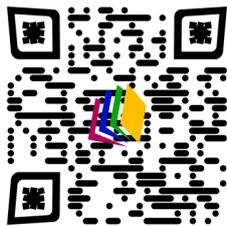


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## **Philosophical Background of Ethics in Governance and Society**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

Ethics, morals, values and attitude are the guiding force of our behaviour; they are also the building block of human character. Ethics is also central to stability and continuity of any society. This article is first in the series of article on ethics which we collectively try to put forward.

This article deals with philosophical background of strong ethics covering treatises of both western and Indian thinker, social reformers who contributed immensely to the domain of ethics and draws a comparison between them as ‘Socratic gesture of Gandhi’, ‘Gandhian impression on Mandela and Martin Luther king junior’, and their point of convergence and divergence and their implication on administration. Present paper concisely brings about the meaning, nature and scope of ethics and morality in public life, their interrelation, theoretical underpinning of ethics and its determinants, challenges and measure to overcome them.

It highlights the need of strong internal locus of control i.e ethics, morals in public life. It also touches upon the relevance of strong institution of restraints like police, judiciary etc. The major identification that ethics pertains to are also focused such as, Ethics as fairness, Ethics as justice, Ethics as equitable distribution of resources. To further elaborate them, article briefly mentions Rawls theory of justice, entitlement approach of Amartya Sen, Rights based approach, Ending all forms of discrimination approach. It builds the theoretical base by defining ethics, its determinants and how not only ethics but sound ethics should be the building block of society based on just values like liberty, equality, accommodativeness, openness to all culture and eradicating the traditional institution like sati, purity-pollution, child marriage etc.

Further this paper also touches upon the governance underpinning of ethics which will be exclusively discussed in our series of article. The paper tried to bring out the issues of society, social justice, and internal

security challenge along with governance in consideration with omission and commission of ethical conduct.

Further the article delves insight upon the relationship between ethics and morality, their contradictions and dialectical relation, temporal and contextual relevance of one over other. The utility of ethical principles and morality is essential in various dimensions of public life, like social justice in society will be reflected if robustness of integrity is observed and repeated over generations. Good governance and social capital would be natural outcome of observing and maintaining robustness of ethics and morality in public life.

Lastly it tried to link the national and international occurrence in consideration with ethics and integrity like recent killing of George Floyd in USA which display the prejudice and stereotype which exist in structurally stratified society which lead to discrimination, inequality and further social exclusion which leave the segment of society humiliated, subordinated and alienated. Hence, the purpose of the paper is to reflect that the strong ethics in society can reduce the social challenges, improve the governance, bring effectiveness in social justice measure, and further reduce the threat to internal security.

**KEY WORDS:** Ethics, Morality, Governance, Emotion, Egoism, Altruism

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## INTRODUCTION

*“As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world - that is the myth of the atomic age - as in being able to remake ourselves”*

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

The Mahatma’s vision of a strong and prosperous India - Purna Swaraj - can never become a reality if we do not address the issue of the strong-hold of corruption on our polity, economy and society in

general. It requires concerted and holistic approach to bring suitable structural changes ethically. Ethics, morals, values and attitude are the guiding force of our behaviour. They are also the building blocks of human character. We often use ethics interchangeably with legality and morality. However, ethics is different term and is also central to stability and continuity of any society. The meaning, nature and scope of ethics have expanded in the course of time. ‘Ethics’ is integral to public administration and public life. It focuses on how the public administrator should question, behave, reflect, in order to be able to act responsibly and manage its state of affairs amicably. For that matter ethics guide nature, behaviour, choices and preferences of functionaries so that they can achieve desired goal and function in a just, fair and objective manner.

## MEANING AND RELEVANCE OF ETHICS

Ethics is collective conscience of society. It is based on values which are abstract, object-free, and universal. They are general determinants of our behaviour and is a set of criterions, standards, norm, yardstick, task that society places on itself and which guide behaviour, choices and actions. Ethics are societal, they help society to sustain, maintain social order, stability and continuity. Being consciously aware that standards do not, by themselves, ensure ethical behaviour; that requires a robust culture of integrity to challenge corrupt malpractices.

‘Ethics’ is a system of accepted beliefs, mores and values, which influence human behaviour. More specifically, it is a system based on morals. Thus, ethics is the study of what is morally right, and what is not. The Latin origin of the word ‘ethics’ is ethicus that means character. Since the early 17th century, ethics has been accepted as the “Science of