General Studies Paper – 4 (Ethics) – Important Terms (Jargon) and Their Meaning

BY [INSIGHTS](http://insightsonindia.com/author/vinay-g-b/) · SEPTEMBER 3, 2014

**By**: User of Insightsonindia.com

**Illegal Gratification**: It is defined as taking gratification other than legal remuneration in respect of an official act.  Gratification is not limited to pecuniary gratifications or to gratifications estimable in money. It also includes favouring or disfavouring one person over the other. Ex: The **2G spectrum scam** involved politicians and government officials in India illegally undercharging mobile telephony companies for frequency allocation licenses, which they would then use to create 2G spectrum subscriptions for cell phones.

**Malfeasance**: It is the commission of an act that is unequivocally illegal or completely wrongful or the commission of an unlawful act done in an official capacity. It affects the performance of official duties and may cause harm to others. It results in legal liability for the person who commits the act. It is a tort.

**Misfeasance**: It is engaging in proper action or duty, but failing to perform the duty correctly. The performance of duty is riddled with errors caused by mistakes or carelessness, but is without evil intent and/or violation of law.

**Diligence**: Diligence is steadfast application, assiduousness and industry—the virtue of hard work. It is one of the seven heavenly virtues. Diligent behaviour is indicative of a work ethic — a belief that work is good in itself.

**Diligence in Buddhism**-The last words of the Buddha was “Strive on with diligence”. Diligence is an integral part of all Buddhist teaching, and is considered the fourth of the pāramitā. In Mahayana tradition diligence is the third pāramitā and the first which is said to lead to liberation. The practice of diligence will bring an increase of qualities.  
**Bureaucratic inertia**: Bureaucratic inertia is the inevitable tendency of bureaucratic organizations to perpetuate the established procedures and modes, even if they are counterproductive and/or diametrically opposed to established organizational goals. This unchecked growth may continue independently of the organization’s success or failure. Through bureaucratic inertia, organizations tend to take on a life of their own beyond their formal objectives.  
“The bureaucracy is expanding to meet the needs of the expanding bureaucracy.” –Oscar Wild  
Example: The United States Department of Agriculture has offices in almost all U.S. counties, even though only 14% of counties have valid farms or existing agricultural relevancy.

**Intuition**: it is the ability to acquire representation or knowledge about things apparently without reasoning or usage of reasoning in general. It is often conceived as a kind of inner perception. Sometimes it develops with age, sometimes maturity, sometimes with experience, in some with intellect. It teaches guides and motivates us. We experience Déjà-vu’s coz our intuition might have felt it or comprehended it much before.

**Prudence**: Prudence is the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason.[1] It is classically considered to be a virtue, and in particular one of the four Cardinal virtues.  It is often associated with wisdom, insight, and knowledge. In this case, the virtue is the ability to judge between virtuous and vicious actions, not only in a general sense, but with regard to appropriate actions at a given time and place. Although prudence itself does not perform any actions, and is concerned solely with knowledge, all virtues are to be regulated by it. Distinguishing when acts are courageous, as opposed to reckless or cowardly, for instance, is an act of prudence.

**Perseverance**: Steady persistence in adhering to a cause of action, a belief or a purpose etc. in spite of difficulties, obstacles or discouragement.  
Example: Medicine is a field which requires dedication and perseverance.

**Red tapism**:Red tape is excessive regulation or rigid conformity to formal rules that is considered redundant or bureaucratic and hinders or prevents action or decision-making. It is usually applied to governments, corporations, and other large organizations. It is the bureaucratic practice of hair splitting or foot dragging, blamed by its practitioners on the system that forces them to follow prescribed procedures to the letter.  Red tape can also include filing and certification requirements, reporting, investigation, inspection and enforcement practices, and procedures.

**Probity**: It is the adherence to the highest principles and ideals. It is the quality of having strong moral principles, honesty and decency. Probity in governance is an essential and vital requirement for an efficient and effective system of governance and for socio-economic development.  An important requisite for ensuring probity in governance is absence of corruption. The other requirements are effective laws, rules and regulations governing every aspect of public life and, more important, an effective and fair implementation of those laws, etc. Indeed, a proper, fair and effective enforcement of law is a facet of discipline.

**Intellectual Integrity**: It is defined as recognition of the need to be true to one’s own thinking and to hold oneself to the same standards one expects others to meet. It is to practice what one advocates to others and to honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in one’s own thoughts and action.

**Esprit de corps**: The common spirit of comradeship existing among the members of a group and inspiring enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honour of the group.For example, a military unit.

**Fidelity**: It is defined as faithfulness to obligations, duties or observances; exact correspondence with fact or with a given quality, condition or event; accuracy in reporting detail; adherence to truth. A public servant is expected to be at all times a trustworthy person in the public services. An unfaithful public servant tarnishes the image of the entire system.  
**Moral turpitude**: Criminal law describes it as conduct contrary to community standards of justice, honesty or good morals. It involves gross violation of standards of moral conduct, vileness, such that an act involving moral turpitude was intentionally evil, making the act a crime.

**Moral objectivism**: The position that certain acts are objectively right or wrong, independent of human opinion. It doesn’t depend on what anyone *thinks* is right or wrong. That is, the view that the ‘moral facts’ are like ‘physical’ facts in that what the facts are does not depend on what anyone thinks they are.

**Moral scepticism**: “Moral Scepticism” names a diverse collection of views that deny or raise doubts about various roles of reason in morality. Different versions of moral scepticism deny or doubt moral knowledge, justified moral belief, moral truth, moral facts or properties, and reasons to be moral. Ex: Questioning the Rajya Dharma.

**Indriya nigraha**: It means not letting our sense organs run astray. ‘Indriyas have to be our slaves-we should be theirs’. IT is one of the most practical aspects of Sanatana philosophy.

**Stithaprajnata**: It is the concept discussed in the saukhya yoga of the Gita. A sthithaprajna is one whose mind has become absolutely still, quietened and tranquil. One who accepts pleasure and pain with equanimity.

**Moral Universalism**: it is the meta-ethical position that some system of ethics, or a universal ethic, applies universally. That is, for all similarly situated individuals, regardless of culture, race, sex, religion, nationality, sexuality or any other distinguishing feature. It is opposed to moral nihilism and moral relativism.

**Moral Nihilism**: It is the meta-ethical view that nothing is intrinsically moral or immoral. For moral nihilists, morality is without universal or even relative truth in any sense.

**Moral Absolutism**: It is an ethical view that certain actions are absolutely right or wrong, regardless of other circumstances such as their consequences or intentions behind them.

**Moral Relativism**: It may be any of several philosophical positions concerned with the differences in moral judgements across different people and culture.

**Meta-Ethics**: It is a branch of ethics that seeks to understand the nature of ethical properties statements attitudes and judgements.

**Normative Ethics:** It is the study of ethical action. It investigates the set of questions that arise when considering how one ought to act, morally speaking.

**Applied Ethics**: It is the philosophical examination from a moral standpoint, of particular issues in private and public life that are matters of moral judgement. It attempts to use philosophical methods to identify the morally correct course of action in various fields of human life.

**Neutral Bureaucracy**: Here, bureaucratic officials function strictly according to the principles and ideals laid down in the constitution.

**Committed Bureaucracy**: Here, bureaucrats, in addition to following the principles and ideals laid down in the constitution, also follow the policies and programs of the party in power. Ex: in China.

**Deontology**: It is the normative ethical position that judges the morality of an action based on the action’s adherence to a rule or rules. It is sometimes described as duty or obligation or rule based ethics.

**Consequentialism**: It is a class of normative ethical theories which holds that the consequences of one’s conduct are the ultimate basis for any judgement about the rightness of that conduct.

**Utilitarianism**: It is a theory in normative ethics holding that the proper course of action is the one that maximizes utility, usually defined as maximizing happiness and reducing suffering.

**Hedonism**: It is a school of thought that argues that pleasure is the only intrinsic good. In very simple terms, a hedonist strives to maximize net pleasure.

**Altruistic Hedonism**: Propounds that we ought to sacrifice personal happiness in order to bring any increase of happiness to others.

**Benevolence**: Showing morally correct behaviour; inclination towards charity; ethical thinking; disposition towards doing good and being kind.

**Performance Accountability**: Every govt servant should feel answerable or responsible for his non performance or under performance, for not meeting standards, under utilizing his resources to the govt, to the people and to his conscience.

**In house reporting system**: In house reporting system means a system established by an organization to meet the standards of effective functioning to prevent and detect violations of law shortfalls, achievements, problems and issues in policy making by consultations co-ordinations, reprimands and rapprochement.

**Rapprochement**: Establishing cordial relations with employees and other people who have direct relationship with the organization.

**Gray Areas**: The areas (issues) in which we (organization) are deficient or lagging. It may be due to misunderstanding, miscomprehension, overlook or overlap. Guidelines are often provided in these areas for minimizing gray areas.

**Summum Bonum**: ***Summum bonum*** is a Latin expression meaning “the highest good”, which was introduced by Cicero, to correspond to the Idea of the Good in Greek philosophy. The *summum bonum* is generally thought of as being an end in itself, and at the same time as containing all other goods. The term was used in medieval philosophy and in Kantianism, to describe the ultimate importance, the singular and overriding end which human beings ought to pursue.  
**Ergonomics**: Ergonomics (or human factors) is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance.  
**Teleology: Theory** of morality that derives duty or moral obligation from what is good or desirable as an end to be achieved. Also known as consequentialist ethics, it is opposed to deontological ethics (from the Greek *deon*, “duty”), which holds that the basic standards for an action’s being morally right are independent of the good or evil generated.  
**Equanimity**: It is a state of psychological stability and composure which is undisturbed by experiences of good or bad, pain or pleasure, or other phenomenon that may cause the normal people to lose the balance of their mind.  
**Rationality**: It is a concept which believes in the use of reason which is detached with passions, emotions and beliefs. If our personal beliefs or sentiments are not in conformity with rationality, they should not prevail over rationality. It means bringing out a practical solution to a practical situation.  
**Commitment**: Being always responsible and genuine to the words, deeds and promises. It is the most important ingredient of public servant. There might be a chance to flout promises and rebuild our relationships in personal life. But in official capacity, breaking a promise or vow can’t be undone or taken back because it affects public at large.  
**Initiative**: The power or ability to take up a new task exploring a new area making a new beginning for a progressive development, energetically with enterprise and determination.  
**Apathy**: Lack of interest or concern. It is a state of indifference or not showing concern, motivation, excitement, passion etc. Being indifferent towards others problems, towards systemic lapses, towards progressive change.  
**Sentient**: **Sentience** is the ability to feel, perceive, or to experience subjectivity. Eighteenth-century philosophers used the concept to distinguish the ability to think (*reason*) from the ability to feel (*sentience*). In modern Western philosophy, sentience is the ability to experience sensations (known in philosophy of mind as “qualia”). For Eastern philosophy, sentience is a metaphysical quality of all things that requires respect and care. The concept is central to the philosophy of animal rights, because sentience is necessary for the ability to suffer, which is held to entail certain rights.

**Karmaphala Siddhanta**: As you sow, so you reap. (replete in all Indian texts)  
***Varnashrama-dharma***– duties performed according to the system of four*varnas*(social divisions) and four ashrams (stages in life). Focus is on responsibilities (which naturally fulfil the rights of others). Four *varnas* – *brahmanas*(priests, teachers, and intellectuals),*kshatriyas* (police, army, and administration), *vaishyas*(farmers, merchants, and business people), *shudras*(artisans and workers). Four *ashrams* – student life, household life, retirement, and renunciation.

**Kleptocracy**: **Kleptocracy**,alternatively *cleptocracy* or *kleptarchy,* is a form of political and government corruption where the government exists to increase the personal wealth and political power of its officials and the ruling class at the expense of the wider population, often with pretence of honest service. This type of government corruption is often achieved by the embezzlement of state funds.

**Rectitude**: righteousness or consequences in procedure or being honourable and honest.

By: Anonymous