

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES · MAINS GENERAL STUDIES PAPER IV

Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

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Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude for UPSC

Notes for UPSC Mains General Studies Paper IV

2027 Edition · Compiled October 2026 · Compiled by Arvind KrS

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UNIT I

5 CHAPTERS

Ethics and Human Interface

Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions; dimensions of ethics; ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values – lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators; role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.

CHAPTERS

01	Understanding Ethics: Essence, Determinants and Consequences	6
02	Dimensions of Ethics and Ethical Theories	21
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TOPICS COVERED IN THIS UNIT

01 Understanding Ethics: Essence, Determinants and Consequences

What Ethics Means · Why Ethics Matters · The Essence of Ethics · Determinants of Ethics · Consequences of Ethics · Ethics and Law · Ethics, Religion and Politics · Constitutional and Popular Morality · The Vocabulary of Morality · How Good People Slip

02 Dimensions of Ethics and Ethical Theories

The Four Branches of Ethics · Meta-Ethics: The Nature of Morality · Duty-Based Ethics · Consequentialism and Its Variants · Virtue, Care and Situation Ethics · Rights, Justice and Means–Ends · Applied Ethics: Fields and Frontiers · How Moral Judgement Develops · Moral Intuition and Moral Reasoning · An Integrated Decision Lens

03 Ethics in Private and Public Relationships

Private and Public Relationships · Values in Private Life · Values in Public Relationships · Principles of Public Life · Self-Interest and Selfishness · When Private Meets Public · Conflict of Interest · Managing Conflicts of Interest · The Personal Life of Officials · Gender and the Ethical Workplace

04 Human Values: Role of Family, Society and Education

Understanding Human Values · Classifying Values · Why Values Matter · Universal or Changing? · Vices and the Crisis of Values · Conflict of Values · The Family: First School of Values · Society, Media and Religion · Educational Institutions · Values for Contemporary India

05 Lessons from Great Leaders, Reformers and Administrators

Learning from Lives · World Leaders of Conscience · Builders of Modern India · Reformers of the 19th Century · Reformers against Caste · Administrators Who Set Standards · Ambition and Principle · Turning Lessons into Practice

ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

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Understanding Ethics: Essence, Determinants and Consequences

For six years India's electoral bond scheme was perfectly legal. Parliament had passed it, the government had notified it and the State Bank of India sold the bonds. In February 2024 a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court struck it down, holding that anonymous political donations defeated the voter's right to know who funds the people who govern. The episode captures the oldest question in public life: is it enough that something is *permitted*, or must it also be *right*? That gap between what we may do and what we ought to do is the territory of ethics.

SYLLABUS

MAINS · GS PAPER IV

Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions; dimensions of ethics; ethics in private and public relationships

CONTENTS

01	What Ethics Means	02	Why Ethics Matters
03	The Essence of Ethics	04	Determinants of Ethics
05	Consequences of Ethics	06	Ethics and Law
07	Ethics, Religion and Politics	08	Constitutional and Popular Morality
09	The Vocabulary of Morality	10	How Good People Slip
11	Previous Year Questions		

This chapter covers:

- what ethics means, and how it differs from morality, values, codes and law;
- why ethics matters for individuals, organisations and the State;
- the essence of ethics and how a human action is judged;
- the determinants and the consequences of ethics in human actions;

- ethics in relation to law, religion and politics, and constitutional versus popular morality;
- the working vocabulary of morality and why good people sometimes go wrong.

The dimensions of ethics and the major ethical theories follow in Chapter 2; ethics in private and public relationships in Chapter 3; values in Chapter 4.

01 What Ethics Means

The word **ethics** comes from the Greek *ethos*, meaning character, custom or habitual way of life. Its Latin twin *mores* (customs) gave us "morals". Indian thought has its own rich vocabulary: **dharma** (that which sustains, the right order of duties), **niti** (right policy and conduct, as in the Nitishastra literature) and **rita** (the cosmic order of the Vedas). Across cultures the core question is the same: *how ought a human being to live and act, towards oneself, towards others and towards the world?*

As a discipline, ethics is the **systematic study of the principles and values that help us decide what is right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust** in human conduct. It does not stop at describing how people behave. It asks how they *should* behave, and it insists on reasons. A preference ("I like honesty") becomes an ethical position only when it is defended ("honesty matters because trust is the basis of every relationship and institution").

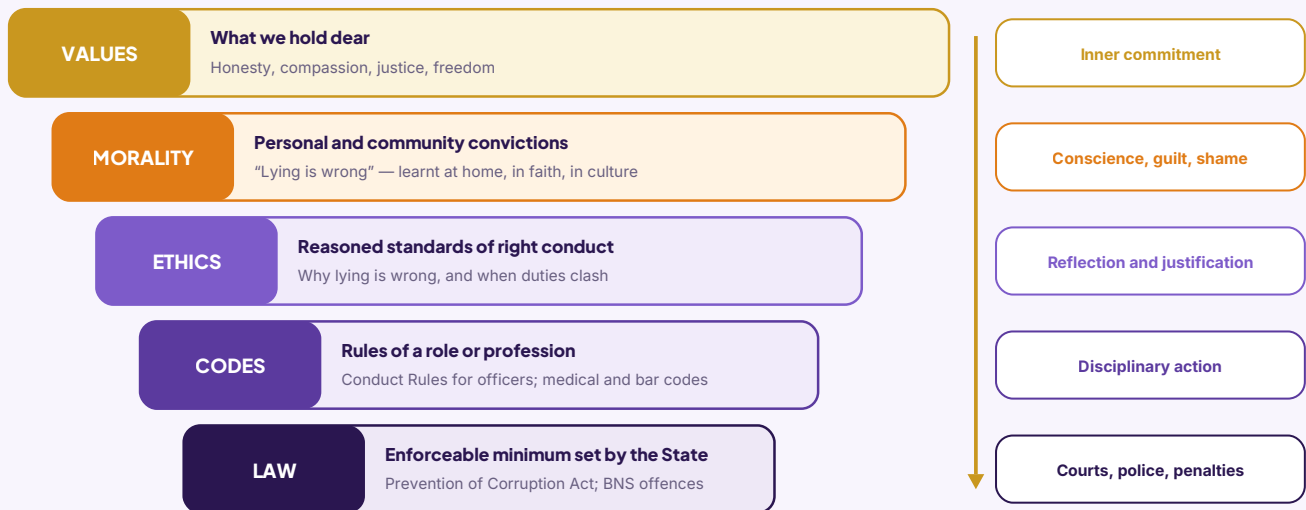
Ethics and Its Neighbours

In everyday speech ethics, morality and values are used interchangeably, and in an exam answer that is rarely penalised. But the distinctions sharpen analysis, especially when a public servant's personal convictions pull one way and official duty another.

TERM	WHAT IT IS	SOURCE AND ENFORCEMENT	ILLUSTRATION
Values	Enduring beliefs about what is worth pursuing	Upbringing, culture, experience; held inwardly	Truth, compassion, freedom
Morality	Personal or communal convictions about right and wrong	Conscience, religion, tradition; guilt and social disapproval	"Never lie to your parents"
Ethics	Reasoned, often codified, standards of right conduct	Philosophy, professions, institutions; reflection and peer judgement	Why lying harms trust; when confidentiality may yield to safety
Etiquette	Conventions of polite behaviour	Social custom; mild disapproval	Greeting elders, table manners
Law	Rules made and enforced by the State	Legislature, courts; penalties	Bribery is an offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988

From Values to Law: Five Layers of Right Conduct

Each layer narrows the one above it — and each is enforced differently.



Wider and more personal at the top; narrower, written and enforceable at the bottom. Law is ethics' floor, not its ceiling.

Fig. 1.1 Values, morality, ethics, codes and law form a narrowing ladder: each is enforced differently, and law is only the floor.

The line between **morality** and **ethics** is drawn in two ways. One view treats morality as the content (the convictions people hold) and ethics as the critical study of that content. The other treats morality as personal and ethics as the standards of a group or profession. Both views agree on one practical point: **personal morality cannot override the ethics of a public role**. An officer who privately disapproves of a lawful policy must still implement it fairly, unless it demands a clearly unlawful or inhuman act.

02 Why Ethics Matters

The Nature of Ethics

- **Normative:** it prescribes how one ought to act, rather than merely recording how people do act.
- **Rational and reflective:** ethical judgements must be justified by reasons that others can examine.
- **Concerned with voluntary conduct:** reflexes and accidents are outside its scope; choices are within it.
- **About the "other":** it asks us to weigh interests beyond our own, whether of people, animals, future generations or nature.
- **Universal yet contextual:** dignity, honesty and justice are recognised almost everywhere, but applying them depends on circumstances.
- **Dynamic:** new knowledge and technology keep opening new questions, from data privacy and artificial intelligence to gene editing and climate justice.
- **Above the legal minimum:** ethics often asks for more than the law requires.

What Ethics Does for Us

Ethics is not an ornament on top of a working life. It does practical work. It acts as a **moral compass** in situations that rules do not foresee. It improves **decision-making** by forcing us to look at motives, means and effects on every stakeholder. It builds **trust**, the invisible capital that lets families, markets and governments

function without a policeman at every door. It protects the **dignity** of the weak against the convenience of the strong. In administration it converts **power into responsibility** and discretion into fairness.

REMEMBER: COMPETENCE NEEDS A COMPASS

Skill without ethics only makes harm more efficient. A brilliant engineer who cuts corners on a bridge, or a capable officer who bends a tender for a friend, does more damage precisely because of their competence. E. Sreedharan's Konkan Railway and Delhi Metro are remembered for both: world-class execution and a refusal to compromise on probity, timelines and safety. Competence decides what one *can* do; ethics decides what one *should* do.

Shared values also hold up institutions that look purely legal or economic. Laws work mainly because most people obey them voluntarily; no police force can watch everyone. Democracy needs tolerance of opponents and acceptance of defeat, which no statute can enforce. Markets depend on honest weights, truthful accounts and contracts kept even when breaking them would pay. When these unwritten obligations weaken, as in tax evasion, polarised politics or financial frauds, the formal institutions begin to fail however good the rulebook.

03 The Essence of Ethics

The **essence** of a thing is the quality that makes it what it is. The essence of ethics is the **conscious, voluntary choice of the right over the merely convenient**, made with regard for others. Knowing the good is not enough; ethics lies in choosing and practising it, especially when it costs something.

Four Core Principles

Medical ethics has distilled four principles that work well far beyond hospitals:

- **Beneficence:** do good.
- **Non-maleficence:** do no harm.
- **Autonomy:** respect people's right to decide for themselves.
- **Justice:** treat people fairly and share burdens and benefits equitably.

Almost every civilisation also states some form of the **Golden Rule**: treat others as you would wish to be treated. The Mahabharata says one should not do to others what one would find painful oneself; Confucius, the Buddha, the Torah, the Gospels and the Hadith say much the same. The rule is a portable test of fairness for any decision.

How an Action Is Judged

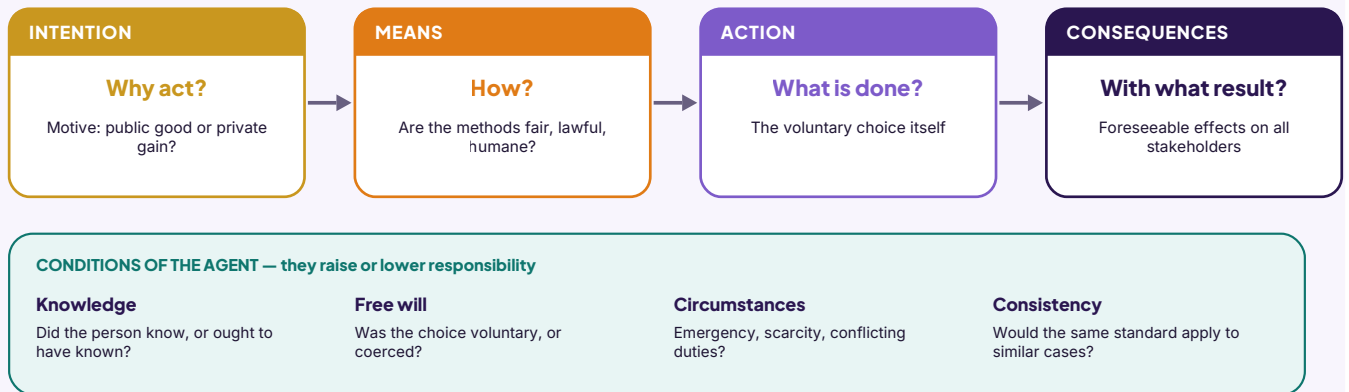
Ethics rarely judges an act by its outcome alone. A full evaluation looks at a chain of four links (intention, means, the act itself and its consequences) and at the conditions under which the person acted.

- **Intention:** a benevolent motive adds moral worth, but cannot rescue harmful means.

- **Means:** desirable ends do not justify every method. Gandhi held that means and ends are as inseparable as seed and tree.
- **Consequences:** actual and reasonably foreseeable effects on all stakeholders count.
- **Knowledge and free will:** responsibility shrinks with genuine ignorance or coercion, and grows when one ought to have known better.
- **Circumstances and consistency:** emergencies and conflicting duties matter, but similar cases should be judged by similar standards.

Anatomy of an Ethical Act

An action is judged by four links in a chain, read against the conditions of the person acting.



A good end does not clean a bad means, and a good motive does not excuse careless consequences.

Fig. 1.2 The four links of an ethical act, and the conditions that raise or lower the actor's responsibility.

04

Determinants of Ethics

Determinants of Ethics

What shapes a person's moral choices — from the inside out.

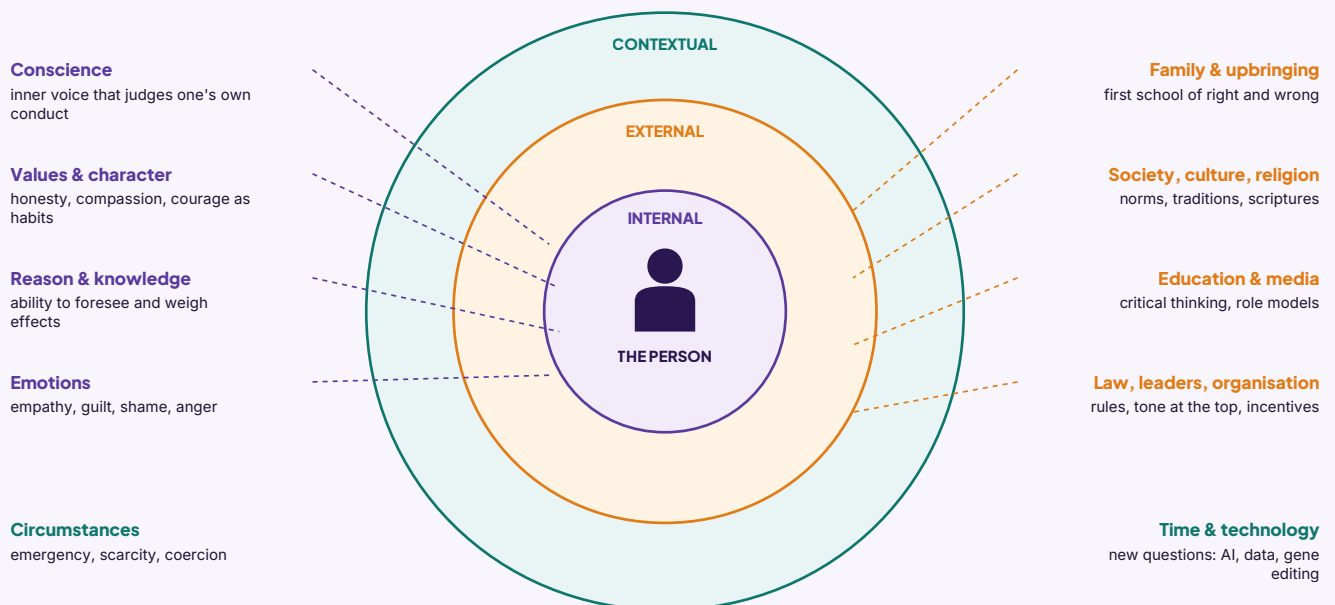


Fig. 1.3 Internal, external and contextual determinants act together on every moral choice.

Why do two people raised in the same city respond differently when offered a bribe? **Determinants of ethics** are the factors that shape a person's moral awareness, judgement and behaviour. They work in three layers.

Internal Determinants

- **Conscience:** the inner faculty that judges one's own conduct (see Chapter 18).
- **Values and character:** virtues practised until they become habits.
- **Reason and knowledge:** the ability to foresee effects and weigh competing claims.
- **Emotions:** empathy moves us to help; guilt and shame restrain us; anger and fear can distort judgement.
- **Intention and motivation:** what one is really trying to achieve.

External Determinants

- **Family:** the first school of right and wrong, through example more than instruction.
- **Society and culture:** norms, customs and traditions set what is "normal". These can uplift, as with seva and hospitality, or entrench injustice, as with untouchability or dowry.
- **Religion and philosophy:** ideas of duty, compassion, karma and justice.
- **Education and media:** critical thinking, civic sense and role models, or misinformation.
- **Peers and leaders:** people copy those around and above them; the "tone at the top" sets an organisation's ethics.
- **Law and institutions:** rules, incentives and penalties set minimum standards. The Code of Hammurabi already punished a judge who altered a sealed verdict, nearly four thousand years ago.

Contextual Determinants

Circumstances such as scarcity, emergencies or coercion change what can fairly be expected of a person. **Time** changes standards too: practices once accepted, such as child marriage or manual scavenging, are now recognised as wrong. **Technology** keeps adding questions earlier generations never faced, such as deepfakes, algorithmic bias and surveillance. Life experience can also reshape ethics: a person who suffers discrimination abroad often becomes far more sensitive to it at home.

CONCEPT: PERSON OR SITUATION?

Moral psychology shows that situations matter more than we like to admit. In famous experiments people obeyed harmful orders, conformed to obviously wrong group answers or walked past someone in need when they were in a hurry. The lesson for governance is twofold: **build character** through values and training, and **design situations**, through transparency, rotation of sensitive posts, checks and protection for dissent, so that ordinary people are not set up to fail.

05

Consequences of Ethics

Ethical and unethical choices both spread outward like ripples in a pond, from the self to the organisation, to society and finally to the legitimacy of the State.

Consequences of Ethics: The Ripple Effect

One choice spreads outward — as trust when it is ethical, as damage when it is not.

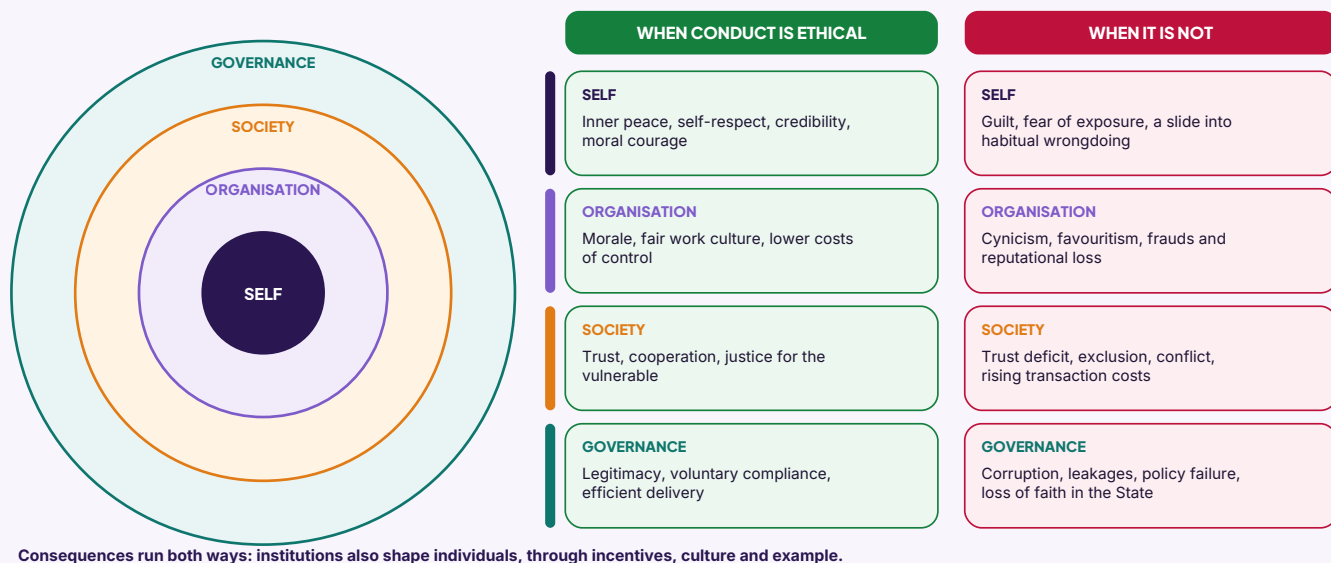


Fig. 1.4 The ripple effect: the same choice builds trust when ethical and spreads damage when not.

For the Individual

Ethical consistency brings **inner peace**, self-respect and credibility. It strengthens **moral courage**, because each honest choice makes the next one easier. Unethical conduct works the other way: a first small compromise makes the second feel normal, and a person can slide into habitual wrongdoing while still thinking of themselves as decent.

For Organisations and Society

Ethical organisations enjoy higher morale, lower costs of supervision and durable reputations. Societies with high trust cooperate easily, protect the vulnerable and resolve conflicts peacefully. A **trust deficit** does the reverse. Every transaction needs paperwork, guarantees and middlemen; cynicism spreads; people withdraw into narrow loyalties of caste, community or faction.

For Governance

Ethical governance earns **legitimacy**, and legitimate governments get voluntary compliance in tax payment, vaccination drives and traffic rules, which is far cheaper than coercion. Corruption causes leakages, distorts policy, punishes the honest and erodes faith in democracy itself. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission's fourth report, *Ethics in Governance* (2007), treated corruption as one of the gravest obstacles to good governance and traced it to a deficit of ethics as much as to weak laws.

06

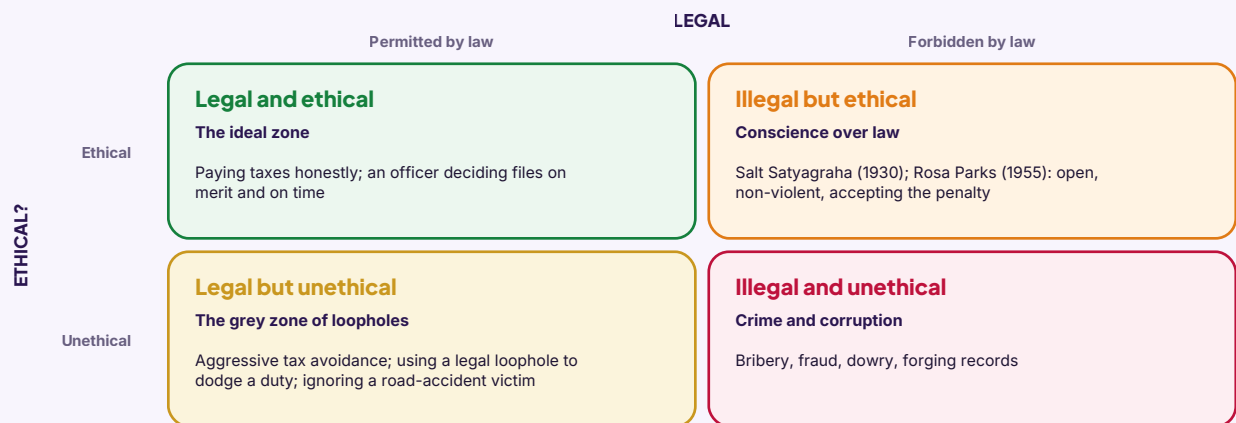
Ethics and Law

Law and ethics both aim at an orderly and just society, and they overlap heavily: murder, fraud and bribery are both illegal and unethical. But they differ in origin, scope and enforcement.

BASIS	LAW	ETHICS
Source	Constitution, legislature, courts	Conscience, reason, culture, philosophy, professions
Form	Written, precise, public	Often unwritten; principles rather than rules
Enforcement	The State, through penalties	Conscience, social approval, professional bodies
Scope	Outward conduct; the minimum society will enforce	Motives, character and conduct; the ideal one should reach
Change	Through formal amendment or interpretation	Through shifting understanding and reflection

Law and Ethics: Four Possible Combinations

An action can be judged on two separate scales — what the State permits and what conscience approves.



Law fixes the minimum society will enforce; ethics asks for more — and sometimes for resistance to an unjust law.

Fig. 1.5 Four combinations of legality and ethics, with examples of each.

How the Two Interact

- **Ethics goes beyond law.** No law obliges you to return extra change or to admit a mistake in a file, yet ethics does. Laws are also blunt: they cannot reach every motive or every situation.
- **Ethics improves law.** Changing moral awareness has driven laws against sati, dowry, child marriage and untouchability, and more recently the **Good Samaritan** protections (Section **134A** of the Motor Vehicles Act, added in **2019**) that shield people who help accident victims.
- **Ethics can resist unjust law.** Civil disobedience, as in Gandhi's **Salt Satyagraha (1930)** or Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her bus seat (**1955**), openly breaks an unjust law, non-violently, while accepting the penalty. That acceptance separates conscience from mere lawlessness.
- **Law can be legal yet unethical.** A law may be validly passed and still offend dignity or fairness. Constitutional courts then test it against fundamental rights, as with the electoral bond scheme in **2024**.

COMMON CONFUSION: "RIGHT TO DO" VS "RIGHT THING TO DO"

Having a legal right or discretion does not make every use of it right. An officer may lawfully choose among eligible candidates for a posting; choosing a relative is still unethical. A company may lawfully shift profits to a low-tax country; it may still be shirking a fair share. **Legality is not a defence for unethical conduct**; it only tells us that the State will not punish it. A line often credited to the American judge Potter Stewart puts it neatly: ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.

07 Ethics, Religion and Politics

Ethics and Religion

Religion has been humanity's oldest teacher of ethics. Buddhism's five precepts (no killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct or intoxicants), the Hindu ideals of dharma and seva, the Islamic emphasis on *akhlaq* (good character) and *zakat*, the Christian command to love one's neighbour and the Sikh practice of *langar* and *kirat karni* (honest work) have shaped the conduct of billions.

BASIS	RELIGION	ETHICS
Foundation	Faith, revelation, scripture, tradition	Reason, experience, reflection
Scope	Spiritual and moral life, worship, salvation	Right conduct and character in this world
Authority	God, prophets, texts, religious leaders	Arguments that any reasonable person can examine
Reach	Members of a particular faith	Can be shared by believers and non-believers alike

The two usually reinforce each other, but they can also diverge. Ethics does not need religion: atheists and agnostics can be deeply ethical, and a secular state needs a **public ethic** that people of every faith and none can accept, which in India is the Constitution. Religion can also be invoked to justify exclusion, as in the denial of temple entry, or violence. When religious practice clashes with dignity and equality, constitutional values must prevail. In a public role, an officer's faith may inspire their compassion but must never colour their impartiality.

Ethics and Politics

A common view holds that politics is the art of the possible, a game of power where ethics is a luxury. Machiavelli advised rulers to learn "how not to be good". Criminalisation of politics, money power, defections and hate speech seem to support the cynic.

Yet the classical tradition, from Aristotle to Kautilya to Gandhi, treats politics as the pursuit of the **common good**, which makes ethics its very purpose. Among the **seven social sins** that Gandhi published, he named "**politics without principle**" (*Young India*, 1925). Leaders such as Lal Bahadur Shastri, who resigned as Railway Minister after a 1956 train accident, show that power and principle can coexist. Ethics gives politics legitimacy; without it, politics loses the voluntary consent on which democracy depends.

- **Values for political life:** pursuit of public interest over sectional gain, ethical means, integrity, accountability, transparency in funding and respect for opponents.
- **Bringing ethics back:** transparent political finance, decriminalisation of candidates, inner-party democracy, functional ethics committees in legislatures, civic education and role models in public life.



Fig. 1.6 Gandhi on the Salt March, 1930: open, non-violent defiance of an unjust law, with the penalty accepted.

08

Constitutional and Popular Morality

Constitutional morality means adherence to the values and processes of the Constitution, such as liberty, equality, dignity, fraternity, the rule of law and restraint in the use of power, even when popular sentiment pulls the other way. Dr B. R. Ambedkar, borrowing from the historian George Grote, warned the Constituent Assembly in November 1948 that constitutional morality "is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated."

The Supreme Court has made the idea central to its reasoning. In *Manoj Narula* (2014) it described constitutional morality as bowing to the norms of the Constitution and not acting in a way that violates the rule of law. In *Navtej Singh Johar* (2018), decriminalising consensual same-sex relations, and *Joseph Shine* (2018), striking down the adultery offence, it held that constitutional morality must prevail over **popular or social morality** where rights and dignity are at stake.

Popular morality is the set of standards widely accepted in a community at a given time. It is real and often valuable, but it is not automatically right: it once accepted sati, untouchability and the exclusion of women from public life. **Objective morality**, the view that some moral truths hold regardless of opinion (torturing an innocent for fun is wrong even if a crowd applauds), supports the idea that majorities cannot vote away basic rights.



Fig. 1.7 Dr B. R. Ambedkar, who warned that constitutional morality must be cultivated.

BASIS	CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY	POPULAR MORALITY
Source	Constitutional text, values and processes	Prevailing beliefs, customs and traditions
Orientation	Rights, dignity and the rule of law	What the majority or dominant group approves

BASIS	CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY	POPULAR MORALITY
Stability	Anchored in enduring principles	Shifts with public mood
Minorities	Protects them against majoritarian pressure	May reflect majority prejudice
For officials	The binding standard for using public power	A context to be understood, not obeyed blindly

INDIA: WHY IT MATTERS TO A CIVIL SERVANT

The oath of a public servant is to the Constitution, not to a crowd, a party or a superior. Constitutional morality guides discretion (fair, reasonable and proportionate), protects rights while enforcing law and order, and keeps officers neutral. A District Magistrate who protects an inter-faith couple from a hostile mob, or ensures Dalit grooms can ride a horse through a village, is practising constitutional morality against popular morality.

09 The Vocabulary of Morality

Mains answers gain precision from a handful of terms that describe how people relate to moral rules.

TERM	MEANING	EXAMPLE
Moral	Conforming to accepted standards of right	Returning a lost wallet intact
Immoral	Knowingly violating a moral standard	Taking a bribe
Amoral	Indifferent to or unaware of moral standards	A very young child; a person who sees ethics as irrelevant to business
Non-moral	Outside the scope of morality altogether	Choosing the colour of one's shirt; a law of physics
Moral agent	A being able to tell right from wrong and be held responsible	A sane adult; debated for corporations and AI systems
Moral absolutism	Some acts are always right or wrong, whatever the context	"Torture is never permissible"
Moral relativism	Right and wrong depend on culture or individual	"When in Rome, do as the Romans do"
Moral pluralism	Several values are genuine and can conflict; none always wins	Liberty versus security in counter-terrorism laws

Moral Intuition and Moral Reasoning

Moral intuition is the quick, almost automatic sense that something is right or wrong, shaped by emotion, upbringing and experience. It makes us rush to help an injured child before we think. **Moral reasoning** is the slow, deliberate weighing of facts, duties, consequences and principles, as when an administrator balances a dam's benefits against the displacement of tribal families. Intuition is fast but can carry bias; reasoning is careful but can rationalise. Good judgement uses intuition as an alarm bell and reasoning as the test of whether the alarm is justified.

REMEMBER: ABSOLUTISM, RELATIVISM AND THE MIDDLE PATH

Pure absolutism struggles when duties clash (truth-telling against saving a life). Pure relativism cannot condemn even obvious wrongs such as caste atrocities or female infanticide, because "it is their culture". **Moral pluralism** takes the middle road. It accepts a core of near-universal values (dignity, honesty, non-violence, fairness) and respects diversity in how they are applied.

10 How Good People Slip

Behavioural ethics studies why well-meaning people do wrong. Its findings give a civil servant a vocabulary for diagnosing failures in themselves and in institutions.

How Good People Slip: The Psychology of Ethical Failure

Most wrongdoing is not planned villainy; it grows from blind spots that each have an antidote.

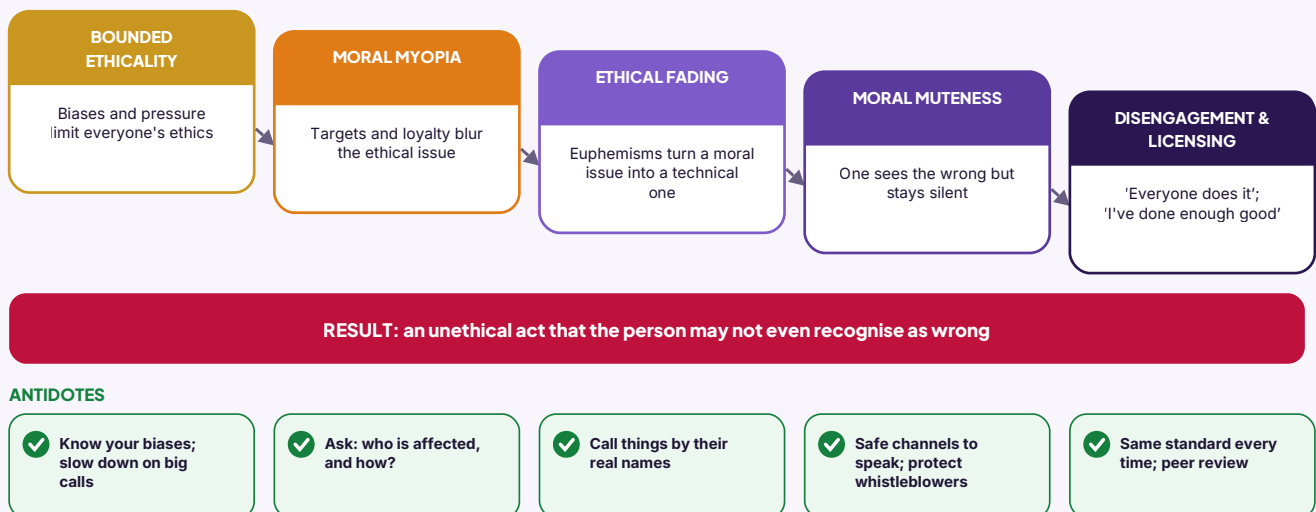


Fig. 1.8 Five blind spots that lead decent people into unethical acts, and the antidote to each.

- **Bounded ethicality:** everyone's ethics is limited by biases (such as the self-serving bias) and by pressures to conform. No one is immune.
- **Moral myopia:** a distorted moral vision in which targets, loyalty or ambition crowd out the ethical issue. Its extreme form is moral blindness.
- **Ethical fading:** the ethical colour of a decision drains away, helped by euphemisms. A bribe becomes "speed money", falsified data becomes "adjusting figures".

- **Moral muteness:** one recognises a wrong but stays silent, or speaks in vague language to avoid conflict. It is the root of most institutional cover-ups.
- **Moral disengagement:** restructuring reality to feel less guilty: "everyone does it", "I was only following orders", "the victim deserved it".
- **Moral licensing and equilibrium:** people keep a mental scoreboard. After doing good they feel licensed to cut corners; after doing wrong they seek a good deed to restore balance.
- **Moral imagination:** the positive counterpart. It means seeing the full range of options, including creative ones that are both ethical and effective, instead of a false choice between "rules" and "results".

USING THIS CHAPTER IN MAINS

Open conceptual answers with a crisp definition (ethics as reasoned standards of right conduct; essence as conscious choice of the right). Use the **intention-means-consequences** chain to judge any act, the **internal-external-contextual** frame for determinants, and the **ripple** of individual-organisation-society-governance for consequences. For law and ethics, the four-box matrix with Salt Satyagraha and legal loopholes is quick and persuasive. Cite constitutional morality (Ambedkar, *Navtej Johar*) whenever popular pressure clashes with rights, and use behavioural terms such as ethical fading and moral muteness to explain institutional failure in case studies.

Chapter 1 at a Glance

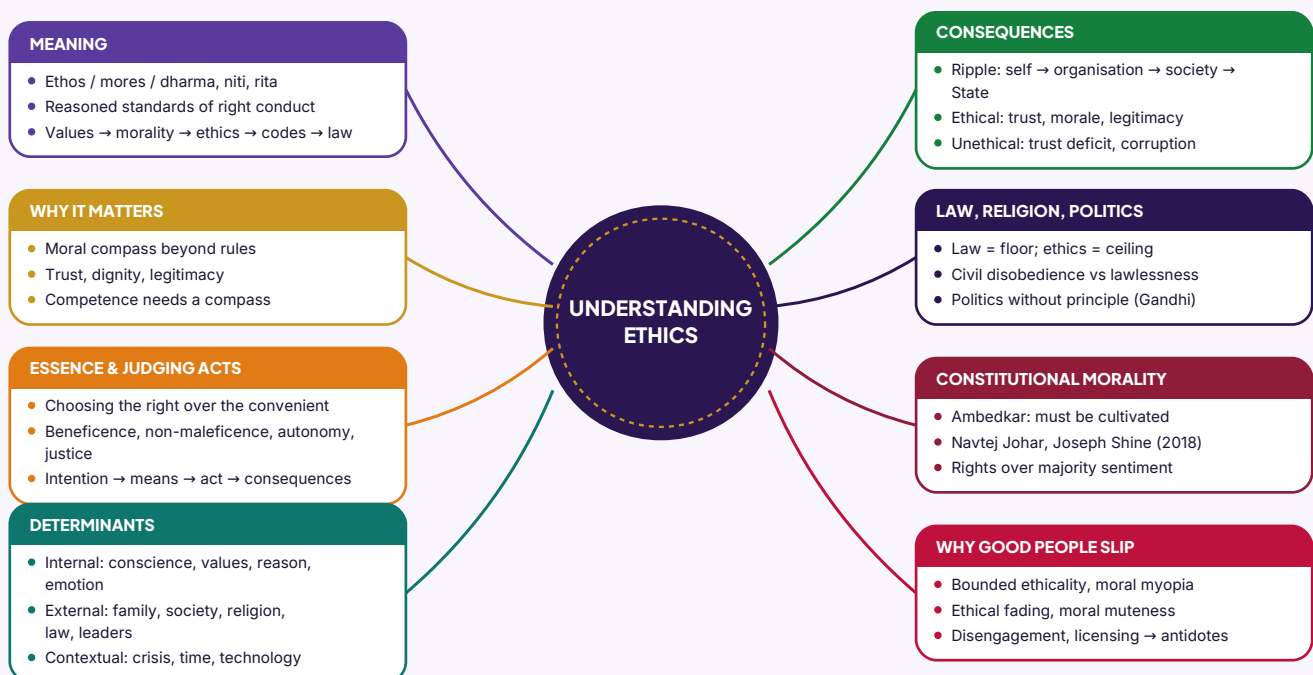


Fig. 1.9 Chapter 1 at a glance: the whole chapter on one page for quick revision.



Previous Year Questions



2022

GS IV · 10 MARKS

It is believed that adherence to ethics in human actions would ensure in smooth functioning of an organization/system. If so, what does ethics seek to promote in human life? How do ethical values assist in the resolution of conflicts faced by him in his day-to-day functioning?

Approach: Explain that ethics promotes trust, fairness, dignity, cooperation and responsibility, which keep organisations running smoothly. Show how ethical values help resolve everyday conflicts: clarity of priorities, impartial reasoning, empathy for stakeholders and courage to choose the right option, with a workplace example. Conclude that ethics is a practical tool for daily decisions, not merely an ideal. (Sections 02–03)

2017

GS IV · 10 MARKS

Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor democratic government, nor even the market economy will function properly. What do you understand by this statement ? Explain with illustration in the contemporary times.

Approach: Explain that institutions rest on informal moral foundations: laws need voluntary compliance, democracy needs tolerance and civic virtue, markets need trust and honest contracts. Illustrate with contemporary examples such as tax evasion despite laws, polarised politics, and financial frauds undermining markets. Conclude that law and institutions cannot substitute for shared values, which must be nurtured through families, schools and leadership. (Section 02)

2016

GS IV · 10 MARKS

Explain how ethics contributes to social and human well-being.

Approach: Define ethics as the standards that guide right conduct and well-being as the flourishing of individuals and communities. Show its contributions: trust and cooperation, justice and fairness, protection of the vulnerable, reduced conflict and corruption, and inner peace from a clear conscience, with an example such as honest public distribution reducing hunger. Conclude that ethics converts material progress into genuine human welfare. (Section 05)

2015

GS IV · 10 MARKS

Differentiate between the following :

- (i) Law and ethics
- (ii) Ethical management and Management of ethics
- (iii) Discrimination and Preferential treatment
- (iv) Personal ethics and Professional ethics

Approach: Take each pair in turn with a crisp distinction and an example: law is external and enforceable while ethics is internal and wider; ethical management means running an organisation ethically, while management of ethics means building systems such as codes and training; discrimination is unjust exclusion, while preferential treatment is a justified corrective such as reservation; personal ethics governs private life, professional ethics governs role-based duties. Use a compact table if helpful and keep within 200 words. (Section 06; Chapter 3 for personal and professional ethics)

2014

GS IV · 10 MARKS

The current society is plagued with widespread trust-deficit. What are the consequences of this situation for personal well-being and for societal well-being? What can you do at the personal level to make yourself trustworthy?

Approach: Define trust-deficit and explain its sources: corruption, broken promises, misinformation and impersonal institutions. Bring out consequences for personal well-being (anxiety, isolation, cynicism) and societal well-being (low cooperation, higher transaction costs, weak institutions). List personal steps to be trustworthy: consistency of word and deed, transparency, keeping commitments and admitting mistakes, and conclude that trust is rebuilt one reliable act at a time. (Section 05)

2013

GS IV · 10 MARKS

What do you understand by 'values' and 'ethics'? In what way is it important to be ethical along with being professionally competent?

Approach: Open by defining values as enduring beliefs about what is desirable and ethics as the reasoned standards of right conduct built on them. Then show why competence without ethics is dangerous: skill amplifies harm when misdirected, public trust depends on character, discretion needs a moral compass and long-term credibility rests on integrity, citing E. Sreedharan's Delhi Metro as competence fused with probity. Conclude that competence decides what an officer can do, while ethics decides what an officer should do. (Sections 01-02)

2013

GS IV · 10 MARKS

It is often said that 'politics' and 'ethics' do not go together. What is your opinion in this regard? Justify your answer with illustrations.

Approach: State the popular view that politics is about power and expedience, citing criminalisation, money power and unprincipled defections. Counter it with the classical view that politics is the pursuit of the common good, illustrated by Gandhi, Shastri and constitutional morality, and argue that ethics gives politics legitimacy and durability. Suggest reforms such as transparent funding, internal party democracy and ethics committees, and conclude that the two must go together for democracy to survive. (Section 07)

UNIT IX

4 CHAPTERS

Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues: a method and toolkit, and every UPSC case study from 2013 to 2026 with an expert approach.

CHAPTERS

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TOPICS COVERED IN THIS UNIT

29 Solving Ethics Case Studies: Method and Toolkit

What a Case Study Tests · What UPSC's 84 Cases Reveal · The Seven-Step Method · Mapping Stakeholders and Issues · Generating and Weighing Options · Testing the Decision · Values Bank and Legal Anchors · A Playbook for Recurring Types · Writing the Answer · Demonstration Case: Devghat Bridge

30 UPSC Case Studies 2013–2017

UPSC 2013 Case Studies · UPSC 2014 Case Studies · UPSC 2015 Case Studies · UPSC 2016 Case Studies · UPSC 2017 Case Studies

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UPSC 2023 Case Studies · UPSC 2024 Case Studies · UPSC 2025 Case Studies · UPSC 2026 Case Studies

ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

MAINS · GS PAPER IV

UPSC Case Studies 2023–2026

A District Collector deciding whether a fingerprint scanner may stand between a hungry family and its ration; a District Magistrate deciding, after a midnight landslide, whether a bleeding mother can receive blood outside a licensed blood centre; a police chief told that his AI system is biased. The twenty-four case studies of 2023 to 2026 carry the oldest questions of public life into new settings: artificial intelligence, data, climate, refugees and ethnic strife. Each is reproduced verbatim and followed by an approach that a serving officer could defend in public.

SYLLABUS

MAINS · GS PAPER IV

Case Studies on above issues

CONTENTS

01 UPSC 2023 Case Studies

02 UPSC 2024 Case Studies

03 UPSC 2025 Case Studies

04 UPSC 2026 Case Studies

This chapter covers:

- the six case studies of 2023: a dormant account, a landslide, work–life balance, a bribe video, workplace bullying and a viral video;
- the six of 2024: AI emissions, online radicalisation, captured naxalites, a brother's bid, a water crisis and drug-trial shortcuts;
- the six of 2025: a disaster and a mother's death, forest land for housing, insider information, split purchases, rural-jobs fraud and a refugee column;
- the six of 2026: consent in surgery, predictive policing, a land-use racket, biometric rationing, ethnic conflict and arms exports;
- for each case, an approach: stakeholders, issues, options, the best course and the values, laws and judgments that support it.

The seven-step method behind every approach is explained in Chapter 29; the case studies of 2013 to 2022 are in Chapters 30 and 31.

UPSC 2023 Case Studies

The 2023 set tests personal integrity under quiet pressure: kindness that bends rules, a superior's demands on family time, a political offer, an insecure senior and a family attacked online. Two cases add the law of the workplace and of emergency medicine.

Case 1: A Kind Manager and a Dormant Account

2023 · QUESTION 7 · 20 MARKS

You are working as an executive in a nationalised bank for several years. One day one of your close colleagues tells you that her father is suffering from heart disease and needs surgery immediately to survive. She also tells you that she has no insurance and the operation will cost about ₹ 10 lakh. You are also aware of the fact that her husband is no more and that she is from a lower middle class family. You are empathetic about her situation. However, apart from expressing your sympathy, you do not have the resources to fund her.

A few weeks later, you ask her about the well-being of her father and she informs you about his successful surgery and that he is recovering. She then confides in you that the bank manager was kind enough to facilitate the release of ₹ 10 lakh from a dormant account of someone to pay for the operation with a promise that it should be confidential and be repaid at the earliest. She has already started paying it back and will continue to do so until it is all returned.

- What are the ethical issues involved?
- Evaluate the behaviour of the bank manager from an ethical point of view.
- How would you react to the situation?

APPROACH

Stakeholders: the colleague, her father, the account holder, the manager, the bank's depositors.

(a) Ethical issues: misuse of money held in trust (a dormant account is a depositor's property, not idle cash); compassion through an unauthorised loan; secrecy that gives the manager a hold over her; loyalty to a friend versus duty to the bank; and a precedent that "temporary" misuse is fine if repaid.

(b) The manager's conduct: humane in motive, indefensible in means. Using a customer's funds without consent or sanction is criminal breach of trust by a banker (Section 316(5), Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023) and criminal misconduct under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, as staff of a nationalised bank are public servants. Repayment does not undo the offence, and he has exposed the colleague to prosecution. Lawful routes (a staff loan, a medical advance) existed. His act fails Kant's test: no bank survives if every manager does the same.

(c) My response: I would neither join the cover-up nor shame her. I would first explain the risk and urge a voluntary disclosure to the regional head with a request to convert the amount into a regular staff loan so the depositor's balance is restored at once. If she declines, I must report through the bank's vigilance (protected-disclosure) channel. I would still help her raise funds and press for dual control and alerts on dormant accounts.

Values: fiduciary duty, integrity, compassion within rules, courage of conviction.

Case 2: Blood Transfusion at a Landslide Site

2023 · QUESTION 8 · 20 MARKS

A landslide occurred in the middle of the night on 20th July, 2023 in a remote mountain hamlet, approximately 60 kilometres from Uttarkashi. The landslide was caused by torrential rains and has resulted in large-scale destruction of property and life. You, as District Magistrate of that area, have rushed to the spot with a team of doctors, NGOs, media and police along with numerous support staff to oversee the rescue operations.

A man came running to you with a request for urgent medical help for his pregnant wife who is in labour and is losing blood. You directed your medical team to examine his wife. They return and convey to you that this woman needs blood transfusion immediately. Upon enquiry, you come to know that a few blood collection bags and blood group test kits are available in the ambulance accompanying your team. Few people of your team have already volunteered to donate blood.

Being a physician who has graduated from AIIMS, you know that blood for transfusion needs to be procured only through a recognized blood bank. Your team members are divided on this issue; some favour transfusion, while some others oppose it. The doctors in the team are ready to facilitate the delivery provided they are not penalized for transfusion. Now you are in a dilemma. Your professional training emphasizes on prioritising service to humanity and saving lives of individuals.

(a) What are the ethical issues involved in this case?

(b) Evaluate the options available to you, being District Magistrate of the area.

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues: the right to life (Article 21) versus procedure, since the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and its Rules treat blood as a drug that only licensed blood centres may collect and issue; the safety of unscreened blood; informed consent; doctors' fear of liability; and the needs of other victims.

(b) Options: (i) *Refuse transfusion and wait:* lawful, but in a cut-off hamlet the delay may cost two lives: legalism without compassion. (ii) *Transfuse at once without safeguards:* fast, but risks infection and reaction. (iii) *Evacuate* by helicopter or road to the nearest First Referral Unit with blood storage: ideal if it can be done within the golden hour. (iv) *Emergency "walking donor" transfusion with safeguards:* grouping and cross-matching, rapid tests with the kits available, written consent of the woman and her husband, full records.

Best course: run (iii) and (iv) together. Request an airlift; if the doctors certify that she will not survive the delay, I would order (iv) in writing as chairperson of the District Disaster Management Authority and take responsibility myself, so that the doctors act on a lawful order in good faith (Section 73, Disaster Management Act, 2005). Afterwards: follow-up tests for mother and baby, a report to the Chief Medical Officer and State Blood Transfusion Council, and pre-positioned blood in future disaster kits.

Values: sanctity of life, compassion, responsibility, prudence; *Parmanand Katara* (1989) on the duty to preserve life.

Blood at a Disaster Site: A Lawful Decision Path

Life comes first, but the safeguards travel with it.

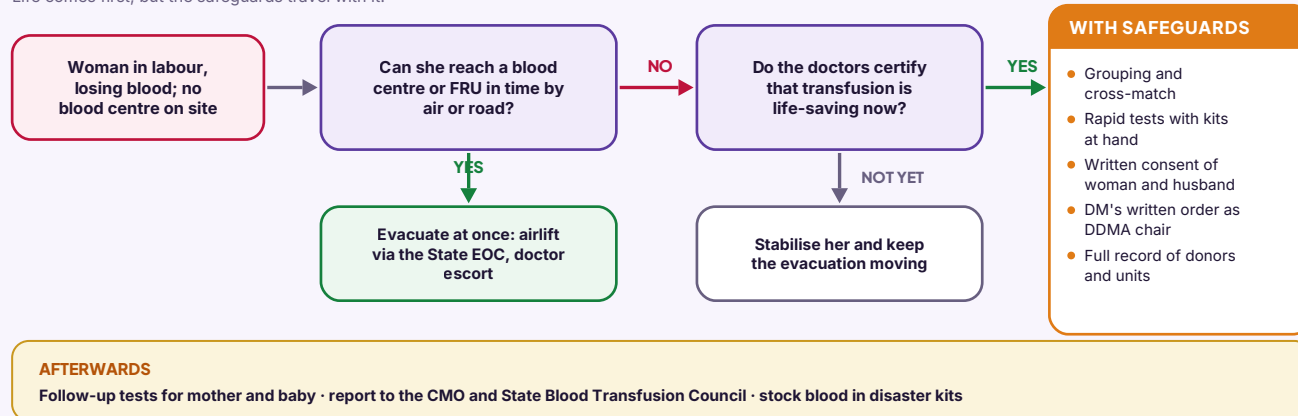


Fig. 32.1 Case 2 as a decision path: evacuation is the first choice; an emergency transfusion is a last resort taken on a written order and with every safeguard the site allows.

Case 3: A Joint Secretary's Weekend

2023 · QUESTION 9 · 20 MARKS

At 9 pm on Saturday evening, Rashika, a Joint Secretary, was still engrossed in her work in her office. Her husband, Vikram, is an executive in an MNC and frequently out of town in connection with his work. Their two children aged 5 and 3 are looked after by their domestic helper. At 9:30 pm her superior, Mr. Suresh calls her and asks her to prepare a detailed note on an important matter to be discussed in a meeting in the Ministry. She realises that she will have to work on Sunday to finish the additional task given by her superior.

She reflects on how she had looked forward to this posting and had worked long hours for months to achieve it. She had kept the welfare of people uppermost in discharging her duties. She feels that she has not done enough justice to her family and she has not fulfilled her duties in discharging essential social obligations. Even as recently as last month she had to leave her sick child in the nanny's care as she had to work in the office. Now, she feels that she must draw a line, beyond which her personal life should take precedence over her professional responsibilities. She thinks that there should be reasonable limits to the work ethics such as punctuality, hard work, dedication to duty and selfless service.

- (a) Discuss the ethical issues involved in this case.
- (b) Briefly describe at least four laws that have been enacted by the Government with respect to providing a healthy, safe and equitable working environment for women.
- (c) Imagine you are in a similar situation. What suggestions would you make to mitigate such working conditions?

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues: duty to the public versus duty to family, both real obligations; a culture that equates long hours with dedication; the gendered burden of care; a superior's last-minute demand that reflects poor planning; and burnout, which harms public decisions. Rashika's wish to "draw a line" is not selfishness: sustained dedication needs rest.

(b) Four laws for a healthy, safe and equitable workplace:

(1) *Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013*: Internal Committees in offices with ten or more employees, Local Committees in districts. (2) *Code on Social Security, 2020* (in force from 21 November 2025, absorbing the Maternity Benefit Act): 26 weeks' paid maternity leave, work from home by agreement, and a crèche in establishments with 50 or more employees. (3) *Code on Wages, 2019* (replacing the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976): equal pay for the same or similar work and no gender discrimination in recruitment. (4) *Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020*: women may work night shifts and in all occupations with consent and safeguards. Government servants also get 730 days' Child Care Leave.

(c) My suggestions: agree the scope with Mr Suresh and offer the note by Monday morning; delegate research to the Director; work from home on e-Office; share care with her spouse. Institutionally: no routine after-hours calls, rotated weekend duty, workplace crèches and flexible hours.

Values: dedication, balance, gender justice, the ethics of care.

Case 4: Vinod and the Tyre Bribe Video

2023 · QUESTION 10 · 20 MARKS

Vinod is an honest and sincere IAS officer. Recently, he has taken over as Managing Director of the State Road Transport Corporation, his sixth transfer in the past three years. His peers acknowledge his vast knowledge, affability and uprightness.

The Chairman of the State Road Transport Corporation is a powerful politician and is very close to the Chief Minister. Vinod comes to know about many alleged irregularities of the Corporation and the high-handedness of the Chairman in financial matters.

A Board Member of the Corporation belonging to the Opposition Party meets Vinod and hands over a few documents along with a video recording in which the Chairman appears to be demanding bribe for placing a huge order for the supply of QMR tyres. Vinod recollects the Chairman expediting clearing of pending bills of QMR tyres.

Vinod confronts the Board Member as to why he is shying away from exposing the Chairman with the so-called solid proof he has with him. The member informs him that the Chairman refuses to yield to his threats. He adds that Vinod may earn recognition and public support if he himself exposes the Chairman. Further, he tells Vinod that once his party comes to power, Vinod's professional growth would be assured.

Vinod is aware that he may be penalized if he exposes the Chairman and may further be transferred to a distant place. He knows that the Opposition Party stands a better chance of coming to power in the forthcoming elections. However, he also realizes that the Board Member is trying to use him for his own political gains.

- (a) As a conscientious civil servant, evaluate the options available to Vinod.
- (b) In the light of the above case, comment upon the ethical issues that may arise due to the politicization of bureaucracy.

APPROACH

(a) Options: (i) *Ignore the evidence:* safe for his career, but silence makes him complicit. (ii) *Expose the Chairman publicly* as the member urges: popular, but it breaches the conduct rules on political neutrality and unauthorised communication (Rules 3, 5 and 9, All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968), relies on an unverified video and may spoil an inquiry. (iii) *Accept the promise of future reward:* a corrupt bargain that ends his neutrality. (iv) *Use institutional channels:* check his own records of QMR tyre orders, rates and bill clearances; have the video verified; inform the Board and the Chief Secretary; send a written complaint to the State Vigilance or Anti-Corruption Bureau or the Lokayukta; and hold pending orders for fresh, transparent e-tendering.

Option (iv) is right. It acts on corruption without becoming a pawn of either party. Vinod should keep a written record and accept the risk of another transfer: courage of conviction is part of integrity.

(b) Politicisation of the bureaucracy: it erodes neutrality and anonymity; officers become instruments of whichever party is in power or hopes to be; transfers turn into punishment (six in three years here); vigilance is used selectively; honest officers retreat into "safe" inaction; citizens lose faith. The Supreme Court in *T.S.R. Subramanian v. Union of India* (2013) called for fixed tenures, Civil Services Boards and written instructions from political executives; implementing these is the remedy.

Values: integrity, impartiality, non-partisanship, courage.

Case 5: Seema and the Insecure Chief Architect

2023 · QUESTION 11 · 20 MARKS

You have just been appointed as Additional Director General of Central Public Works Department. The Chief Architect of your division, who is to retire in six months, is passionately working on a very important project, the successful completion of which would earn him a lasting reputation for the rest of his life.

A new lady architect, Seema, trained at Manchester School of Architecture, UK joined as Senior Architect in your division. During the briefing about the project, Seema made some suggestions which would not only add value to the project, but would also reduce completion time. This has made the Chief Architect insecure and he is constantly worried that all the credit will go to her. Subsequently, he adopted a passive and aggressive behaviour towards her and has become disrespectful to her. Seema felt it embarrassing as the Chief Architect left no chance of humiliating her. He would very often correct her in front of other colleagues and raise his

voice while speaking to her. This continuous harassment has resulted in her losing confidence and self-esteem. She felt perpetually tensed, anxious and stressed. She appeared to be in awe of him since he has had a long tenure in the office and has vast experience in the area of her work.

You are aware of her outstanding academic credentials and career record in her previous organisations. However, you fear that this harassment may result in compromising her much needed contribution in this important project and may adversely impact her emotional well-being. You have also come to know from her peers that she is contemplating tendering her resignation.

- (a) What are the ethical issues involved in the above case?
- (b) What are the options available to you in order to complete the project as well as to retain Seema in the organization?
- (c) What would be your response to Seema's predicament? What measures would you institute to prevent such occurrences from happening in your organization?

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues: workplace bullying and the dignity of an employee; insecurity and credit-seeking overriding the public interest (better design, earlier completion); possible gender bias; a culture of deference to seniority; and my own duty of care as head of the division.

(b) Options: (i) *Do nothing*: the project may finish, but Seema leaves and bullying is endorsed. (ii) *Shift Seema to another project*: protects her but rewards the bully and loses her ideas. (iii) *Immediate disciplinary action*: a strong signal, but it could derail the project months before his retirement. (iv) *Calibrated intervention*: a private, firm conversation with the Chief Architect that respects his legacy but makes clear that conduct must change; a project structure in which he leads and Seema heads a design-optimisation stream, with ideas minuted under their authors' names in reviews I chair. I would choose (iv), escalating to (iii) if the behaviour continues.

(c) My response and measures: meet Seema privately, listen, acknowledge the harm and ask her to stay; offer support, confidentiality and counselling. If any conduct has a sexual or gendered element, she can approach the Internal Committee under the POSH Act, 2013. For the organisation: a written respectful-workplace policy (bullying is "conduct unbecoming" of a government servant), a grievance channel outside the hierarchy, 360-degree feedback, training in emotional intelligence and clear credit-sharing norms.

Values: dignity, fairness, empathy, ethical leadership.

Case 6: A Viral Video Against an Officer's Family

2023 · QUESTION 12 · 20 MARKS

You hold a responsible position in a ministry in the government. One day in the morning you received a call from the school of your 11-year-old son that you are required to come and meet the Principal. You proceed to the school and find your son in the Principal's office. The Principal informs you that your son had been found wandering aimlessly in the grounds during the time classes were in progress. The class teacher further informs you that your son has lately become a loner and did not respond to questions in the class, he had also been unable to perform well in the football trials held recently. You bring your son back from the school and in the evening, you along with your wife try to find out the reasons for your son's changed behaviour. After repeated cajoling, your son shares that some children had been making fun of him in the class as well as in the WhatsApp group of the students by calling him stunted, duh and a frog. He tells you the names of a few children who are the main culprits but pleads with you to let the matter rest.

After a few days, during a sporting event, where you and your wife have gone to watch your son play, one of your colleague's son shows you a video in which students have caricatured your son. Further, he also points out to the perpetrators who were sitting in the stands. You purposefully walk past them with your son and go home. Next day, you find on social media, a video denigrating you, your son and even your wife, stating that you engaged in physical bullying of children on the sports field. The video became viral on social media. Your

friends and colleagues began calling you to find out the details. One of your juniors advised you to make a counter video giving the background and explaining that nothing had happened on the field. You, in turn posted a video which you have captured during the sporting event, identifying the likely perpetrators who were responsible for your son's predicament. You have also narrated what has actually happened in the field and made attempts to bring out the adverse effects of the misuse of social media.

(a) Based on the above case study, discuss the ethical issues involved in the use of social media.

(b) Discuss the pros and cons of using social media by you to put across the facts to counter the fake propaganda against your family.

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues in the use of social media: cyberbullying of a child, with lasting harm to self-esteem; virality that outruns verification, so a fabricated video becomes "truth" in hours; anonymity that removes accountability; the privacy and dignity of minors, both victim and perpetrators; trial by social media; and weak digital literacy among schoolchildren.

(b) Pros of my counter-video: it answers falsehood quickly and before the same audience; it protects the family's reputation and my professional credibility; it draws attention to the misuse of social media; and truth-telling is itself a value.

Cons: naming and showing "likely" perpetrators who are eleven-year-olds exposes them to counter-trolling and treats children as adversaries, against the spirit of child-identity protection in the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015; it accuses without proof; it escalates a quarrel into a public feud; and conduct rules (for example Rule 17, All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968) allow an officer to vindicate his private character but require a report to the Government.

A better course: take down the part that identifies the children, or blur their faces; preserve evidence and complain on the national cybercrime portal (cybercrime.gov.in, helpline 1930) and to the platform's grievance officer under the IT Rules, 2021; pursue defamation remedies against the adults who made the fake video; ask the school to act under its anti-bullying policy and meet the parents; arrange counselling for my son.

Values: truthfulness with restraint, compassion for children, prudence, responsible digital citizenship.

02

UPSC 2024 Case Studies

The 2024 cases widen the frame to systems: a technology company's carbon footprint, radicalisation on social media, armed insurgency, private-sector conflict of interest, scarce water and pharmaceutical shortcuts. Several ask for measures and action plans, not just a choice.

Case 7: AI Growth and a 48 per cent Emissions Jump

2024 · QUESTION 7 · 20 MARKS

There is a technological company named ABC Incorporated which is the second largest worldwide, situated in the Third World. You are the Chief Executive Officer and the majority shareholder of this company. The fast technological improvements have raised worries among environmental activists, regulatory authorities, and the general public over the sustainability of this scenario. You confront substantial issues about the business's environmental footprint. In 2023, your organization had a significant increase of 48% in greenhouse gas emissions compared to the levels recorded in 2019. The significant rise in energy consumption is mainly due to the surging energy requirements of your data centers, fuelled by the exponential expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI-powered services need much more computational resources and electrical energy compared to conventional online activities, notwithstanding their notable gains. The technology's proliferation has led to a growing concern over the environmental repercussions, resulting in an increase in warnings. AI

models, especially those used in extensive machine learning and data processing, exhibit much greater energy consumption than conventional computer tasks, with an exponential increase.

Although there is already a commitment and goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2030, the challenge of lowering emissions seems overwhelming as the integration of AI continues to increase. To achieve this goal, substantial investments in renewable energy use would be necessary. The difficulty is exacerbated by the competitive environment of the technology sector, where rapid innovation is essential for preserving market standing and shareholders' worth. To achieve a balance between innovation, profitability and sustainability, a strategic move is necessary that is in line with both, business objectives and ethical obligations.

- (a) What is your immediate response to the challenges posed in the above case?
- (b) Discuss the ethical issues involved in the above case.
- (c) Your company has been identified to be penalized by technological giants. What logical and ethical arguments will you put forth to convince about its necessity?
- (d) Being a conscience being, what measures would you adopt to maintain balance between AI innovation and environmental footprint?

APPROACH

(The figures echo Google's 2024 environmental report, which disclosed a 48 per cent rise over 2019.)

(a) Immediate response: own the problem publicly instead of hiding behind offsets; form a board-level sustainability committee; commission an independent audit of Scope 1–3 emissions and water use; and publish revised interim targets with a dated roadmap.

(b) Ethical issues: innovation and profit versus climate harm and intergenerational justice; the honesty of a "net zero by 2030" pledge that the business plan contradicts (greenwashing); shareholder primacy versus stakeholder duties; data centres competing with local communities for power and water; and fairness between the Global North and South.

(c) Facing a penalty: I would accept accountability as necessary: the polluter pays, and a carbon price pushes the whole sector, including us, towards efficiency. I would argue for fairness too: one standard for every technology giant, credit for transparent disclosure and verified cuts, recognition of common but differentiated responsibilities for a firm from the developing world, and use of penalty revenue for the green transition.

(d) Balancing measures: round-the-clock renewable power purchase with storage; data centres sited near clean energy and cooler climates; efficient chips and liquid cooling; smaller, distilled models and carbon-aware scheduling; an internal carbon price; executive pay linked to climate goals; assured disclosure under SEBI's BRSR Core; and AI applied to grid efficiency.

Values: Hans Jonas's imperative of responsibility, Gandhian trusteeship, transparency.

Case 8: Online Recruitment by a Terror Group

2024 · QUESTION 8 · 20 MARKS

Raman is a senior IPS officer and has recently been posted as D.G. of a state. Among the various issues and problems/challenges which needed his immediate attention, the issue relating to recruitment of unemployed youth by an unknown terrorist group, was a matter of grave concern.

It was noted that unemployment was relatively high in the state. The problem of unemployment amongst graduates and those with higher education was much more grave. Thus they were vulnerable and soft targets.

In the review meeting taken by him with senior officers of DIG Range and above, it came to light that a new terrorist group has emerged at the global level. It has launched a massive drive to recruit young unemployed people. Special focus was to pick young people from a particular community. The said organisation seemed to have the clear objective of utilising/using them for carrying out militant activities. It was also gathered that the said (new) group is desperately trying to spread its tentacles in his state.

A definite/reliable intelligence tip was received by the State CID and Cyber Cell that a large number of such unemployed youth have already been contacted by the terrorist outfit/group through social media and local communal organisations and other contacts. The need of the hour was to act swiftly and to check these elements/designs before they assume serious proportions.

Discrete inquiries made by the police, through the Cyber Cell, revealed that good numbers of unemployed youth are very active on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. On an average, many of them were spending 6 – 8 hours each day, using electronic devices/internet, etc. It also came to light that such unemployed youth were showing sympathy and endorsing the messages received from certain persons, allegedly the contact persons of that global terrorist group. Their social media accounts revealed their strong affinity to such groups inasmuch as many of them started forwarding anti-national tweets on their WhatsApp and Facebook, etc. It seemed that they succumbed to their ploy and started propagating secessionist ideology. Their posts were hyper-critical of the government's initiatives, policies and subscribing to extreme beliefs and promoting extremism.

- (a) What are the options available to Raman to tackle the above situation?
- (b) What measures would you suggest for strengthening the existing set-up to ensure that such groups do not succeed in penetrating and vitiating the atmosphere in the state?
- (c) In the above scenario, what action plan would you advise for enhancing the intelligence gathering mechanism of the police force?

APPROACH

(a) Options for Raman: (i) *Mass crackdown* through arrests and blanket blocking: quick deterrence, but it profiles a community (Articles 14 and 15), alienates families and feeds the recruiters' story. (ii) *Wait and watch*: lets the network grow. (iii) *Intelligence-led, graded action*: prosecute handlers and recruiters under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 and Section 113 (terrorist act) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita; for youth who have only shared content, counselling with families, teachers and community leaders. (iv) *Platform action*: blocking of terrorist content under Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000. The right course is (iii) with (iv): firm with handlers, rehabilitative with the misled.

(b) Strengthening the set-up: a counter-radicalisation cell in each district; credible counter-narratives from local voices; skilling, apprenticeships and sports for unemployed graduates in partnership with industry; digital-literacy and counselling in colleges; a confidential helpline for worried families; beat-level community policing; and close coordination with central agencies through the Multi-Agency Centre.

(c) Intelligence action plan: a trained social-media monitoring unit working on open sources within legal limits; human intelligence through trusted beat officers; use of CCTNS and NATGRID data; financial-trail analysis with the FIU; interception only on lawful authorisation under the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the IT Act, with logs and periodic review to meet the proportionality test of *Puttaswamy* (2017); regular training and audits.

Values: rule of law, impartiality, proportionality, compassion.

Case 9: Captured Naxalites and a Charging Crowd

2024 · QUESTION 9 · 20 MARKS

With multipronged strategy of the Central and State Governments specially in the last few years, the naxalite problem has been resolved to a large extent in the affected states of the country. However, there are a few pockets in certain states where naxalite problem still persists, mainly due to involvement of foreign countries. Rohit is posted as SP (Special Operations) for the last one year, in one of the districts which is still affected by the naxalite problem. The district administration has taken a lot of developmental works in the recent past in the naxalite affected areas to win the hearts and minds of the people. Over a period of time, Rohit has established an excellent intelligence network to get the real time information regarding the movement of naxalite cadre. To instill confidence in the public and have moral ascendancy over the naxalites, a number of cordons and search operations are being conducted by the police. Rohit, who himself was leading one of the

contingents got a message through his intelligence source that about ten hard core naxalites were hiding in a particular village with sophisticated weapons. Without wasting any time, Rohit reached the target village with his team and laid out a foolproof cordon and started carrying out a systematic search. During the search, his team managed to overpower all the naxalites along with their automatic weapons. However, in the meantime, more than five hundred tribal women surrounded the village and started marching towards the target house. They were shouting and demanding the immediate release of insurgents since they are their protectors and saviours. The situation on the ground was becoming very critical as the tribal women were extremely agitated and aggressive. Rohit tried to contact his superior officer, IG (Special Operations) of the state on the radio set and on mobile phone, but failed to do so due to poor connectivity. Rohit was in great dilemma since out of the naxalites apprehended, two were not only hard core top insurgents with prize money of ₹ ten lakhs on their heads, but were also involved in a recent ambush on the security forces. However, if he did not release the naxalites, the situation could get out of control since the tribal women were aggressively charging towards them. In that case, to control the situation Rohit might have to resort to firing which may lead to valuable loss of lives of civilians and would further complicate the situation.

- (a) What are the options available with Rohit to cope with the situation?
- (b) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Rohit?
- (c) Which of the options, do you think, would be more appropriate for Rohit to adopt and why?
- (d) In the present situation, what are the extra precautionary measures to be taken by the police in dealing with women protesters?

APPROACH

(a) Options: (i) *Release the insurgents*: defuses the moment, but it is unlawful, rewards mob pressure and demoralises the force. (ii) *Hold them and fire if the crowd charges*: risks killing unarmed women and destroys years of trust. (iii) *De-escalate and extract*: hold the cordon, secure the prisoners, talk to the crowd through elders, women constables and the panchayat, and move the two top cadres out by the safest route while summoning reinforcements by any available means.

(b) Dilemmas: rule of law versus civilian lives; justice for ambushed jawans versus restraint; firmness versus hearts and minds; acting without orders; and the women possibly serving as a shield.

(c) Most appropriate option: (iii). There is no lawful power to release arrested persons under pressure, and firing on unarmed women would be disproportionate and undo the district's development work. *Nandini Sundar v. State of Chhattisgarh* (2011) warned against alienating tribal people. If extraction is impossible, he should hold defensively and keep talking; any force must be the minimum needed to protect life, after warning (Section 148, BNSS).

(d) Precautions with women protesters: women police to handle women, and no male officer to touch a woman (Section 43(1), BNSS); no arrest of a woman after sunset save in exceptional cases with a magistrate's prior permission (Section 43(5)); warnings in the local language; videography; non-lethal means; informing families of the arrested (Section 48); cases against instigators, not mass FIRs.

Case 10: Sneha and Her Brother's Bid

2024 · QUESTION 10 · 20 MARKS

Sneha is a Senior Manager working for a big reputed hospital chain in a mid-sized city. She has been made in-charge of the new super speciality center that the hospital is building with state-of-the-art equipment and world class medical facilities. The building has been reconstructed and she is starting the process of procurement for various equipment and machines. As the head of the committee responsible for procurement, she has invited bids from all the interested reputed vendors dealing in medical equipment. She notices that her brother, who is a well-known supplier in this domain, has also sent his expression of interest. Since the hospital is privately owned, it is not mandatory for her to select only the lower bidder. Also, she is aware that her brother's company has been facing some financial difficulties and a big supply order will help him recover. At

the same time, allocating the contract to her brother might bring charges of favouritism against her and tarnish her image. The hospital management trusts her fully and would support any decision of hers.

- (a) What should be Sneha's course of action?
- (b) How would she justify what she chooses to do?
- (c) In this case, how is medical ethics compromised with vested personal interest?

APPROACH

(a) Course of action: Sneha has three options: award the contract to her brother (helps family, betrays trust), bar him altogether (unfair if his offer is the best), or disclose and step aside. She should take the third. She should declare the relationship in writing at once; recuse herself from this tender; ensure objective technical and price criteria are fixed before bids are opened; and avoid discussing it with her brother. He may compete on equal terms; the decision must rest on quality, safety, after-sales service and life-cycle cost, with reasons recorded.

(b) Justification: the fact that the lowest bid need not be chosen widens discretion, and wider discretion demands more transparency, not less. Management's full trust is a reason to protect it, not to use it. The principle is the same one that makes the Companies Act, 2013 (Section 188) require approval of related-party contracts and that bars an officer from dealing with a firm in which family is interested (Rule 4(3), AIS Conduct Rules). Disclosure protects her reputation and, if he wins fairly, her brother's too.

(c) How medical ethics is compromised: equipment chosen for family reasons may be less reliable, putting patient safety and accurate diagnosis at risk (non-maleficence); inflated costs pass into patients' bills in a country where most health spending is out of pocket (justice). Hospital procurement is part of patient care, not merely business.

Values: integrity, objectivity, transparency, beneficence.

Case 11: Farmers, Factories and a Drying District

2024 · QUESTION 11 · 20 MARKS

With the summer heat being exceptionally severe this year, the district has been facing severe water shortage. The District Collector has been mobilizing his subordinate officials to conserve the remaining water reserves for preventing the district from plunging into acute drinking water crisis. Along with an awareness campaign for conserving water, strict measures have been taken for stopping the over-exploitation of ground-water. Vigilance teams have been deployed to tour the villages and find the farmers who are drawing water from deep borewells or from the river reservoir for irrigation. The farmers are agitated by such action. A delegation of farmers meets the District Collector with their issues and complains that while they are not being allowed to irrigate their crops, big industries located near the river are drawing huge amounts of water through deep borewells for their industrial processes. The farmers allege that their administration is anti-farmer and corrupt, being bribed by the industry. The district needs to placate the farmers as they are threatening to go on a prolonged protest. At the same time, the District Collector has to deal with the water crisis. The industry cannot be closed as this would result in a large number of workers being unemployed.

- (a) Discuss all options available to the District Collector as a District Magistrate.
- (b) What suitable actions can be taken in view of mutually compatible interests of the stakeholders?
- (c) What are the potential administrative and ethical dilemmas for the District Collector?

APPROACH

(a) Options: (i) *Continue the drive against farmers only:* saves water, but is unequal and provokes protest. (ii) *Close the industry:* saves water, but costs thousands of jobs; disproportionate. (iii) *Equitable rationing by law:* drinking water first, as the National Water Policy, 2012 treats drinking water and sanitation as the first priority; audit large users; enforce the conditions of the Central Ground Water Authority's no-objection certificates (digital flow meters, extraction limits, recharge); directions under the State groundwater law or the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986; and a time-bound order on new deep borewells (Section 163, BNSS). Option (iii) is fair and lawful.

(b) Actions serving everyone's interests: a joint water committee of farmers, industry and officials; metered extraction displayed on a public dashboard; industry to recycle water, use treated sewage, cut use in peak summer and fund tankers and check dams under CSR; farmers to receive crop advisories, micro-irrigation support and drought relief from the disaster response fund; wage work on water conservation under the rural employment guarantee; community water budgeting as under Atal Bhujal Yojana; and an independent, public inquiry into the bribery charge.

(c) Dilemmas: farmers' livelihoods versus workers' jobs; drinking water versus irrigation; equal enforcement against a powerful industry versus the local economy; legality versus legitimacy when rules look one-sided; short-term relief versus aquifer health and intergenerational equity; and handling a corruption charge without dismissing or prejudging it.

Values: fairness, impartiality, transparency, empathy, sustainability.

Sharing Scarce Water in a Drought District

Drinking water first, then a fair share for every other user, with the same rules for farm and factory.

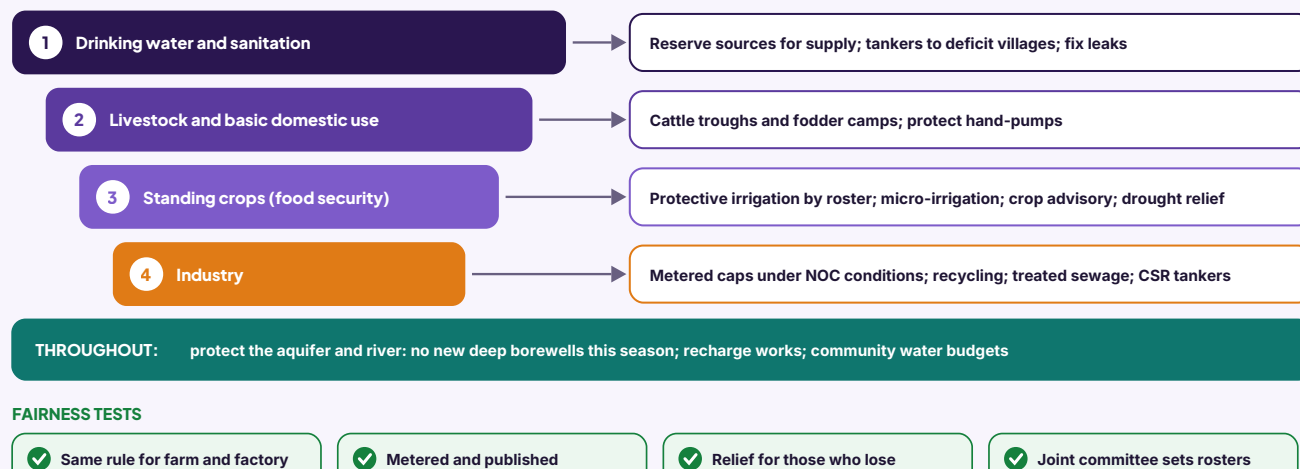


Fig. 32.2 Case 11: a drought plan that the District Magistrate can defend to farmers and industry alike, because the same rules and meters apply to both.

Case 12: Shortcuts in a Pandemic Drug Trial

2024 · QUESTION 12 · 20 MARKS

Dr. Srinivasan is a senior scientist working for a reputed biotechnology company known for its cutting-edge research in pharmaceuticals. Dr. Srinivasan is heading a research team working on a new drug aimed at treating a rapidly spreading variant of a new viral infectious disease. The disease has been rapidly spreading across the world and the cases reported in the country are increasing. There is huge pressure on Dr. Srinivasan's team to expedite the trials for the drug as there is significant market for it, and the company wants to get the first-mover advantage in the market. During a team meeting, some senior team members suggest some shortcut for expediting the clinical trials for the drug and for getting the requisite approvals. These include manipulating data to exclude some negative outcomes and selectively reporting positive results, foregoing the process of informed consent and using compounds already patented by a rival company, rather than developing one's own component. Dr. Srinivasan is not comfortable taking such shortcuts, at the same time he realises meeting the targets is impossible without using these means.

- What would you do in such a situation?
- Examine your options and consequences in the light of the ethical questions involved.
- How can data ethics and drug ethics save humanity at large in such a scenario?

APPROACH

(a) What I would do: reject all three shortcuts in writing; put before leadership a realistic plan for *ethical* speed: adaptive design, more sites, rolling submissions, and the accelerated approval for unmet needs that the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019 already allow; license the rival's compound instead of infringing it. If management insists, I would report to the Ethics Committee and the regulator (CDSCO).

(b) Options and consequences: (i) *Take the shortcuts:* first-mover profit, but falsified data could approve an unsafe or useless drug during an epidemic; prosecution under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940; infringement suits under the Patents Act, 1970; and lost trust, as Ranbaxy's 2013 guilty plea in the United States over falsified data showed. (ii) *Resign quietly:* clean hands, but the harm continues. (iii) *Ethical acceleration:* slower, but the approval survives scrutiny and the company's name survives too.

The ethical questions are clear. Informed consent is non-negotiable under the Nuremberg Code, the Declaration of Helsinki (revised 2024) and the ICMR National Ethical Guidelines, 2017. Selective reporting breaches honesty and non-maleficence; using a patented compound, justice.

(c) Why data and drug ethics protect humanity: honest data reveal true safety and efficacy; publishing negative results prevents repeated harm; registration on the Clinical Trials Registry–India allows scrutiny; trust sustains uptake of drugs and vaccines in a crisis; and fair access through licensing and TRIPS flexibilities brings cures to the poor. Thalidomide remains the warning.

03

UPSC 2025 Case Studies

The 2025 cases return to the district and the Secretariat: a disaster that coincides with personal grief, welfare versus forests, a minister's and a son's pressure, a split purchase order, a looted employment scheme and a refugee column at a north-eastern border.

Case 13: A Mother's Death During a Cloudburst**2025 · QUESTION 7 · 20 MARKS**

Vijay was Deputy Commissioner of remote district of Hilly Northern State of the country for the last two years. In the month of August heavy rains lashed the complete state followed by cloud burst in the upper reaches of the said district. The damage was very heavy in the complete state especially in the affected district. The complete road network and telecommunication were disrupted and the buildings were damaged extensively. People's houses have been destroyed and they were forced to stay in open. More than 200 people have been killed and about 5000 were badly injured. The Civil Administration under Vijay got activated and started conducting rescue and relief operations. Temporary shelter camps and hospitals were established to provide shelter and medical facilities to the homeless and injured people. Helicopter services were pressed in, for evacuating sick and old people from remote areas. Vijay got a message from his hometown in Kerala that his mother was seriously sick. After two days Vijay received the unfortunate message that his mother has expired. Vijay has no close relative except one elder sister who was US citizen and staying there for last several years. In the meantime, the situation in the affected district deteriorated further due to resumption of heavy rains after a gap of five days. At the same time, continuous messages were coming on his mobile from his hometown to reach at the earliest for performing last rites of his mother.

- What are the options available with Vijay?
- What are the ethical dilemma being faced by Vijay?
- Critically evaluate and examine each of these options identified by Vijay.
- Which of the options, do you think, would be most appropriate for Vijay to adopt and why?

APPROACH

(a) Options: (i) leave for Kerala at once; (ii) stay and forgo the last rites; (iii) hand over charge to the Additional Deputy Commissioner and travel briefly; (iv) stay through the critical phase, ask friends and the Kerala district administration to keep the body in a hospital mortuary, let his sister fly in, and travel once command is secure.

(b) Dilemma: a son's duty and need to grieve against a public duty to thousands in danger; and the risk that grief impairs judgement.

(c) Evaluation: (i) honours his mother, but leaving as rains resume, with roads and phones down, may cost lives; a successor new to the terrain would lose hours. (ii) shows dedication but denies a deep human need. (iii) is reasonable once the situation stabilises. (iv) balances both, though it relies on others' help.

(d) Most appropriate: a combination of (iv) and (iii). Vijay should inform the Chief Secretary and the Divisional Commissioner at once and ask for a senior officer to share command; remain for the most critical window while the rains are heavy; coordinate through friends and his sister so the rites can wait a short while with dignity; then hand over formally and travel for the shortest possible time, returning to lead rehabilitation. This respects both duties. The Gita's *sthitaprajna*, steady in grief, is the ideal; emotional intelligence and colleagues' support make it possible.

Values: dedication to duty, filial love, compassion for self, responsibility.

Case 14: Forest Land for Housing the Homeless

2025 · QUESTION 8 · 20 MARKS

In line with the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Indian Constitution, the government has a constitutional obligation to ensure basic needs – “Roti, Kapda aur Makan (Food, Clothes and Shelter)” – for the under-privileged. Pursuing this mandate, the district administration proposed clearing a portion of forest land to develop housing for the homeless and economically weaker sections of the society.

The proposed land, however, is an ecologically sensitive zone densely populated with age-old trees, medicinal plants and vital biodiversity. Besides, these forests help to regulate micro-climate and rainfalls; provide habitat for wildlife, support soil fertility and prevent land/soil erosion and sustain livelihoods of tribal and nomadic communities.

In spite of the ecological and social costs, the administration argues in favour of the said proposal by highlighting that this very initiative addresses fundamental human rights as a critical welfare priority. Besides, it fulfils the government's duty to uplift and empower the poor through inclusive housing development. Further, these forest areas have become unsafe due to wild-animal threats and recurring human-wild life conflicts. Lastly, clearing forest-zones may help to curb anti-social elements allegedly using these areas as hideouts, thereby enhancing law and order.

(a) Can deforestation be ethically justified in the pursuit of social welfare objectives like, housing for the homeless?

(b) What are the socio-economic, administrative and ethical challenges in balancing environmental conservation with human development?

(c) What substantial alternatives or policy interventions can be proposed to ensure that both environmental integrity and human dignity are protected?

APPROACH

(a) Can deforestation be justified? Not as proposed; it is a false choice. Shelter (*Chameli Singh*, 1996) and a healthy environment are both part of the right to life, and Articles 48A and 51A(g) make protection of forests a constitutional duty. Clearing a sensitive forest that sustains tribal livelihoods cannot be the first choice when alternatives exist; wildlife conflict and hideouts call for management and policing, not clearance. Diversion, even as a last resort, needs central approval under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 (renamed in

2023), compensatory afforestation under the CAF Act, 2016, and the consent of gram sabhas under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (Niyamgiri, 2013).

(b) Challenges: *Socio-economic:* housing one poor group by displacing another (tribal and nomadic families); loss of water, soil and micro-climate services that the poor depend on most. *Administrative:* scarce land, clearances, coordination between departments, encroachment. *Ethical:* intergenerational equity, anthropocentric versus ecocentric values, and consent and procedural justice.

(c) Alternatives: a land bank of unused government, PSU and railway land and brownfield sites; vertical housing, in-situ slum redevelopment and rental housing under PMAY-Urban 2.0 (approved in 2024 for one crore urban homes); recognition of forest rights instead of eviction; wildlife corridors, fencing and rapid-response teams; and planning with the gram sabha. Gandhi's insight, as often rendered, that the earth has enough for every need but not every greed, fits.

Values: sustainable development, justice, trusteeship.

Case 15: The Secretary, His Son and the Minister's Nephew

2025 · QUESTION 9 · 20 MARKS

Subash is Secretary, PWD in the State Government. He is a senior officer, known for his competence, integrity and dedication to work. He enjoys the trust and confidence of Minister Incharge of PWD and Programme Implementation. As a part of his job profile, he is responsible for policy formulation, execution of projects relating to infrastructure initiatives in the State. Besides, he oversees the technical and administrative aspects relating to planning, designing and construction etc.

Subash's Minister is an important Minister in the state and significant growth in urban infrastructure development and road network has been registered during his tenure. He is very keen for launching of ambitious road construction project in the near future.

Subash is in regular touch with the Minister and is working various modalities of road construction project. Regular meetings, interactions and presentations are made by him to the Minister before a formal public announcement of the project is made by the Minister. Subash's only son Vikas is in real estate business. His son from his own sources is aware that a mega road project is on the anvil and announcement in this regard is expected anytime. He is very keen to know from his father the exact location of the upcoming project. He knows that there would be quantum jump in the prices of land in the vicinity. Buying land at this stage at cheaper prices would pay him rich dividends. He is pleading with him (his father) day in and day out to share him location of the proposed project. He assured him that he would handle the matter discretely as it would not attract any adverse notice as he in the normal course, keeps on buying land as a part of his business. He feels pressurised because of constant pleadings by his son.

Another significant aspect of the matter pertained to the extra/undue interest in the above project by the Minister PWD. His nephew was also having big infrastructure project company. In fact, the Minister has also introduced his nephew to him and indicated to him to take care of his nephew's business interest in the forthcoming project. The Minister encouraged him to act fast in the matter as early announcement and execution of mega road project would enhance his status in the party and public life.

In the above backdrop, Subash is in a fix as to the future course of action.

- Discuss the ethical issues involved in the case.
- Critically examine the options available to Subash in the above situation.
- Which of the above would be most appropriate and why?

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues: misuse of confidential official information for private gain; conflict of interest; family pressure

versus integrity; political pressure to favour the Minister's relative; fairness in tendering; landowners selling cheap to insiders; and loyalty to a Minister versus loyalty to the Constitution.

(b) Options: (i) *Tell the son the location:* a breach of Rule 9 (unauthorised communication of information) and Rule 3 of the AIS (Conduct) Rules, and a road to prosecution for undue advantage. (ii) *Refuse the son but oblige the nephew:* half-integrity; favouritism in tendering violates the General Financial Rules, CVC norms and the Prevention of Corruption Act. (iii) *Refuse both quietly:* right in substance, but the Minister's pressure stays unrecorded and may return. (iv) *Refuse both firmly and build safeguards:* tell the son clearly, and declare any land interests he already holds near likely alignments, keeping away from those decisions (Rule 4(3)); tell the Minister respectfully that the project will go through open e-tendering with pre-set criteria, where his nephew may compete like anyone; record the conversation in a file note; time the announcement and land notification together to deny speculators; adopt an Integrity Pact.

(c) Best option: (iv). It protects the project, the exchequer, landowners and even the Minister, whom a scandal would ruin, and keeps relationships civil without compromising duty.

Values: integrity, confidentiality, impartiality, courage; Nolan's principles of selflessness and objectivity.

Case 16: Split Orders and a Promotion at Stake

2025 · QUESTION 10 · 20 MARKS

Rajesh is a Group A officer with nine years of service. He is posted as Administrative Officer in an Oil Public Sector undertaking. As an Administrative Officer he is responsible for managing and coordinating various administrative tasks to ensure smooth functioning of office. He also manages office supplies, equipment etc.

Rajesh is now sufficient senior and is expecting his next promotion in JAG (Junior Administrative Grade) in the next one or two years. He knows that promotion is based on examination of ACRs/Performance Appraisal of last few years (5 years or so) of an officer by a DPC (Departmental Promotion Committee) and an officer lacking requisite grading of ACRs may not be found fit for promotion. Consequences of losing promotion may entail financial and reputational loss and set-back for career progression. Though he also puts his best efforts in official discharge of his duties, yet he is unsure of assessment by his superior officer. He is now putting extra efforts so that he gets thumping report at the end of financial year.

As Administrative Officer, Rajesh is regularly interacting with his immediate boss, who is his reporting officer for writing his ACR. One day he calls Rajesh and wants him to buy computer-related stationery on priority from a particular vendor. Rajesh instructs his office to initiate action for procuring these items. During the day, the dealing Assistant brings an estimate of Rupees Thirty Five Lakhs covering all stationery items from the same vendor. It is noticed that as per delegated financial powers, as provided in the GFR (General Financial Rules) as applicable in that Organisation, expenditure for office items exceeding Rupees Thirty Lakhs requires sanction of the next higher authority (boss in the present case). Rajesh knows that immediate superior would expect all these purchases should be done at his level and may not appreciate such lack of initiative on his part. During discussions with office, he learns that common practice of splitting of expenditure (where large order is divided into a series of smaller ones) is followed to avoid obtaining sanction from higher authority. This practice is against the rules and may come to the adverse notice of Audit.

Rajesh is perturbed. He is unsure of taking decision in the matter.

- What are the options available with Rajesh in the above situation?
- What are the ethical issues involved in this case?
- Which would be the most appropriate option for Rajesh and why?

APPROACH

(a) Options: (i) *Split the order* into pieces below ₹30 lakh: pleases the boss, but breaches Rule 157 of the General Financial Rules, 2017, which forbids dividing a demand into piecemeal purchases to avoid higher sanction; it invites audit and vigilance scrutiny. (ii) *Approve ₹35 lakh at his own level:* exceeds delegated powers. (iii) *Put up one*

consolidated proposal to the boss for sanction, through competitive procurement (the Government e-Marketplace or tender, as the organisation's manual requires), with a note on need, quantity and price reasonableness. (iv) Seek oral clarification first, then follow (iii).

(b) Ethical issues: integrity versus career; the fear of an adverse report steering decisions; a "common practice" that normalises deviance; a nominated vendor, which suggests favouritism; accountability for public money; and possible misuse of position by the superior.

(c) Most appropriate: (iii), after reviewing whether the full quantity is needed now. It respects the delegation of powers, keeps the decision with the person who is meant to take it, and protects the boss himself from an audit para. Rajesh can frame it in that spirit, respectfully and in writing. Competitive bidding protects everyone. His career is better safeguarded by an honest record than by a pliant one: assessment entries must be communicated and can be represented against (*Dev Dutt v. Union of India*, 2008).

Values: integrity, courage of conviction, prudence, accountability, rule of law.

Case 17: Repairing a Looted Rural Jobs Scheme

2025 · QUESTION 11 · 20 MARKS

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program, MGNREGA was earlier known as National Rural Employment Scheme, NREGA. It is an Indian Social Welfare Program that aimed at fulfilling the 'Right to Work' provisions made in the Constitution. MGNREGA was launched in 2006 under Rural Employment Sector by the Ministry of Rural Development.

Main objective of the program is to give legal guarantee of wage employment to the adult members of rural households who are willing to do unskilled manual labour work subject to a maximum of 100 days per year for every household. Every rural household has the right to register under the scheme, job card is issued to the registered, Job Card holder can seek employment; State Government shall pay 25% of minimum wage for the first 30 days as compensatory daily unemployment allowance to the families and of wage for remaining period of the year. MGNREGA work was undertaken by various Gram Panchayats.

You have been appointed as an Administrator Incharge of the District. You have been given the responsibility of monitoring MGNREGA work undertaken by various Gram Panchayats. You are also given the authority to give technical sanctions to all MGNREGA works.

In one of the Panchayats in your jurisdiction, you notice that your predecessor has mismanaged the Program in terms of:

- (i) Money not disbursed to actual job-seekers.
- (ii) Muster Rolls of the Labourers not properly maintained.
- (iii) Mismatch between the work done and payments made.
- (iv) Payments made to fictitious persons.
- (v) Job Cards were given without looking into the need of person.
- (vi) Mismanagement of funds and to the extent of siphoning of funds.
- (vii) Approved works that never existed.

(a) What is your reaction to the above situation and how do you restore the proper functioning of MGNREGA Program in this regard?

(b) What actions would you initiate to solve the various issues listed above?

(c) How would you deal with the above situation?

APPROACH

Note: under MGNREGA, the unemployment allowance is at least one-fourth of the wage rate for the first 30 days and at least half thereafter. Since 1 July 2026 the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 (125 days) has replaced MGNREGA; it keeps mandatory social audits and grievance redress, so the approach below still applies.

(a) My reaction: this is theft from the poorest; I would act firmly, on facts, not presumptions. First, keep works running, pay genuine workers and publicise a helpline.

(b) Actions on each issue: (i) and (iv): door-to-door verification of job cards with the gram sabha, deletion of fictitious names, payment only to verified accounts, recovery. (ii): electronic muster rolls and geotagged, photographed attendance through the NMMS app. (iii) and (vii): physical verification of every work and its measurement book by an independent technical team,, with geotagged photographs. (v): re-verify, but every rural household willing to work is entitled to a card; correct fraud, do not exclude. (vi): special audit; FIRs for cheating, forgery and criminal breach of trust under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Prevention of Corruption Act; disciplinary action and recovery.

(c) Dealing with the situation: order a social audit by the independent State Social Audit Unit with a public hearing; involve the Ombudsperson; display works and payments on citizen information boards; protect complainants; hear the predecessor fairly; rotate staff. Andhra Pradesh's state-run social audits since 2006 show that transparency deters theft.

Values: accountability, transparency, justice, compassion for workers.

Case 18: Refugees and Armed Soldiers at the Border

2025 · QUESTION 12 · 20 MARKS

Ashok is Divisional Commissioner of one of the border districts of the North East State. A few years back, Military has taken over the neighbouring country after overthrowing the elected civil government. Civil war situation is prevailing in the country especially in last two years. However, internal situation further deteriorated due to rebel groups taking over control of certain populated areas near own border. Due to intense fight between military and rebel groups, civilian casualties has increased manifold in recent past. In the meantime, in one night Ashok got information from the local police guarding the border check post that there are about 200-250 people mainly women and children trying to cross over to our side of the border. There are also about 10 soldiers with their weapons in military uniform part of this group who wants to cross over. Women and Children are also crying and begging for help. A few of them are injured and bleeding profusely need immediate medical care. Ashok tried to contact Home Secretary of the State but failed to do so due to poor connectivity mainly due to inclement weather.

- What are the options available with Ashok to cope with the situation?
- What are the ethical and legal dilemmas being faced by Ashok?
- Which of the options, do you think would be more appropriate for Ashok to adopt and why?
- In the present situation, what are the extra precautionary measures to be taken by the Border Guarding Police in dealing with soldiers in uniform?

APPROACH

(a) Options: (i) *Turn everyone back:* inhuman; the injured may die. (ii) *Let everyone in:* humane, but armed soldiers are a security risk. (iii) *Admit women, children and the injured* for first aid and shelter, record biometrics, and admit the soldiers only after disarming them, holding them separately under guard. (iv) *Wait for orders:* delay may cost lives.

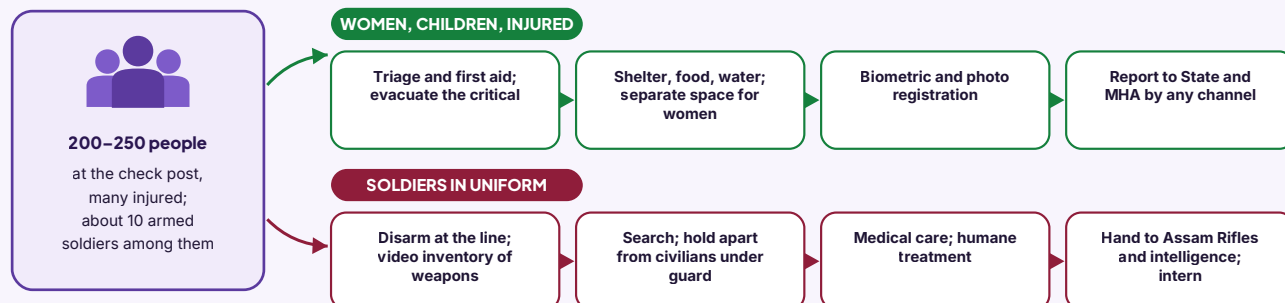
(b) Dilemmas: security versus humanitarian duty; India is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, entry without documents is an offence under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 (in force from 1 September 2025), and the Centre wants such influx checked; yet Article 21 protects every person on Indian soil, citizen or not (*NHRC v. State of Arunachal Pradesh*, 1996), and non-refoulement is a widely accepted norm.

(c) Best option: (iii). Life-saving cannot wait; disarming removes the threat; temporary shelter is not asylum, and the Centre decides later. Indian practice agrees: Mizoram has sheltered over 30,000 Myanmar civilians since 2021, while more than 600 Myanmar soldiers who crossed over were disarmed, held by the Assam Rifles and repatriated by January 2024.

(d) Precautions with soldiers in uniform: disarm them at the line and inventory weapons on video; search them; hold them apart from civilians under armed guard; humane treatment and medical care; questioning by the Assam Rifles and intelligence agencies; internment pending a decision, as neutral States do under Hague Convention V (1907).

Night at the Border: Two Tracks, One Principle

Save life first, remove the threat, record everything, and let the Centre decide.



ANCHORS

Article 21 covers every person · non-refoulement · temporary shelter is not asylum · Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 · Hague Convention V (1907)

Fig. 32.3 Case 18: civilians and soldiers are handled on separate tracks; humanitarian help and security are not alternatives but parallel duties.

04 UPSC 2026 Case Studies

The 2026 paper is the most contemporary yet: patient consent, AI-driven policing, corruption that paralyses an office, biometric gatekeeping of food, ethnic conflict and the ethics of selling weapons abroad. Each asks the officer to justify the chosen option, not merely to list it.

Case 19: Lata's Hysterectomy Without Consent

2026 · QUESTION 7 · 20 MARKS

Lata, a mother of two children, was admitted to a hospital for acute abdominal pain. Her sister-in-law, Sujatha, accompanied her. Dr. Mansi examined Lata and recommended a diagnostic laparoscopy. Lata's consent was taken to conduct the medical procedure under general anesthesia.

During the laparoscopy, Dr. Mansi's team discovered a tumor in Lata's uterus. A closer examination suggested that the tumor could be malignant.

One option before Dr. Mansi was to extract a sample for biopsy. In that case, if the tumor was malignant, Lata would have to undergo another surgery for removal of the uterus. An alternative was to remove the uterus immediately. Dr. Mansi had to take a quick decision.

As Lata was under general anesthesia, Dr. Mansi explained the situation to Sujatha. Sujatha agreed with Dr. Mansi's recommendations for a hysterectomy, wherein Lata's uterus would be removed to avoid the risk and pain of undergoing another surgery. Dr. Mansi removed Lata's uterus after receiving Sujatha's consent in writing. Lata was informed of this the next day. She was very upset and felt betrayed as she had not consented to the removal of her uterus.

Lata complained to the police who tried to convince her that Dr. Mansi had acted with good intention to help a patient. Sujatha was of the same opinion, however Lata was not convinced and decided to approach the court.

- (a) Discuss the ethical issues involved in this case.
- (b) Discuss the moral conduct of the doctor in this situation.

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues: bodily autonomy and informed consent; reproductive choice as part of personal liberty under Article 21 (*Suchita Srivastava*, 2009; *Puttaswamy*, 2017); substitute consent from a relative for a competent adult who would wake within hours; medical paternalism versus autonomy; beneficence (sparing a second surgery) versus non-maleficence (an irreversible loss on a suspicion that was not yet confirmed); relatives deciding for women; and police dissuading a complainant.

(b) The doctor's conduct: well-intentioned, but wrong. There was no emergency: the tumour "could be" malignant and nothing suggested danger to life within hours. The right course was to take a biopsy, close, and let Lata decide once she was awake and informed. On almost identical facts, the Supreme Court in *Samira Kohli v. Dr. Prabha Manchanda* (2008) held that consent to a diagnostic procedure is not consent to remove an organ, except in a life-threatening emergency, and that a relative cannot consent for a competent adult. Sujatha's signature therefore has no legal force.

Good faith mitigates blame: criminal liability needs gross negligence (*Jacob Mathew*, 2005), so the apt remedies are compensation before a consumer commission and review by the State Medical Council. Dr. Mansi should acknowledge the error and apologise. The police should record the complaint and seek an independent medical opinion, not talk her out of it; going to court is her right.

Values: autonomy, respect for persons (Kant), honesty, humility, accountability.

Case 20: Predictive Policing in a Riot-Prone District

2026 · QUESTION 8 · 20 MARKS

Ravi is a senior police officer with vast experience in riot control and cyber-policing. Since one year, he has been the Superintendent of Police (SP) of a district with a history of frequent rioting.

Last year, Ravi had sought installation of an AI enabled software for predictive policing. This system has been operational for approximately six months. This new system employs advanced algorithms for capturing the biometric data of persons in a crowd and swiftly relating it to a data library. This has enabled the police to identify the persons involved in various crimes.

The system has identified an immigrant and low-income neighbourhood as a centre for gang violence and drug trafficking. Aided by this AI analysis, the local police has focused its patrolling, preventive detentions and establishing checkpoints. Consequently, public order and law enforcement has visibly improved.

Last week, some community leaders, civil rights lawyers and human rights activists visited Ravi's office. They submitted a memorandum that the new system is faulty as it is based on incorrect historical data caused by social biases and discriminatory policing. The memorandum also alleges that the increased surveillance has created a climate of tension amongst residents. This feeling is aggravated by the fact that the residents are not aware of the data noted against their names.

- (a) What are the ethical issues including biases involved in the use of AI in data-driven policing?
- (b) Place yourself in Ravi's role and discuss the alternatives available. Justify the action that optimises compliance with ethics.

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues and biases: *historical bias*: past over-policing of poor and immigrant areas produced more records there, so the model sends more patrols, which produce more records (a feedback loop); *accuracy bias*: face recognition errs more for some groups; *collective suspicion*: a whole neighbourhood treated as criminal (Articles 14, 15 and 21); *privacy*: mass biometric capture of crowds lacks a clear statutory basis (the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 covers arrested persons, not crowds) and must meet *Puttaswamy's* test of

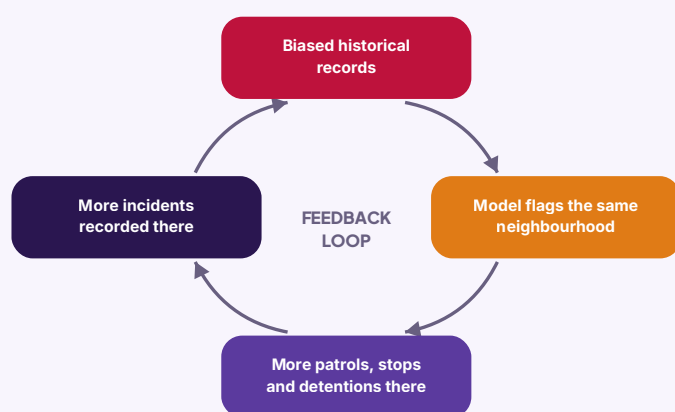
proportionality; *opacity*: residents do not know what is recorded; and detention on algorithmic suspicion. Since Section 17 of the DPDP Act, 2023 exempts crime-related processing from most duties, ethics must fill the gap left by law.

(b) Alternatives: (i) *Continue*: order holds, but legitimacy erodes. (ii) *Scrap it*: loses a useful tool. (iii) *Pause algorithmic targeting, audit and reform*: an independent audit of data and error rates with civil-society observers; AI as one input only, with human verification before any action; no detention on a flag alone (Section 170, BNSS needs knowledge of a design to commit an offence); deletion of non-matching biometrics; a published SOP and a desk where residents can see what is held on them; community policing.

Option (iii) protects rights, keeps the tool's value and builds trust, the real capital of policing. The EU's AI Act, 2024 likewise bars predicting individual crime by profiling alone.

How Bias Feeds Itself in Predictive Policing

Without circuit-breakers, yesterday's patrol pattern becomes tomorrow's 'evidence'.



CIRCUIT-BREAKERS

- ✓ Independent audit of training data and error rates, with civil-society observers
- ✓ Human verification before any stop or detention; no action on a flag alone
- ✓ Delete non-matching biometrics; fix retention limits
- ✓ Published SOP and a desk where residents can see what is held on them
- ✓ Compare patrol-generated and citizen-reported crime data
- ✓ Community policing and regular review of where patrols go

Fig. 32.4 Case 20: why a model trained on past policing keeps returning to the same streets, and the checks that break the loop.

Case 21: Seema and the Land-Use Racket

2026 · QUESTION 9 · 20 MARKS

Seema is a senior bureaucrat with a reputation of honesty and professional efficiency. She has recently been posted as the District Collector (DC) to Surinder Nagar, where a large industrial area is being established.

The new industrial area had caused many farmers to submit applications for change of land use (CLU) to convert their farmlands into residential areas. There is an unusually large backlog of these applications awaiting processing. Seema noticed that some applications had been approved selectively with no visible chronological pattern. The case files showed a few complaints of some approvals being subject to receipt of large bribes from the applicants.

On further fact-finding, Seema realized that a small group of touts was controlling this illegal activity through some subordinate officials in the Collectorate. This had created a fear in the other employees who were reluctant to process any application. The resultant backlog has been piling up thereby hindering local economic progress and causing public dissatisfaction.

Seema was faced with a major moral and administrative challenge of dismantling this corruption network without hampering daily administrative operations. An aggressive internal investigation would result in institutional resistance and, possibly, a backlash from labour unions. Conversely, ignoring this situation would encourage the wrongdoers and unnecessarily continue this avoidable harassment to the populace.

(a) What are the ethical issues involved in this case?

(b) Discuss the options open to Seema. Identify the recommended option and justify it.

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues: corruption and rent-seeking; selective approvals that break the equality of citizens before the State (Article 14); fear that silences honest employees; a backlog that harms farmers and the local economy; capture of an office by touts; the leader's duty to reform without paralysing work; and due process for accused staff.

(b) Options: (i) *Aggressive, sweeping inquiry and mass suspensions*: a strong signal, but likely to stall work, harden resistance and hurt the innocent. (ii) *Ignore the racket and simply clear the backlog*: continuity, but it legitimises corruption. (iii) *A phased, systemic strategy* (recommended):

1. Remove discretion: online applications, a strict first-in-first-out queue on a public dashboard, time limits under the State's public-services guarantee law, and faceless scrutiny, so touts lose leverage. 2. Clear the backlog through special camps run by trusted teams; rotate desks. 3. Target the network quietly: share evidence with the Anti-Corruption Bureau for trap cases under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act; departmental action and suspension where evidence is strong; police action against touts. 4. Engage staff and unions: make clear the drive targets corruption, not employees; protect and reward honest workers. 5. Open a grievance and whistle-blower channel.

Option (iii) attacks the cause, not just the symptom, using Klitgaard's formula: corruption = monopoly + discretion – accountability.

Values: integrity, courage, fairness, prudence.

Case 22: Fingerprints and Food in Nainipura

2026 · QUESTION 10 · 20 MARKS

Vikas is a government officer with over a decade of service in public administration. He has recently moved as the District Collector (DC) of Nainipura, a remote hilly district bordering a forest. Due to Nainipura's low levels of economic development, one of his major duties is to ensure proper functioning of the public distribution system (PDS) amongst the economically weaker sections (EWS).

During his on-site visits, Vikas was apprised of a typical administrative challenge in operating the PDS. To prevent leakages, all distributors were required to carry out real-time biometric identification of the beneficiaries, whose fingerprints were tallied with identity card records. This was creating problems as the operating system sometimes rejected fingerprint matching in the cases of growing children, manual labourers and senior citizens. The problem was further compounded in periods of low WiFi connectivity. The distributors, in such cases, resorted to personal discretion when they could identify the recipient.

Vikas had to address this problem on priority. Strictly adhering to government regulations would ensure fiscal probity but would greatly trouble the proposed beneficiary, i.e., EWS. It may even impinge on their fundamental right to life as per Article 21 of the Constitution. Conversely, leaving the resolution solely to the discretion of the distributors could lead to misuse and leakages.

(a) What are the options open to Vikas? How should he balance fiscal probity with empathy towards the designated beneficiaries?

(b) Discuss the ethics of using technology as a gatekeeper for welfare schemes.

APPROACH

(a) Options: (i) *Strict biometric-only distribution*: probity, but children, labourers and the elderly are excluded, violating the right to food under the National Food Security Act, 2013 and Article 21; the 2017 death of eleven-year-old Santoshi Kumari in Jharkhand, after her family's card was cancelled for want of Aadhaar seeding, shows the cost. (ii) *Leave it to dealers' discretion*: inclusion, but leakage. (iii) *Layered authentication with accountable exceptions* (recommended): iris, face or mobile-OTP fallback; a nominee for the elderly and disabled; an offline mode that syncs later; and a manual exception register recording the card, a photograph and a thumb impression, countersigned by a village official or two witnesses and audited monthly.

Balance: check leakage *after* delivery rather than deny food *before* it. Analytics can flag shops with unusual exception rates; vigilance committees, social audits and the district grievance officer close the loop. The Aadhaar judgment (2018) held that no one may be denied a benefit merely because authentication fails.

(b) Technology as a gatekeeper: it cuts ghost beneficiaries, enables portability under One Nation One Ration Card. But exclusion errors fall on the weakest, because systems assume able bodies and good networks; the burden of proof shifts to the poor; and "the machine said no" leaves no one accountable. Technology should serve entitlements, not ration them: inclusion by default, human override and swift redress. Gandhi's talisman and Amartya Sen's work on entitlements make the same point.

Case 23: Restoring Trust in a Divided District

2026 · QUESTION 11 · 20 MARKS

Rajapuram is a border district. Jhara and Biru, its two major communities are in continual conflict with each other. The social fabric is fractured and demands mending.

Ethnic tensions between the two communities have erupted into violence resulting in a large number of deaths. The stated causes are conflicting land claims, uneven resource allocation and inadequate political representation in government bodies. Separate relief camps had to be created for the two communities. The situation is volatile and appears to be getting out of control.

Rajan has been appointed the District Magistrate (DM) of Rajapuram and tasked to quickly get the situation under control. His immediate tasks include restoring administrative authority, reopening the highway and initiating peace talks. On taking over his appointment, Rajan realized that the inter-community rivalry had even seeped into the local administration and police. With functional neutrality being the immediate casualty, it had made both communities distrustful of the government. The neighbouring country could utilize the opportunity to spur insurgent activity and further aggravate the situation. Rajan favoured a controlled approach starting with opening the highway to restore food and medical supplies. He toyed with the idea of requisitioning CRPF units to help restore administrative control.

(a) Discuss the ethical issues that need to be addressed in this case.

(b) What are the options open to Rajan? Which option would ensure protection of his non-partisan image without compromising ethics?

APPROACH

(a) Ethical issues: protection of life and restoration of the rule of law; neutrality of officials compromised by community loyalties; fair relief between segregated camps; a deep trust deficit; underlying grievances over land, resources and representation; rumours; cross-border insurgency; and human rights in any use of force.

(b) Options: (i) *Restore control through local police alone:* quick, but the police are seen as partisan. (ii) *Requisition the CRPF:* a neutral force that can secure the highway and buffer zones, provided it works under civil direction and strict rules on minimum force. (iii) *Talks first, without security:* goodwill, but violence continues. (iv) *A combined, controlled approach* (recommended): seek central armed police through the State Government to escort food and medical convoys and hold buffer zones; post officers from neither community in sensitive charges; give both camps identical ration, health and schooling standards, with open audits; run a rumour-control cell, restricting the internet only briefly and proportionately (*Anuradha Bhasin, 2020*); form peace committees of elders, women and youth from both sides; and refer land disputes to a neutral panel.

Protecting a non-partisan image: one standard for both: FIRs against violence from either side, equal relief, equal access to the DM, messages in both languages. Manipur since 2023 shows why neutrality must be visible.

Values: impartiality, rule of law, empathy, courage.

Case 24: Which Country Gets the Missiles?

2026 · QUESTION 12 · 20 MARKS

Ajit has been recently promoted as the Head of the Department of Weapon Sales (DWS) in the Ministry of Defence Production (MDP). His charter of duties includes international sales of weapons produced domestically by MDP.

In two recent wars, MDP weapons have performed admirably, resulting in many countries showing interest in buying them, particularly long-range artillery and missiles. Country A and country B have asked for these weapons. However, production constraints restrict DWS to accept only one purchase order.

Country A is a developing nation with a sound technology base. MDP is planning R&D collaboration with it for the next generation of weapons. It is not part of any security alliance and needs weapons for protection from a troublesome neighbour. It seeks a large acquisition on a long-term loan.

Country B is also a developing nation. Military strength is its priority, with the military budget often ingressing into allocations for human resources and infrastructure development. It is in security alliance with a superpower who has a large military base there and periodically allots it financial grants. It is a member of an economic bloc with which the government is currently negotiating a free trade agreement. It is not a signatory of NPT but possesses smaller nuclear weapons and delivery systems. It supports some guerrilla forces abroad. It has sought a smaller acquisition and is prepared to make some advance payment. It is currently negotiating arms purchases from another nation too.

Ajit discussed this case with his counterparts in the related departments. Therein, the significant economic benefits, employment generation and stronger diplomatic relations arising from this sale were highlighted. It was also emphasized that refusing the deal could result in country B purchasing weapons from some other supplier.

Ajit was aware that in arms sales, due diligence at each stage was pivotal to ensure conformity to national policy and international treaties.

- (a) Discuss the options available to Ajit. Which option should he select and why?
- (b) How can Ajit balance nation's economic and strategic interests with ethical considerations?

APPROACH

(a) Options: (i) *Sell to Country B:* advance payment, trade leverage and jobs; but B diverts money from welfare, backs guerrilla forces abroad (risk of weapons reaching non-state actors), holds nuclear weapons outside the NPT (long-range missiles could become delivery systems), hosts a superpower base (risk of technology leakage) and is shopping elsewhere anyway. (ii) *Sell to Country A:* a genuine defensive need, no bloc ties, an R&D partnership; the loan risk is manageable through a government line of credit. (iii) *Sell to neither:* avoids risk but forgoes strategic gains.

Ajit should recommend **Country A**, with full due diligence: end-user and non-retransfer certificates; compliance with India's SCOMET export controls and the Missile Technology Control Regime (India joined in 2016), whose guidelines strongly presume against transferring the most capable missiles, so ranges and payloads must be checked; post-shipment verification; human-rights risk assessment. The argument that "B will buy elsewhere" does not remove our complicity: another's wrong does not make ours right.

(b) Balancing interests and ethics: treat a reputation as a responsible power as part of the national interest; adopt published export-risk criteria like the Arms Trade Treaty's (India is not a party); weigh export gains (a record ₹38,424 crore in 2025–26) against the risk of misuse; prefer long-term partners to quick cash; and offer Country B non-lethal cooperation while trade talks proceed on their merits.

Values: responsibility, prudence, just-war ethics, Kautilya's realism tempered by dharma.

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