. Even families and simple friendships would become impossible, for all interpersonal relationships require some basis of trust, which means that we can normally expect the truth from each other.

Ethics examines and evaluates moral life and human conduct. Broadly following themes constitute essence.

- **Standard of Conduct:** It is derived from theories of several moral thinkers and philosophers. Various religious book also help to set out standards of conduct of human being. Some of the standards are
  - Our ancient texts and scriptures
  - The will of God
  - Moral standard appropriate to the occasion
  - Another standard is self interest’, because self preservation is the first law of the existence. Darwin’s theory of “struggle for existence and survival of the fittest” comes from this principle only.
  - Another ethical standard is utilitarianism because it recommends those actions which could produce good result for greatest number of people.
  - Another view is that of ‘duty’ which recommends actions based upon moral duty only.

- **Principles through which ethical problems could be solved**
  - Enactment of laws, rules and regulations for ethical actions of human beings and for their compliance.
Conscience has also been found to be a major source of ethical guidance especially in the Indian value system.

- Ethics that shape the society and the nation
  - It becomes a part of the preamble of the constitution.
  - Constitutional values and ethos of a country.
  - With the passage of time new values are added to make it relevant

- Moral aspects of relations between human beings
  - In personal relationship people experience feelings of hurt, injustice, grievance, neglect, betrayal, etc.
  - Human relations and interactions are very significant. Social and family pleasure are rooted in human relations
  - Moral standards and codes need to be made to determine these relations.

- Ethics of Individual character. There are five important virtues.
  - Prudence: Sensible and careful while making judgments. It is very significant and important for civil servants.
  - Courage: The ability to face pain or opposition without showing fear. Very significant for the army.
  - Temperance: The practice of controlling behaviour
  - Justice: The fair treatment especially based on law
  - Benevolence: (Especially used for people who are in power or authority) kind, helpful and generous.

**Approaches of Ethical Study**

- Thinking ethically is an important aspect of the image we create of ourselves. We all have an image of our better selves–of how we are when we act ethically or are “at our best.” We probably also have an image of what an ethical community, an ethical business, an ethical government, or an ethical society should be. Ethics really has to do with all these levels–acting ethically as individuals, creating ethical organizations and governments, and making our society as a whole ethical in the way it treats everyone.

- However, Human beings have long worried about how they should live, and act; often they take decisions about good and bad ways of acting; they form views about good and bad ways of living. In other words, they engage in what they consider to be worthwhile moral living, i.e., in action and ethical thinking. Or they take morality for granted, as a ‘given’ in their culture and religious or mythological heritage.

**Thinking Ethics from the topoi of India**

Ethics as a speculative science is based on the foundations of the moral behaviour of man, but a substantial portion of the moral codes are based on religious beliefs, social customs and traditions. When we take the Indian ethics too the morality is very much based on certain beliefs, customs and traditions of Indian religions. It is true that the foundations of Indian ethics can be sought in the metaphysical and the theological beliefs in the form of worship, prayers and in the form of ideals and principles that directed man’s life in the society. When we speak of Indian ethics, we cannot deny the intimate relationship that prevails between ethics and Hindu or any other religion. Ethics and religion are so closely related and whatever may be the religion, it contains within itself some system of morality for the guidance of its followers. And thus Indian ethics is an indispensable part of Hindu religion and other religions of Indian origin. Indian ethical ideals and principles are very much found in the Vedas and in other Indian literatures and in other teachings of the Indian religions.
Meaning of Ethics in Indian Tradition

- The Indian term for morality and ethics is ‘dharma’. Dharma comes from the root ‘dhr’, which means ‘to hold together’. And thus, the function of dharma is to hold the human society together for its stability and growth. Right conduct is essential if the human society is to survive.
- Dharma in the Vedas refers to the highest truth and power and it is very much understood as the performance of Vedic sacrifices and other rituals in the Vedas and Dharmasastras. So Dharma is understood in Vedas as duty par-excellence. Dharma is also generally understood as the duties of humans according to one’s own caste and stage of life (Varnasrama Dharma).
- And thus, many Hindu thinkers say if one does his duty; he will achieve either heaven or a better birth in the next life or even prosperity here and now. Thus, the Hindu concept of dharma has been recognized by its very close association with ritualistic and caste-oriented duties.
- Hence the term dharma in Hinduism has two connotations:
  - Performance of ritual sacrifices and duties according to one’s own caste, and
  - Practice of moral virtues and norms.
- So when we speak of dharma as morality, it includes all the duties one ought to perform and all the virtues he ought to practice to attain moksa or liberation.

Thinking Ethics in the West

- The defining moment in ethics - or the genealogy of ethics - in the West is said to have arisen with Aristotle's effort to break up philosophy and social matrix with traditional forms of religious and mythical speculations of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. He worked on a practical mode of reasoning that looks for justification for any ideas like how we should live, what is good and bad action, and what is our purpose in life which has been taken to be the first systematic treatment of ethics in Western civilization.
- According to Aristotle, the goal of life is in achieving all of one’s potential or the flourishing of all of one’s capabilities. To describe this, he used the technical term ‘eudemonia, which is often (mis)translated as ‘happiness’, ‘pleasure’, ‘contentment’, implying a flourishing in order to make the question of human well-being more a matter of how well a person carries out activities in life than how he is merely feeling as in happiness. ‘Eudemonia’ for Aristotle is an activity (energies) of the soul, something to be sought for one’s own sake, an intrinsic end in itself. Thus, Aristotle’s ethics is predicated on the goodness of action, the supremacy of rational nature (beyond the animal side) of human beings and the purposive nature of the universe in which humans find meaning for their existence. Aristotle’s philosophical ethics is described as ‘naturalistic,’ since it is mostly based on certain broad, psychological and biological facts about human nature.
- In general, western Ethical theory has largely fallen within the ambit of philosophy, in which Religion and theology have been actively involved in the enterprise, and much effort has been concentrated in philosophically theorizing such concept such as:
  - Inquire into the rules and principles that govern our conduct
  - Investigate and clarify meanings of moral terms and statements
  - Analyze and explain moral judgments or positions
  - Establish criteria and methods for validating ethical judgments
  - Develop ideal patterns of behaviour or rules for ethically sound praxis (e.g. virtues, principled action, practical reasoning, self-formation, care for the other) towards some greater end states (be that self-actualization, social integration, global harmony, or other-worldly salvation)
- By and large, the Western efforts have tended towards the construction of a rationalistic system of moral principles, and moral theorizing in contemporary philosophy which has been concerned with establishing an objective set of norms, i.e., a normative framework in which all intents and purposes
are independent of subjectivist or individual and culture-specific values with a moral system, i.e., based on emotions, intuitions, or subjective feelings, or historical and historicized traditions. However, there might be rationalistic conception of the moral order which yields a consistent set of rules and principles and basic pattern of conduct. This is a belief shared from the eighteenth-century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant to John Rawls closer to our time.

**Ethical paths in Western philosophy**

- The word **deontological** is derived from the Greek word Deon, meaning ‘duty’. It is concerned with **right** action as its theories are focussed on whether ethical decisions per se are right or wrong, regardless of the consequences or intentions of those ethical decisions.
- Whereas, the word **teleological** is derived from two Greek words: telos, which means ‘purpose’ or ‘goal’; and logos, which refers to ‘science’ or ‘study’. It is concerned with **being good** - in other words, with being a good person with good intentions. Therefore, in contrast to deontological ethics, the teleological ethical traditions concentrate on the purpose of - or the intention behind - human actions. The focus of teleological ethical theories is on what the goal of a given decision is.

**Difference between Indian Ethics and Western Ethics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Western Ethics</th>
<th>Indian Ethics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Finding Truth</td>
<td>Protocol and Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis</td>
<td>Rational Thought</td>
<td>Religious teachings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>Logic, Cause and Effect.</td>
<td>Respect towards family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of origin</td>
<td>Athens, Rome and Judeo Christianity</td>
<td>Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Holistic and cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict and Harmony</td>
<td>Good must triumph over Evil</td>
<td>Good and Bad, Light and Dark all exist in equilibrium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To summarize, several moral thinkers and philosophers of ancient times to modern period provided intellectual arguments against the various ways of developing a virtuous character. Aristotle took his stand to debate that the actions contribute greatly to the way a character is. Earlier to that, he elucidated how
individuals act the way they speak or behave. Confucius in Analects demonstrated the notion of how the environment acts upon the way the person interacts. Another prominent figure, Plato exemplified the soul as a lead to the characters desires and wants. Several modern thinkers of India such as Mahatma Gandhi have great contribution in developing ethical ideologies. Thus, Indian and Western Ethics are by no means united and are incredibly diverse within themselves since Ethics as a subject is full of competing ideas.

Consequences of Ethics in Human Actions

- There are factors in human behaviour that determine whether it is good or bad. There are three such determinants of ethics, namely the object, the end, and the circumstances.
  - ‘Object’ means what the free will chooses to think, say, do or not to do.
  - By end is meant the purpose for which the act is willed, which may be the act itself (as one of loving God) or some other purpose for which a person acts (as reading to learn). In either case, ‘the end’ is the motive or the reason why an action is performed.
  - By circumstances are meant all the elements that surround a human action and affect its morality without belonging to its essence. Some circumstances so affect the morals of an action as to change its species. Other circumstances change the extent of kindness or badness of an act. In bad acts they are called aggravating circumstances.
- Every human action has an object which defines it and set it off from other actions. The object can be good, bad or indifferent.
- The three principles which apply to any action are listed below:
  - An action whose object is by nature is bad will always remain so. For example, no circumstance or purpose can change the nature of a lie.
  - An action which is good can become bad because of circumstance.
  - An action which is indifferent can become good or bad depending on circumstance or purpose.

Impediments to Human Actions

- Ignorance: It is defined as absence of knowledge in a subject for which a person is capable off.
  - An animal cannot be ignorant because of its inability to have knowledge.
  - But a civil servant cannot be said to be ignorant if he/she lacks knowledge of administration and governance.
- Passion: Passion influences human action. It includes anger, grief, love, hatred, or greed.
- Fear: It is defined as a mental or emotional reaction, arising from an impending danger. It is of two categories.
  - Grave fear, which would affect courage of a person. It destroy’s a person freedom of choice and hence will adversely affect the voluntariness of action. It can influence the degree to an extent in which actions are not considered human.
  - Light fear, which would not affect a person’s courage. It does not destroys the person freedom but only diminishes it.
- Violence: It is external physical force exerted on a person. When a person offers all the resistance he can, actions done in these circumstances are unfree and therefore not human actions.
- Habit: It is a quality acquired through frequent repetitions that enable the subject to be acted easily and prompt by -
  - Good habits which are virtue and bad habits are vices.
  - Voluntariness and choices do not remain in these cases.
**Temperament**: Temperament is the sum of a person’s natural propensities as opposed to character which is the collection of a person’s acquired propensities. Both may sometime lessen the voluntariness of action.

## Human Values

### What are Human Values?

- Human values are the virtues that guide us to take into account the human element when one interacts with other human beings. They are the positive dispositions that create bonds of humanity between people and thus have value for all of us as human beings. They are strong positive feelings for the human essence of others.
- These human values have the effect of bonding, comforting, reassuring and procuring serenity.
- Human values are the foundation for any viable life within the society which leads to peace.
- Human values, thus defined, are universal and they are shared by all human beings, whatever their religion, nationality, culture, or personal history. However, they induce consideration for others.

### Types of Human Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brotherhood</th>
<th>Friendship</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>Civility</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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![Diagram of Value Education]

Fostering universal core values
- Integrity
- Discipline
- Justice

Developing values in individuals
- Physical
- Emotional
- Intellectual
- Spiritual
- Moral
- Aesthetic

Promoting values in society leading to individual and societal transformation

Creating a Holistic Education system
Several universal human values such as truth, righteous conduct, peace, love and non-violence are directly associated to physical, intellectual, emotional psyche and spiritual facets of human personality. There is need and urgency to reinforce these values for a better and humane society.

Need of Human Values

- Value education is always essential to shape one’s life and to give one an opportunity of performing on the global stage.
- The need for value education among the parents, children, teachers etc, is constantly increasing as we continue to witness increasing violent activities, behavioural disorders and lack of unity in the society etc.
- Value education helps to remove our confusions and contradictions and enables us to rightly utilize the technological innovations.
- There are different views that call urgent need to inculcate human values in Indian society. Presently, negative human values are in upper side. It may be because of neglect of value education which created vagueness and indiscipline in the mind of people.

Fundamental and Instrumental Values

Fundamental Values

- A value that is desirable in itself is a fundamental value. The idea here is that certain goods are worth having purely for their own sake. Such values do not depend upon other values for their worth - they are fundamental.
- Pleasure, happiness, and love are often cited as examples of fundamental values. For instance, it seems that we value pleasure for its own sake; pleasure seems intrinsically desirable. As a somewhat more controversial example, meanwhile, consider life. On the one hand, life seems to have value in itself. On the other hand, some have claimed that it isn’t mere life that is worth having, but only a meaningful or happy life.

Instrumental Values

- Looking at the opposite extreme, somethings have no real worth in themselves, although they might be exceedingly useful for attaining something else that we do value. Probably the clearest example of such a purely instrumental value is paper money. Money can certainly be of value for obtaining other goods we desire, but it is nearly worthless in itself (What good would a suitcase of money be on a deserted island?). Likewise, an academic degree is valuable as a means to attaining recognition and employment, while a driver’s license has value because it gives the holder the legal right to drive. As such, instrumental values are derived values - they derive their worth from the value or worth of those things they can help us to obtain. Taken just by themselves, however, purely instrumental values are largely worthless.
- Some values appear to be both fundamental and instrumental at the same time. Consider health and knowledge, for instance. Without decent health, it is difficult to attain most other goods in life. Poor health, in fact, can make it harder to preserve life itself, which is necessary for attaining any other good in this life. Although, health has instrumental value, arguably, it also has intrinsic value - being a good thing in and of itself, ‘regardless of what else it may make possible. The same may be said of knowledge, which clearly can be instrumental for attaining all kinds of goods, but which is also often thought to be desirable for its own sake.

Values and ethics are interrelated. Values are the cause and ethics, the effect.

Example: A poor man approached a greedy doctor for an emergency medical treatment. The concerned doctor referred the man to several specialists who had a deep nexus between them. The doctors were impelled by disvalue of greed. This led them to make a nexus outwardly for unethical actions.

Thus disvalue (DV) is the cause and the unethicallity is the effect.
Types of Values:
- Human values = for the good of others.
- Disvalues = bad values
- If HV > DV = person is considered to be good.
- HV < DV = person is considered to be ‘Bad’.

Value Chart (Examples)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Value</th>
<th>Disvalues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contentment</td>
<td>Greed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Envy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>Vanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity</td>
<td>Aggressiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverence</td>
<td>Vindictiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbearance</td>
<td>Duplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Cruelty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Cunning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unselfishness</td>
<td>Hatred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Backbiting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Both HVs and DVs prevail within an individual. If the sum of HVs is greater than the sum of DVs, then that individual is regarded as a GHB. But if the DVs exceed HVs, then the person declines on the scale of Good Human Being. What is true of the individual is also true of the family, society etc.
- Based on the above, ‘values’ may be defined thus:
- ‘Values are an enduring set of emotional or feeling-level dispositions in a person, which (a) underpin the choice of his/her goals; and (b) determine the kind of means used to achieve those goals’.

Example 1
- Love for the country or patriotism was a deep, lofty emotion/feeling during India’s independence movement. Many brilliant people then had adopted ‘achievement of India’s freedom’ as their only goal. This was common for all. But the methods employed by different individuals or groups varied widely. Some used journalism, some literature and art, some direct fighting, some peaceful non-cooperation, some boycotting, some political lobbying, and so on. The dominant proportion of people among all such varying groups was, however, highly dedicated and self-sacrificing. Thus, for both (a) goals and (b) means? HVs were greater than? DVs.

Example 2
- Several pioneering industrial houses were born in India before her political independence in 1947, e.g., Tata Godrej, Bengal Chemical, Shri Ram Group, Walchand Hirachand and the like. Their goal was to prove that India, though suppressed by the rulers, could match them or equal terms in the field of
economic activities. The motive was not market value, rank order, entrepreneurial awards, personal asset growth, etc. Their emotional underpinning was one of deep national self-respect. Accordingly, the means employed also generally tended to be fair and square.

- On the other hand, many of today’s business entities or houses, have chosen goals like rising to the top as fast as possible, etc. The emotion of personal vanity or inordinate greed usually underpins the choice of such goals. This is also seen to be associated with the abandonment of scruples as they use any means to succeed at all cost.

- ‘Ethics’ may be treated as the expression without of ‘values’ within. Values are the cause, Ethics the effect.

- If one operates, in a given instance, from an HV emotion within, the outward action will tend to be ethical. If one is stimulated by a DV emotion within, the external act will tend to be unethical.

Human value causes a sense of warmth, ease, happiness and contribute to harmonious life. On the other hand, disvalues cause inner restlessness, burning agitation etc. Disvalue can be changed into HV by making an individual moral and ethical.