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Distance Learning Programme

UPPCS Mains

Ethics-I





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ETHICS-I

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HUMAN VALUES

Human values are those characteristics which are at the core of being human, that differentiates people from the rest of the animals. These values teach humans to recognize each other and to know how to interact with one another, and help man to live in harmony with the world. Truthfulness, peace, love, non-violence, altruism and cooperation are the most fundamental human values that make man's existence meaningful, congenial, and worthy of praise.

Fundamental Characteristics of Human Values

- Human values are considered universal, timeless and eternal, applying to all human beings.
- Human values are unifying in nature as they cut across every individual's social, cultural, religious and ethnic interests.
- Values are not inborn but internalised through the process of conditioning, learning or socialization.
- The practice of these human values in our daily lives is the key to sustainable peace and happiness.
- Human values bring out the fundamental goodness of human beings and society at large.

Classification of Human Values

- **Intrinsic Values:** The term intrinsic means 'in itself' or 'for its own sake'. They are judged good not for something else, but are good in and of themselves. In other words, they have an eternal property without any reference to an end. For example, Love, happiness or peace have an intrinsic value, independent of anything.
- **Extrinsic/Instrumental Values:** These are those which serve as a means to generate the intrinsic values. These values are judged good for something, i.e., their values are dependent on the consequences or the outcomes. For instance, having money has an extrinsic value because it can buy us the things we need or want, thus making us satisfied and happy.

FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN VALUES

Truthfulness

Truthfulness refers to the state of being true and honest. It means stating the facts, opinions, and truths to the best of one's knowledge without mixing any falsehood. There are many synonyms of truth, such as honesty, integrity, veracity, etc. As per Aristotle 'to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true' thus, truthfulness means

that the speaker should say what is so, as he sees and understands it, and that he should express what is in his mind.

Most religions place a high value on the principle of truthfulness and regard it as the duty of every person to practice truthfulness. Truth is considered an obligation, something as absolute and sublime. A truthful person does not only tell the truth, but he also carries truthfulness in his actions, words, nature, etc. Ancient Indians were noted for their truthfulness. King Harishchandra sacrificed everything for the sake of truth.

Importance of Truth

Truth matters, both to us as individuals and to society as a whole in the following ways:

- Truthfulness builds the moral character of a person. It gives a man firmness and stability. A truthful person meets his commitments and promises; he does not mislead others, thus earns trust and respect among people both in private and public sphere.
- Lying leads to a constant fear of being found out and that results in the loss of a peaceful life. A truthful man, on the other hand, has a clear conscience and does not fear anybody. So, his mind is free from the anxiety that constantly troubles a liar.
- Truthfulness is a prerequisite both for building a stable, lawful society and engaging in meaningful interaction with others. The social existence of human beings depends on truth telling. Truth is the very basis of trust, faith and loyalty among human relations. All relations of men with each other, the whole of life of the community, institution of marriage, business, commerce, everything finds its basis on the intrinsic value of truth. While truthfulness makes social bonds, lying and hypocrisy break them. In the absence of truth telling, the interpersonal relations as well as ordinary transactions of common life will be ridden with doubt, suspicion and anxiety.
- Truth is the foundation for a fair and just society. In court, we require witnesses to swear to tell 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. If witnesses habitually start lying, judicial proceedings will end in mockery of justice.
- The importance of truthfulness lies in vanity about lying. It is often said that one may gain success by lying for a short time, but in the long run he is bound to suffer. For instance, if a shopkeeper sells his articles by giving false information, people will not deal with him the next time.

Why Do People Lie?

There are many reasons for which people are reluctant to face the truth or abandon the truth:

- **A lie is essentially a means to achieve some end:** People often lie to gain personal advantage. People can lie either to save themselves from punishment like a child lies about his mischief to his mother to avoid scolding. While sometimes people utter falsehood to damage the interest and reputation of others, sometimes it is used to project oneself in an attractive but false light. A lie may also be used to flatter those in powerful positions to get into their good books.
- **The essence of falsehood is the intention to deceive others:** Lying is a form of deception. For instance, a person communicates some information to another while knowing that what he/she is saying is not true or believing it to be untrue, thus, intending to deceive or mislead the other person by doing so.
- Many times a lie arises from shyness and embarrassment, and also from the insufficient mastery of the language.

Different Aspects of Truth Telling

- **Distortion or suppression of the truth:** Sometimes people do not resort to wholesale lying, but distort the truth to mislead others. Truth is told in such a manner as to falsify another fact. For instance, media may resort to distorting/suppressing the facts or harsh realities under political or corporate pressure and does not present the true picture to its viewers, thus manipulating their ideas and beliefs.
- **Half truth:** Sometimes only a part of truth or half truth may be told to misguide others. For instance, in the epic Mahabharata, during the course of war Yudhishthir uttered a statement 'Ashwatthama is killed' without specifying if it was the person or an animal, thus having a double meaning only to mislead his Guru Dronacharya to accept the false meaning and loose in war.
- **Remaining silent:** People may choose to remain silent when lies are being told instead of rebutting them immediately. For instance, many a times in court proceeding of criminal cases eyewitnesses choose to keep silent in order to save their own skin or to avoid inconvenience/harm to themselves.

Can Lying be Justified in Some Circumstances?

The general rule is, that truth should never be violated, however, philosophers and moral scholars are divided on the question that –'Are there any circumstances/ exceptions which justify departure from the duty to tell the truth?'

- For philosophers like Kant and St. Augustine truth is an absolute virtue. Immanuel Kant regarded truth telling as a categorical imperative (absolute command or duty) which admits no exception. For a stringent moralist like St. Augustine 'no matter whatever its motive or purpose, falsehood is inherently wrong'.
- As per Socrates lies can be told to guard against enemies and to prevent harm to others. For instance, lying in order to protect an innocent absconder from killers is considered justified.
- As per some thinkers there are some circumstances in which lying may be acceptable or necessary. For instance, sometimes we also need to remain silent if someone has confided in us and asked us not to share the information further. Under these circumstances, it is therefore appropriate not to tell all the truth. Moreover, in some situations it is imperative to avoid telling the truth. For example, Governments may not disclose/dissimulate about matters deemed vital to national security and interest. Similarly a government agent may need to lie to cover up his identity for the sake of the greater good.

The pursuit of truth, whether in private or public life, is difficult. Though truth is considered as the very essence/substance of morality and all religions and philosophical teachings promote the practice of truthfulness, however, people have to adopt truth as a practical virtue in their actual life. The quest for the truth shall not be abandoned just because of fear of bad consequences. Mahatma Gandhi identified truth as the highest virtue. For him the means we employ to achieve what we desire have to be pure and truthful, hence the path of truth shall be followed in all circumstances.

Non-Violence

Non-violence is the practice of being harmless to self and others under every condition. It comes from the belief that hurting people, animals or the environment is unnecessary

to achieve an outcome. It is a general philosophy of abstention from violence based on moral, religious or spiritual principles. In Sanskrit, non-violence is called Ahimsa means 'lack of desire to harm or kill'.

As a value base for human actions, non-violence advocates the peaceful resolution of conflict through negotiation and mediation. When faced with unyielding power imbalances, discrimination, and oppression, it offers the practices of non-violent resistance as an alternative to violence.

Prominent Thoughts on Non-Violence

- **Jainism:** While the doctrine of Ahimsa/non-violence is an important concept in Hindu and Buddhist tradition, it is considered the central or core teaching of Jaina ethical thought. Jains believe that life (which equals soul) is sacred regardless of faith, caste, race, or even species in its pure form, Ahimsa means completely abstaining from causing injury to others. 'Others' here includes all life forms, including birds, plants, and even micro-organisms.

As per Jainism, 'Ahimsa Paramo Dharma', i.e., non-violence is the supreme religion. It does not merely indicate absence of physical violence, but also indicates absence of desire to indulge in any sort of violence. Vegetarianism and other non-violent practices and rituals of Jains flow from the principle of Ahimsa.

- **Gandhi:** One of the most famous leaders of a non-violent movement was Mohandas K. Gandhi, who opposed British imperial rule in India during the 20th century. Gandhi took the religious principle of Ahimsa common to Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism and turned it into a non-violent tool for mass action.

Gandhi explained non-violence/Ahimsa in both negative and positive terms:

Negative view: It is refraining from killing and injuring others. One should not harm anyone by word, thought or deed. Violence has to be shunned in all its aspects.

Positive view: Non-violence does not just mean that one avoids injuring others; one should also show overflowing love to mankind and all living beings.

Non-violence is not cowardice: As per Gandhi, Ahimsa is impossible without fearlessness. He said 'Non-violence is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave'. Exercise of non-violence requires far greater bravery than that of swordsmanship. Cowardice is wholly inconsistent with non-violence.

Gandhi did not think that non-violence was a tool for those who were too scared to take up arms. It is very opposite of weakness or cowardice. Gandhi said 'my non-violence does not admit of running away from danger and leaving dear ones unprotected. Between violence and cowardly flight, I can only prefer violence to cowardice'. Although, there is the absence of physical threat or retaliation, non-violence is not passive. The power of non-violence lies in patience and self-control motivated by the intention to meet human needs and promote a more just society.

Debate Over Ethics of Violence

The ethics of violence is a fiercely debated issue. Socialists like Karl Marx, justified violence to create a stateless society. As he considered the modern representative state is an instrument for exploiting wage labour by capital, an instrument of one class to rule over another. However, thinkers like Gandhi insisted on purity of both means and ends. As per him while a non-violent protest can provide a 'win-win' solution whenever possible;

an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind. The two opposite views in this regard can be analysed as follows:

■ **Violence is Necessary and Justified:** As per some thinkers all violence cannot be condemned or disgusted because of the practical reasons such as:

- In almost every country of the world, the States have armies, whose main purpose is to guard against other State armies in case of any threat to its security. Moreover, all states also have officially sanctioned police forces, with authority to use violence to provide security to vulnerable sections of society and those in need as well as control the domestic population in the event of chaos by force if needed.
- The use of violence is considered justified in pointing to increasing incidences of terrorism, mass slaughters, genocides, suicide bombings, and thus the need to create a counter defence to crimes against humanity.
- By its very nature, violence is a necessary evil. All violence cannot be treated as the same; all violence cannot be shunned. For instance, there is a difference between the violence of the oppressed and the violence of the oppressor. During a course of war, both warring camps cause or itself suffer the greatest number of victims. However, there is a difference in the cruelty inflicted by the perpetrator of war and violence used by the defender to guard against violent repression and to resist occupation. Similarly, a slave-owner who through cunning and violence shackles a slave in chains, and a slave who through cunning or violence breaks the chains, cannot be treated as equals before a court of morality. The use of violence by a girl, who is held in captivity and tries to shoot her way out cannot be considered unjustified against the violence used by her captivator.

In such cases, violence can be effective in preventing violence. Thus, violence is justified when it is a reaction to violent oppression and injustice.

■ **Violence is Unethical and Not Justified:** As per other thinkers, violence cannot be treated as just and ethical because of the following reasons:

- Violence always creates more violence. The cycle of violence never ends up. Violence against anyone, whether verbally or physically, will attract violence/ backlash sooner or later. The history is witness to this fact that violence begets more violence. For instance, the Cold War was the after effect of World War II, which was in itself a backlash against the violence of World War I and these wars were backlashes against even older violence, echoing back to the very beginning of history.
- The development of lethal weapons of mass destruction is justified on the premise of self-defence and the necessity to maintain peace, law and order. However, this has only resulted in creating a security dilemma among nations and consequent proliferation of destructive weapons in the world.
- The NATO military actions against dictatorial regimes in Syria and Libya have not only led the killing of millions of innocents, but also increase in the might of terrorist organizations like ISIS inflicting further violence worldwide.

Thus, violence never ends so long as we respond to violence with violence. The cycle only ends when we choose to be non-violent, even in the face of the violence of others.

■ **Violence does not provide sustainable results:**

- The law enforcement creates at least part of the crime that it is trying to end. The very concept of retributive justice or punishment rests on the idea that there are some people who are just 'wrong' and who deserve bad treatment. This would indicate that hurting the criminals who are dangerous to society is justified. However, it

must be understood that punishment is not a kind or humane act; it is violence and when someone receives punishment, they are getting filled up with violence which will find its way out again. Thus, the cycle of violence and vengeance continues. It is well known that the reoffending rate amongst ex-prisoners is staggeringly high.

- We can subjugate an enemy by use of force, but we cannot subjugate hatred, resentment, mistrust and wickedness through force. The antidote for violence can only be non-violence. A peaceful society can never be achieved through the use of violence. Neither the French nor the Russian revolution could establish a peaceful democratic society. Hence, if we wish to achieve just ends, the means we use must also be just.
- **The tool of violence is often misused:** Violence is often used as a means to justify the existing ruling class monopoly. For instance, in case of Nazi Germany, the state power or the government was the greatest source of organized violence. Moreover, the concept of 'war on terrorism' used by U.S.A to justify its invasion in Iraq is said to be inspired by its motive to gain control over its oil resources and supremacy in the West Asia region.

Importance of Non-Violence

- Non-violence does not just mean not doing violence. It is also a way of taking positive action to resist oppression or bring about political and social change. For example, Gandhi employed the tool of non-violence to fight not only the colonial rule, but also the social evils such as racial discrimination and untouchability.
- In modern times, non-violent methods of action have been a powerful tool for fighting for human rights, justice as well as political malpractices. The Anna Hazare movement against corruption and the Narmada Bachao Andolan are among many examples of its use.
- The benefits of a non-violent culture are tremendous. If nations and their people adopt non-violence in their thinking, planning and actions than instead of devoting time, energy, money and skills towards the development of lethal weapons, the resources can be diverted to achieve the best in spirituality, science, commerce, art, education and other spheres of human activity leading to ecological, economic, political and social development of nations.
- While violence not only threatens survival, but also basic human rights and security, non-violence is a value concept which assesses the manner in which interpersonal and intergroup conflicts are peacefully resolved, power imbalances changed, and oppression is overcome.
- Violence essentially presupposes demonstration of power to create law and order in the society out of fear or compulsion. On the other hand the promotion value of non-violence creates peace and order out of great respect for the rights and dignity of each human being.
- Peace and non-violence is essential to providing the level of stability and predictability vital for a prosperous business economy. People are less likely to invest money and effort towards growth in unstable and violent conditions. Countries with high levels of violence witness slowed economic growth and high socio-economic inequality.
- Practice of environmental non-violence is essential to the achievement of ecological sustainability. Being violent (causing harm) to the environment is dangerous and life threatening for the earth while adopting a more 'green' and non-violent way of living is the key to sustainable development.

Humility

Humility is the quality of being humble. To be humble is to have a modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance or rank. However, it does not mean self debasement or denying one's merit, talents and accomplishment rather it is an acknowledgment of one's talents and abilities. Humility is the quality of not placing oneself on a higher pedestal than others, even when we far exceed them in talents and achievements. For instance, even if one is rich and powerful, one should not feel a sense of superiority over the poor and weak.

From Buddha to Gandhi, all great personalities displayed humility in their behaviour. The great leaders of the world who owned mass appeal like Abraham Lincoln, Lal Bahadur Shastri always practiced humility.

Humility is Not Weakness

In some cultures, humility is considered weakness. People appreciate outlandish displays of wealth and power. A certain amount of pride or arrogance in the behaviour of people with high finance and achievement is both tolerated and respected. On the other hand, simple living, humility is taken as a sign of weakness, submissiveness, and fear.

However, this is a false idea of humility. Humility is not about 'putting yourselves down'. Humility is an indication that we know where our true strength lies. It is avoidance of arrogance, being a braggart and self-obsessed. C.S. Lewis says 'humility is not thinking less of yourselves, but thinking yourselves less'. For instance, the billionaire Sam Walton, founder of the Wal-Mart Empire can be considered an outstanding example of humility who did not believe in showoff. Despite a huge amassing of wealth, he used to drive around in an old pickup truck; such humility was looked on with respect and approval in his home country America.

Thus, real humility is a sign of strength, authentic confidence, and courage. It is like the root which ideally should grow downward while we move upwards. It is a virtue that gives us a sense of satisfaction in our work while freedom from arrogance.

Importance of Humility

The goodness of humility is evident in all walks of life:

■ In Professional/Public Life

- Humility is the line between overestimating our abilities and underestimating them. While overestimation makes one arrogant and blind to one's shortcomings, underestimation makes one miss opportunities for success. However, humility makes people to see their abilities in a humble perspective. They realize how far they fall short and have an overwhelming sense of their need to grow. It is also said that 'a humble man makes room for progress; the proud man believes he is already there'.
- To be an effective leader, humility is a very important characteristic. Humble leaders approach their subordinates in a polite and courteous manner. They often acknowledge their own strengths and weaknesses and are open to seeking the advice and counsel of others. By doing this, they are able to learn more from others, grow, and also transform their weaknesses into strengths and thus, can bring about more productive results. For instance, M.S. Dhoni recognizes the contributions of others,