Ethics and Bureaucracy

What is Ethics?

- Etymologically the term "ethics" corresponds to the Greek word "ethos" which means character, habit, custom, ways of behaviour etc.

- Ethics is also called "moral philosophy"

- "Moral" comes from Latin word "mores" which signifies customs, character, behaviour etc.

- Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is the study of values and guidelines. It seeks to resolve questions of human morality by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime

Various Dimensions and Determinants of Ethical Behaviour

- Morality

- Personal Values

- Organisational Ethics

- Law

Moral Principles

- Broad principles governing personal and institutional behaviour and conduct based on social and cultural norms. Hence, they may vary from society to society (non-vegetarian food) and evolve over a period of time (divorce, widow remarriage)

- In the realm of philosophy

- Not always concrete in nature (Respect for elders, punctuality, inter-caste marriage, caste divisions, spitting)

- Primarily based on social obligation as there is no concrete penalty

- Some moral principles get codified as law (corruption), a lot get accepted in personal value system and organizational ethics (punctuality)

Personal Value System

- Purely personal in nature determined through personal experience and socialization. (Attitude towards corruption)

- Personal values are by and large in conformity with social morality but may be at variance with them (caste division) or even organizational ethics (corruption, punctuality)

- Personal value system can influence social morality (widow remarriage) and organizational ethos (Tatas, Infosys)

- By and large no penalty (Based on moral obligation/financial obligation)

Organizational Ethics

- Norms of an organization (Punctuality, Commitment, Honesty, Cleanliness, Discipline)

- This varies from organization to organization (Tatas and Ambanis)

- Some norms get codified and become applicable to the members of the organization

- There is some physical obligation (Punctuality)

- These may be at variance with Social Moral Principles (Radha Saomi sect), Personal Value System (corruption) and even law (Naxal Movement)

Law

- Totally codified (except perhaps Law of Torts)
- Physical obligation (except some international laws that are not enforceable)
- By and large reflect social value system but on occasions they may be at variance (reservation)

Determinants of Ethical Behaviour

- Individual personality traits
- Socio-cultural environment of the individual
- Organizational norms where the individual works

Ethics In Public Life

- Ethics for Public Figures

- Ethics for those that hold Public Office : Placing public interest over private interest; Custody of funds of people; Regulatory compliance

- Ethics of Regulators : In formulation of Regulations (Non-discriminatory, Equitable and Sympathetic to weaker sections); In execution of Regulation

Ethics In Private Life

- Ethics in dealing with self : Thinking well and not ill of others
- Consistency between words and action
- Be what you project yourself to be
- Ethics in marital life
- Ethics in dealing with one's children
- Ethics in dealing with friends

Public versus Private Ethics

- Does private ethics have no bearing on public life or social ethics?
- Does what occurs in privacy of one's office or home have no influence on public or social policy decisions?
- Can private ethical behaviour be separated from social ethics without consequences?
- Can there be public or social ethics without underlying personal ethics?

Ethics in Public Administration

- Maxim of Legality and Rationality
- Maxim of Responsibility and Accountability
- Maxim of Work Commitment
- Maxim of Excellence
- Maxim of Fusion
- Maxim of Responsiveness and Resilience

Ethics and Public Administration

- Maxim of Utilitarianism
- Maxim of Compassion
- Maxim of National Interest
- Maxim of Justice
- Maxim of Transparency
- Maxim of Integrity

Ethics in Public Relations

- Suppressing unfavourable news?

- Misrepresenting facts?

- Postponing to serve a cause but actually serving some other interest?

- Promising results that cannot be obtained?

- Use of undesirable methods to manipulate news?

Values in Public Relations

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

Personal Ethical Policy

- Not to purposely cause harm to any other human being
- Promoting and demonstrating ideals through actions and not by enforcing them on others
- Respecting the ideas, lifestyles, religions and ideals of others
- Abiding by rules, codes of conduct and laws as long as they are not in conflict with higher principles
- Honest and trustworthy
- Giving others credit due to them
- Honouring confidentiality

Why Ethical Behaviour?

- Individual Level

- Organisational Level

- Societal Level

Individual Level

- Provides credibility to the individual
- Builds confidence in one's self
- Social capital : Trust and Commitment

Organisational Level

- Brand equity

- Employer-employee relationship : Recognises contribution of employees; Pays them due share and promptly; Stands by them in times of need

- Stake-holder relationship

Societal Level

- Absence of greed and equitable distribution of resources
- Less tension and more peaceful
- Equality and justice

Ethical Dilemmas

- Dilemmas involving fairness
- Dilemmas involving personal interest and public interest
- Dilemmas involving faithful execution of official duties
- Dilemmas in acting with integrity
- Dilemmas involving accountability

.......it pays to be honest