

Ethics in Private and Public Relationships

Human life operates simultaneously in private and public spheres. While private relationships are anchored in emotional intimacy, loyalty, and personal morality, public relationships are dictated by institutional rules, constitutional values, and the principle of impartiality. The essence of administrative ethics lies in maintaining a clear boundary between these domains to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure that the "**common good**" remains paramount over personal affiliations.

I. Ethics in Private Relationships

Ethics in private relationships encompasses the moral obligations of empathy, fidelity, care, and non-maleficence that govern interpersonal bonds, family, friendship, and community, forming the crucible of character where a future civil servant's integrity, emotional intelligence, and compassionate governance are first forged.

Features

1. Emotional Foundation

- Private relationships are rooted in love, empathy, loyalty, affection, and emotional attachment rather than formal obligations.
- Moral behaviour in such relationships is driven by compassion and concern for individual well-being.
- **Example:** Supporting a sibling during financial hardship reflects compassion-driven responsibility beyond legal duty.

2. Particularistic Nature

- Obligations in private relationships are stronger toward specific individuals rather than society at large.
- Decisions prioritise family or close associates based on emotional proximity and relational commitment.
- **Example:** Parents prioritising their child's education and safety over broader social considerations.

3. Informal Norms

- Private **ethics** operate through personal values, trust, and unwritten understandings rather than codified legal rules.
- **Example:** Keeping a friend's confidential matter private even without formal confidentiality agreements.

4. Reciprocity and Mutual Trust

- Private relationships are sustained by mutual respect, shared experiences, and reciprocal emotional support.
- Long-term stability depends upon honesty, reliability, and consistent fulfilment of relational expectations.
- **Example:** India Vaccine Maitri initiative for neighbours during the pandemic.

Significance of Ethics in Private Relationships

1. Foundation of Moral Character Formation

- Private relationships shape early moral learning such as honesty, compassion and responsibility.
- **Example:** In the **Ramayana**, **Shravana Kumara** symbolizes filial devotion, illustrating how family **ethics** cultivate duty-consciousness.

2. Development of Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

- Close relationships nurture sensitivity to others' suffering, strengthening humane conduct.
- **Example:** **Mother Teresa** transformed personal compassion into lifelong humanitarian service.

3. Cultivation of Trust and Loyalty

- **Ethical** private conduct builds credibility and long-term relational trust.

- **Example:** In the **Mahabharata**, **Karna** is remembered for loyalty and generosity, reflecting commitment in personal bonds.

4. Moral Courage and Integrity Development

- Strong **ethical** upbringing builds courage to stand for right in adversity.
- **Example:** **A. P. J. Abdul Kalam** often credited his family's value system for shaping his disciplined and humble public life.

5. Emotional Stability and Ethical Consistency

- Healthy private **ethics** provides psychological balance, reducing **unethical** impulses.
- **Example:** Many sportspersons attribute resilience to family grounding; **Sachin Tendulkar** consistently emphasized humility and discipline rooted in family values.

6. Transmission of Social Values Across Generations

- Private **ethics** sustains cultural continuity and moral traditions.
- **Example:** **Sudha Murty's** emphasis on passing values of simplicity, honesty and service to younger generations.

7. Encourages Responsibility and Accountability at Micro Level

- Individuals learn duty through familial obligations.
- **Example:** **Rama** accepted exile to honour his father's word, demonstrating personal responsibility overriding comfort.

II. Ethics in Public Relationships

Ethics in public relationships refers to the moral obligations of accountability, transparency, impartiality, and probity that govern a civil servant's conduct towards citizens, colleagues, and institutions, embodying the principle that public office is a sacred trust, not a privilege, as enshrined in the constitutional vision of **Article 51-A** and the **ARC recommendations** on public service values.

Features

1. Impartiality

- Decisions must be taken objectively, free from personal bias, political pressure, caste considerations, or emotional prejudice.
- Impartial conduct ensures equality before law and strengthens citizens' trust in administrative fairness.
- **Example:** A judge delivering verdict strictly based on evidence and constitutional principles, not public sentiment.

2. Accountability

- Public officials are answerable for their actions and must justify decisions before citizens, legislature, and oversight institutions.
- Transparency mechanisms such as audits, **RTI** disclosures, and asset declarations enhance democratic scrutiny.
- **Example:** Mandatory public disclosure of assets by civil servants to prevent conflict of interest and corruption.

3. Rule-Based Conduct

- Administrative actions must align with constitutional values, codified laws, service rules, and due process requirements.
- Rule-based functioning prevents arbitrariness and protects citizens from misuse of discretionary authority.
- **Example:** **Supreme Court's** insistence on due process in bulldozer demolition cases.

4. Public Interest Orientation

- Public relationships must prioritise collective welfare, social justice, and long-term societal benefit over personal or sectional gain.
- Officials must act as trustees of public resources, ensuring equitable distribution and inclusive governance.

- **Example:** Fair and transparent distribution of disaster relief materials without discrimination or favouritism.

Significance of Ethics in Public Relationships

1. Ensures Impartial Governance

- Public **ethics** prevents favoritism and bias in official actions.
- **Example:** T. N. Seshan enforced electoral reforms impartially, strengthening democratic fairness.

2. Strengthens Institutional Trust

- **Ethical** conduct enhances legitimacy of public institutions.
- **Example:** Vinod Rai reinforced accountability mechanisms through transparent audits.

3. Promotes Accountability and Transparency

- Public **ethics** demands openness in decision-making.
- **Example:** Government e-Marketplace (GeM) digital procurement platform increasing traceability and reducing opaque discretion.

4. Prevents Conflict of Interest and Nepotism

- **Ethical** separation between private loyalties and public duty protects fairness.
- **Example:** Justice U. U. Lalit recusing himself in matters involving prior professional association.

5. Upholds Constitutional Morality

- Public **ethics** ensures actions align with justice, equality and rule of law.
- **Example:** H. R. Khanna upheld right to life during Emergency, prioritising **constitutional morality** over executive power.

6. Protects Rights of Vulnerable Sections

- **Ethical** governance ensures equitable service delivery.
- **Example:** Armstrong Pame mobilised community resources to build a road in Manipur, serving neglected populations.

7. Encourages Responsible Leadership

- **Ethical** leaders accept responsibility for failures.
- **Example:** Jacinda Ardern's willingness to step down out of a sense of responsibility illustrates **ethical** leadership where accountability is treated as a moral obligation, not merely a legal requirement.

8. Promotes Social Harmony and Justice

- Public **ethics** reduces discrimination and strengthens inclusivity.
- **Example:** Abolition of apartheid under Nelson Mandela demonstrated reconciliation rooted in **ethical** leadership.

III. Relationship Between Private and Public Ethics

The relationship between private and public **ethics** rests on the foundational premise that character is indivisible, a person of compromised private morality cannot sustain genuine public integrity, for as **Aristotle** argued, virtue is a habit of the soul, not a professional mask worn in office. The **Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life** and **India's Second ARC's** emphasis on **ethical governance** both recognise that public **ethics** is ultimately an outward expression of internalised private values, making the civil servant's personal moral universe the first line of accountability in democratic governance.

Interlinkage between both spheres

1. Character Continuity

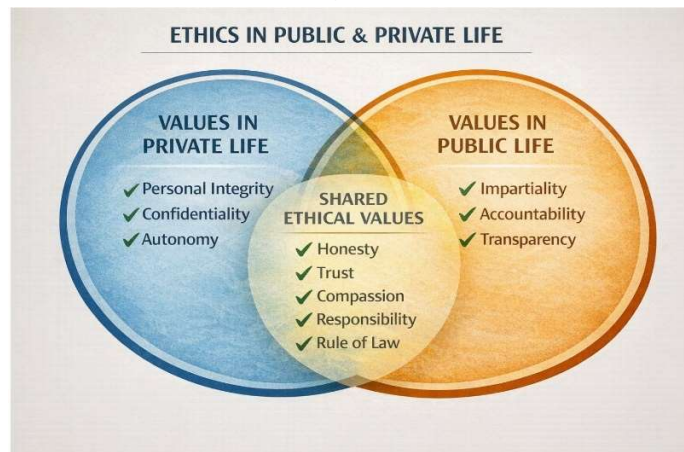
- Integrity learned in private life influences public decision-making.
- **Example:** An officer raised with strong honesty values resists bribery.

2. Empathy Transfer

- Compassion in personal life enhances citizen-centric governance.
- **Example:** Administrators adopting humane approach toward marginalized groups.

3. Moral Courage Development

- Family upbringing instilling courage helps resist political pressure.
- Private virtues often become public strengths.



Despite interlinkage, both spheres must remain distinct to prevent ethical conflicts.

1. Avoidance of Nepotism

- Personal loyalty must not override public duty.
- **Example:** Merit-based recruitment systems insulated from personal influence, as emphasized by figures such as **N. R. Narayana Murthy**, exemplify avoidance of nepotism in practice.

2. Separation of Roles

- Personal beliefs should not bias professional responsibilities.
- **Example:** A civil servant implementing laws objectively even if personally disagreeing.

3. Conflict of Interest Prevention

- Maintaining clear boundaries between personal gain and official authority.
- **Example:** Declaring assets and recusing from decisions involving family interests.
- **Independence safeguards institutional integrity.**

Challenges Involved in Ethics in Private and Public Relationships

1. Nepotism and Favoritism

- Private loyalties often pressure public officials to benefit family or close associates, undermining merit and equality.
- **Example:** Preferential allocation of government contracts or postings to relatives of politicians or senior officials, frequently highlighted in **CVC** and **CAG** observations, erodes public trust and violates **Article 14**.

2. Conflict of Interest

- Personal, financial or relational interests can compromise objective public decision-making.
- **Example:** A regulator holding shares in companies under regulation creates **ethical** conflict, even if no explicit illegality is proven. **UPSC** often links this to asset declaration and recusal norms.

3. Emotional Bias and Compassion Trap

- Excessive empathy in individual cases can lead to unequal or arbitrary decisions.
- **Example:** Granting discretionary relief repeatedly to a known individual while ignoring similarly placed beneficiaries violates fairness, even if driven by compassion.

4. Social Pressure and Patronage Networks

- Caste, community, regional or political affiliations may influence official actions.
- **Example:** Pressure on **District Collectors** during recruitment drives or welfare beneficiary selection to favor candidates from dominant local groups is a recurring governance challenge.

5. Moral Dilemmas between Humanity and Rules

- Strict adherence to rules may conflict with humanitarian considerations.
- **Example:** Eviction of slum dwellers for infrastructure projects versus right to shelter, frequently tested in urban governance and disaster management scenarios.

6. Role Conflict and Dual Obligations

- Individuals simultaneously perform private roles (parent, spouse, community member) and public roles (administrator, judge, regulator).
- **Example:** A civil servant posted in their home district faces difficulty maintaining neutrality while dealing with acquaintances or relatives, often leading to transfer demands.

7. Political Interference in Public Ethics

- Public officials may face pressure to align decisions with political interests over **ethical** considerations.
- **Example:** Manipulation of transfer–posting policies or dilution of inquiry reports against influential persons places officers in **ethical** conflict between duty and career security.

8. Normalisation of Unethical Practices

- Repeated exposure to small **ethical** compromises can normalize misconduct.
- **Example:** Acceptance of “speed money” as routine administrative practice gradually blurs boundaries between private benefit and public duty, a concern repeatedly flagged in **Second ARC** reports.

Way Forward: Strengthening Ethics in Private and Public Relationships

1. Implement comprehensive Code of Ethics as recommended by Second ARC.

- Adopt a formal **Code of Ethics** clearly defining integrity, impartiality and public interest obligations.
- **Second ARC** recommended codifying **ethical** standards beyond conduct rules to guide moral reasoning.

2. Enact statutory Conflict of Interest law with mandatory disclosure and recusal norms.

- Establish clear legal provisions mandating asset disclosure and transparent financial declarations.
- Introduce compulsory recusal mechanisms in cases involving personal or familial interests.

3. Integrate structured ethics training modules in civil services academies.

- Institutionalise case-study based **ethical** dilemma training at **LBSNAA** and state academies.
- Promote reflective learning on **constitutional morality**, empathy and probity in governance.

4. Strengthen RTI, CVC oversight and e-governance transparency mechanisms.

- Enhance transparency through proactive disclosures and digital public procurement systems.
- Empower **CVC** vigilance mechanisms to prevent favoritism and misuse of authority.

5. Ensure robust whistleblower protection for ethical courage in administration.

- Effectively implement **Whistle Blowers Protection Act** with anonymity safeguards.
- Protect officers resisting political pressure or exposing corruption from victimisation.

6. Anchor decisions in constitutional morality over social or personal morality.

- Prioritise justice, equality and rule of law over caste, community or personal loyalty.
- Reinforce **Ambedkar’s** vision that **constitutional morality** must guide public institutions.

7. Empower independent institutions like Lokpal and CAG for accountability.

- Ensure functional autonomy and adequate resources for oversight bodies.
- Strengthen audit and anti-corruption institutions to check executive excesses.

8. Include ethical conduct in performance appraisal and 360-degree reviews.

- Integrate integrity and impartiality metrics into annual performance evaluations.
- Reward **ethical** leadership and penalise misconduct through objective appraisal systems.

Ethics in private relationships nurtures character; **ethics** in public relationships ensures justice and accountability. While both are interconnected through values and virtues, they must remain sufficiently independent to prevent conflicts of interest. Harmonizing compassion with impartiality is the hallmark of **ethical** public life.



Human Values

Human values are the fundamental beliefs and enduring convictions that guide an individual's actions, preferences, and judgments across different situations. They serve as the internalized standards that define what is desirable or "**worthwhile**," acting as the building blocks of an individual's character and a society's culture. In the context of **ethics**, these values provide the moral bedrock upon which **ethical** frameworks are built, transforming abstract principles into tangible human behavior.

Definition of Human Values

Human values are principles or standards of behavior that help individuals discern what is important in life. They function as the internal compass directing actions even when external supervision is absent.

Key Characteristics of Human Values

1. Subjectivity & Universality:

- While some values are personal (e.g., punctuality), others are universal (e.g., truth, non-violence).

2. Stability:

- They are relatively permanent but can evolve through life experiences and education.

3. Hierarchical Nature:

- Individuals prioritize values differently (e.g., one person may value '**Security**' over '**Adventure**,' while another does the opposite).

Sources of Human Values

- **Primary:** Family (the first school of values) and Education.
- **Secondary:** Society, Religion, Peer groups, and Media.
- **Administrative:** The Constitution, Role models, and International Charters.

Examples:

1. Public Life Example

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam demonstrated humility, simplicity and dedication to national service throughout his public career. His refusal to misuse authority and his commitment to youth empowerment reflected deeply rooted integrity and compassion.

2. Mythological Example

In the **Ramayana**, **Rama** accepted fourteen years of exile to uphold his father's promise and protect familial honour. This illustrates unwavering commitment to truth, duty and righteousness over personal comfort.

Significance of Values in Private Life and Contemporary Governance

Values are enduring beliefs that shape behaviour, character and decision-making. In private life, they guide interpersonal relationships and personal integrity. In contemporary governance, values ensure that authority is exercised with accountability, justice and public welfare orientation. Without values, institutions may function legally but lack moral legitimacy.

I. Significance of Values in Private Life

1. Builds Personal Integrity and Character

- Values such as honesty and self-discipline create consistency between words and actions.
- They enable individuals to act **ethically** even in the absence of external supervision.
- **Example:** **A. P. J. Abdul Kalam** maintained simplicity and integrity despite holding the highest constitutional office.

2. Strengthens Trust in Relationships

- Trust is sustained when individuals consistently act according to shared moral principles.
- Values like loyalty and sincerity foster long-term stable relationships.
- **Example:** **Rahul Dravid** is respected for humility and sportsmanship, strengthening trust within teams.

3. Promotes Emotional Stability and Self-Respect

- Living according to one's values reduces guilt, anxiety and moral conflict.
- It enhances inner peace and self-confidence.
- **Example:** **Mother Teresa** devoted her life to service, reflecting deep alignment between belief and action.

4. Encourages Responsibility and Accountability

- Values instill duty-consciousness toward family and society.
- They shape habits of punctuality, fairness and commitment.
- **Example:** In the **Ramayana**, **Rama** accepted exile to honour his father's promise.

5. Shapes Aspirational Role Modelling

- Value-driven individuals become role models within families and communities.
- Their conduct inspires imitation and positive behavioural change.
- **Example:** **Nelson Mandela** embodied forgiveness and reconciliation, influencing global **ethical** discourse.

II. Significance of Values in Contemporary Governance

1. Ensures Integrity in Public Administration

- Values like probity and transparency prevent corruption and misuse of power.
- They safeguard public resources and institutional credibility.
- **Example:** **Vinod Rai** strengthened audit accountability through principled conduct.

2. Upholds Constitutional Morality

- Values align governance with justice, equality and rule of law.
- They prevent arbitrary exercise of authority.
- **Example:** **H. R. Khanna** defended right to life during the **Emergency** period.

3. Strengthens Public Trust and Legitimacy

- Citizens trust institutions that reflect fairness and accountability.
- Value-based governance enhances democratic stability.
- **Example:** Transparent electoral reforms under **T. N. Seshan** improved electoral credibility.

4. Promotes Inclusive and Equitable Policies

- Values like equality and social justice guide welfare-oriented decision-making.
- They ensure marginalised communities receive fair representation.
- **Example:** **Brazil President Lula da Silva's** revival of anti-hunger and social protection programmes offers a contemporary **Example** of inclusion-led policymaking.

5. Enhances Accountability and Responsiveness

- Values compel public officials to answer for decisions and rectify errors.
- They promote citizen-centric governance.
- **Example:** **Lal Bahadur Shastri** resigned as **Railway Minister** accepting moral responsibility after an accident.

6. Prevents Conflict of Interest and Nepotism

- Impartiality ensures separation between personal loyalties and public duty.
- It protects merit-based governance systems.
- **Example:** Civil servants recusing themselves from decisions involving relatives uphold fairness.

7. Encourages Ethical Leadership in Crisis

- Values guide difficult decisions during emergencies and uncertainty.
- They balance efficiency with compassion.
- **Example:** Administrators ensuring equitable oxygen distribution during **COVID-19** crisis reflected humane governance.

8. Supports Sustainable and Future-Oriented Governance

- Values such as responsibility and intergenerational equity guide environmental and developmental decisions.
- They ensure long-term societal well-being over short-term gains.
- **Example:** Mia Mottley's climate justice advocacy exemplifies future-oriented governance rooted in responsibility toward present and future generations.

Reasons for Erosion of Values in Present-Day Private Life and Contemporary Governance

I. Reasons for Erosion of Values in Private Life



1. Rising Materialism and Consumerism

- Excessive emphasis on wealth, status and lifestyle often overshadows intrinsic values like honesty and humility.
- **Example:** Corporate fraud cases such as **Satyam Computer Services** reflected prioritisation of profit over **ethical** responsibility.

2. Competitive and Performance-Driven Culture

- Intense academic and professional competition encourages shortcuts and compromise of principles. Fear of failure sometimes leads individuals to justify **unethical** means.
- **Example:** Examination paper leaks and cheating scandals highlight integrity erosion under pressure.

3. Decline of Joint Family System

- Nuclear families and migration reduce intergenerational moral guidance and mentoring. Limited exposure to elders weakens traditional storytelling and experiential **ethical** learning.

4. Digital Influence and Social Media Culture

- Instant gratification, validation through “likes,” and exposure to misinformation affect moral judgment.
- **Example:** Rising cyberbullying incidents indicate declining empathy in digital interactions.

5. Work–Life Imbalance and Time Constraints

- Busy professional schedules limit meaningful family discussions on **ethics** and values.
- **Example:** Reduced parental supervision weakens inter generational value transmission.

6. Peer Pressure and Social Conformity

- Individuals may compromise values to gain acceptance within social or professional groups. Fear of exclusion often overrides moral conviction.
- **Example:** The **Wells Fargo** account fraud scandal demonstrates how peer and institutional pressure can lead individuals to compromise **ethics** in pursuit of group acceptance.

II. Reasons for Erosion of Values in Contemporary Governance

1. Corruption and Rent-Seeking Behaviour

- Misuse of authority for personal gain undermines institutional integrity. Weak enforcement mechanisms embolden **unethical** practices.
- **Example:** High-profile corruption cases reduce faith in governance systems.

2. Criminalisation of Politics

- Entry of individuals with criminal backgrounds into legislative bodies weakens **ethical** standards. Power becomes associated with coercion rather than service.

3. Weak Accountability and Delayed Justice

- Slow judicial processes and selective enforcement reduce deterrence. Perceived impunity encourages moral compromise in public offices.

4. Excessive Bureaucratic Discretion

- Lack of transparent systems increases scope for favoritism and conflict of interest. Discretion without accountability often leads to abuse of power.

5. Media Sensationalism and Public Pressure

- Decision-making influenced by populist trends may compromise principled governance. Short-term political gains override long-term **ethical** considerations.

6. Erosion of Constitutional Morality

- Majoritarian or identity-driven politics may override justice and equality principles. Public policy decisions sometimes prioritise electoral advantage over fairness.
- **Example:** Judicial emphasis on **constitutional morality** in cases like **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India** reflects attempts to counter social morality dominance.

Way Forward to Address Erosion of Values in Private Life and Contemporary Governance

I. Way Forward in Private Life

1. Revitalising Value-Based Parenting

- Encourage regular discussions within families on honesty, empathy and responsibility in everyday situations.
- Parents should consciously integrate **ethical** reflection into routine decisions and conflict resolution.

2. Strengthening School–Family Collaboration

- Ensure alignment between value education taught in schools and practices reinforced at home.
- Joint workshops and interactive engagements can create consistent **ethical** messaging.

3. Promoting Digital Discipline and Media Literacy

- Teach critical evaluation of online content and responsible digital citizenship practices.
- Structured dialogue on misinformation and cyber **ethics** reduces negative technological influence.

4. Encouraging Community and Volunteer Engagement

- Participation in social service activities cultivates empathy and collective responsibility.
- Experiential exposure to social challenges strengthens compassion and civic awareness.

5. Balancing Achievement with Integrity

- Promote excellence without normalising shortcuts or **unethical** competitiveness.
- Recognise honesty, perseverance and fairness alongside academic or professional success.

6. Reinforcing Cultural and Constitutional Values

- Discuss equality, dignity and justice through practical family decisions and **Examples**.
- Link personal conduct with democratic responsibilities and fundamental duties.

II. Way Forward in Contemporary Governance

1. Institutionalising Comprehensive Code of Ethics

- Implement clear **ethical** guidelines separating private interests from public responsibilities.
- Regular monitoring and enforcement ensure sustained **ethical** compliance.

2. Strengthening Conflict of Interest Frameworks

- Mandate transparent asset disclosures and enforce recusal norms in decision-making.
- Clear regulations reduce scope for nepotism and favoritism.

3. Expanding Digital Governance Mechanisms

- Adopt automated systems and digital platforms to minimise discretionary abuse.
- Audit trails and transparent procurement systems enhance accountability.

4. Protecting Whistleblowers and Ethical Officers

- Ensure effective implementation of whistleblower protection laws.
- Safeguarding **ethical** courage encourages resistance against corruption.

5. Promoting Ethical Leadership and Role Modelling

- Public leaders must demonstrate integrity, humility and accountability in visible conduct.
- Leadership behaviour significantly shapes institutional culture and public trust.

6. Empowering Independent Oversight Institutions

- Provide autonomy and adequate resources to vigilance and audit bodies.
- Timely investigation and prosecution strengthen deterrence against misconduct.

7. Integrating Ethics into Performance Appraisal Systems

- Include integrity and accountability indicators in official evaluation frameworks.
- Reward **ethical** behaviour and penalise misconduct through objective mechanisms.

Human values provide the moral foundation that guides individuals beyond rules toward **ethical** judgment and empathy. They sustain trust, social harmony, and responsible governance, making them indispensable for both personal integrity and public life.