



**MANIKA IAS**

TURNING ASPIRANTS INTO ACHIEVERS

# ETHICS

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## FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAM

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EXAM-ORIENTED

CONCEPT -CENTRIC

STRUCTURED & SIMPLIFIED

*“True justice is not just in the courtrooms, but in classrooms, streets, and homes.”*



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# HUMAN INTERFACE AND ETHICS

# 1. ETHICS AND HUMAN INTERFACE

## Essence and Importance of Ethics

The essence of ethics is its universal nature, providing a moral compass that guides behavior beyond cultural or religious divides. Its main goal is to elevate human conduct by fostering virtues and a focus on the collective good over individual gain. Ethics establishes foundational principles for public life like **accountability, empathy, integrity, honesty, and respect**.

For a civil servant, this is not just theoretical. It is the bedrock of their service. As the second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) report noted, ethics ensures that the administration is not just efficient, but also just and humane.

## Determinants of Ethics in Human Actions

An officer's ethical framework is shaped by a variety of influences throughout their life.

- **Family:** The family is the primary school for values. The integrity of T. N. Seshan, the formidable Chief Election Commissioner, was famously shaped by his father, a lawyer, and a disciplined home environment that prized honesty.
- **Educational Institutions:** Schools and colleges cultivate critical thinking and a sense of social justice. Institutions like the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) play a crucial role in shaping the ethos of civil servants by instilling the core values of the Indian Constitution.
- **Society and Culture:** Societal norms can either support or erode ethics. In a society where minor corruption is normalized ("chalta hai" attitude), an officer needs immense personal conviction to remain upright.
- **Personal Traits and Emotional Intelligence:** Qualities like compassion and the ability to manage emotions are critical. An officer must be able to make rational decisions, especially when dealing with emotionally charged situations like riots or natural disasters.

## Consequences of Ethical Actions

Ethical conduct has profound consequences for the officer, the administration, and society.

### Positive Consequences: A Case of Public Trust

When officers act with integrity, they build public trust and can achieve remarkable feats.

- **Case Study: Armstrong Pame, IAS.** Known as the "Miracle Man," Armstrong Pame was posted to a remote part of Manipur with no motorable road to connect with neighboring districts. Moved by the plight of the people, and without any government funds, he used social media to crowdfund ₹40 lakh and mobilized local volunteers to build a 100 km "People's Road" in 2013. His **empathy, dedication, and integrity** inspired thousands to trust him with their money and labor, achieving what the system could not. This demonstrates how ethical action fosters immense social capital and delivers tangible results.

### Negative Consequences: Erosion of Governance

The absence of ethics leads to corruption, loss of public trust, and systemic failure.

- **Fact:** The 2G spectrum allocation scam and the Coal allocation scam ("Coalgate") were monumental failures of administrative ethics. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of

India initially estimated that the 2G scam led to a presumptive loss of approximately ₹1.76 lakh crore to the national exchequer. Such events erode citizen faith in governance and divert funds meant for public welfare.

## Dimensions of Ethics

### ➤ Meta-Ethics: The View from Above

Meta-ethics doesn't tell us what is right or wrong, but instead asks what morality *is* in the first place. It's the most abstract dimension, dealing with the nature, origin, and meaning of ethical concepts.

It asks questions like:

- **What is the meaning of "good" or "right"?** Are these objective truths or subjective feelings?
- **Where do ethical principles come from?** Are they divine commands, discoveries of reason, or social conventions?
- **Are moral values universal?** Or are they relative to different cultures and individuals?

### ➤ Normative Ethics: Creating the Moral Compass

Normative ethics focuses on creating frameworks to guide moral behavior. This is the dimension that establishes the principles and rules that tell us how we *should* act. It provides the major ethical theories that people use to make moral decisions.

The three main frameworks within normative ethics are:

Ethical Theory	Core Idea	Key Question	Proponent(s)	Example
<b>Deontology (Duty-Based)</b>	The morality of an action is based on whether it adheres to a set of rules or duties. The consequences don't matter.	"What is my duty?"	Immanuel Kant	"Lying is always wrong regardless of the outcome, because it violates the duty to be honest."
<b>Consequentialism (Outcome-Based) (Teleological)</b>	The morality of an action is determined by its outcome or consequences. The best action is the one that produces the greatest good for the greatest number.	"What will the result?"	Jeremy Bentham, J.S. Mill	"Lying might be the right choice if it saves a person's life, as the outcome is better."
<b>Virtue Ethics (Character-Based)</b>	Morality is about the character of the moral agent. It emphasizes developing virtues like courage, honesty, and compassion.	"What would a virtuous person do?"	Aristotle, Plato	"A courageous person would tell the truth even when it's difficult, because that's what courage demands."



**Case Study:**

- **Virtue Ethics (Focus on Character):** This emphasizes the officer's moral character.
  - **Example: T. N. Seshan.** As Chief Election Commissioner (1990-1996), his actions were a direct reflection of his personal virtues of integrity and courage. He didn't just apply rules; he embodied the spirit of a neutral and powerful umpire, single-handedly cleaning up India's notoriously corrupt election process.
- **Deontological Ethics (Focus on Duty):** This is about adhering to rules and performing one's duty, regardless of the consequences.
  - **Case Study: Durga Shakti Nagpal, IAS.** In 2013, as the Sub-Divisional Magistrate in Gautam Buddha Nagar, she launched a massive crackdown on the powerful illegal sand-mining mafia in Uttar Pradesh. She acted purely out of her duty to uphold the law despite facing immense political pressure and even a suspension (which was later revoked). Her actions were a classic example of performing one's duty without fear or favor.
- **Consequentialist Ethics (Focus on Outcomes):** This approach judges an action based on its results, aiming for the "greatest good for the greatest number".
  - **Example:** The construction of large dams like the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River. While the project aimed to provide water and electricity to millions in Gujarat and Rajasthan (a good outcome for the majority), it also led to the displacement of tens of thousands of tribal families, raising significant ethical questions about the rights of the minority. This highlights the inherent dilemmas in a purely outcome-based approach.

**Justice-Based Ethics**

- **Core Idea:** An action is moral if it upholds the principles of justice.
- **Key Thinkers:**
  - Aristotle: "Treat equals equally and unequals unequally." Justice is about giving people what they are due based on merit.
  - John Rawls: Proposed the "Veil of Ignorance." He argued that we should design a just society from an "original position" where we don't know our own race, class, or gender. From this unbiased standpoint, he argued we would choose two principles: 1) Equal liberty for all, and 2) Permitting social and economic inequalities only if they benefit the least advantaged members of society (the Difference Principle). This provides a powerful justification for affirmative action.

The ethical dilemmas faced by public servants like IAS officer Ashok Khemka, who exposed corruption in land deals in Haryana (verified via BBC News reports from 2012-2013), underscore the practical relevance of ethical principles.

**Applied Ethics: Where Rubber Meets the Road**

Applied ethics takes the principles from normative ethics and applies them to specific, often controversial, real-world issues. It's the most practical dimension of ethics, dealing with the concrete dilemmas people face.

Fields of applied ethics include:



- **Bioethics:** Deals with ethical issues in medicine and biology, such as abortion, euthanasia, and genetic engineering.
- **Business Ethics:** Examines moral principles in the business world, including corporate social responsibility (CSR), advertising, and insider trading.
- **Environmental Ethics:** Addresses moral questions about the environment, such as animal rights, pollution, and climate change.
- **Tech Ethics:** Explores the ethical challenges posed by new technologies, like artificial intelligence (AI), data privacy, and automation.