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## **UNIT 21 ETHICAL CONCERNS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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### **21.0 LEARNING OUTCOME**

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After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the meaning of the term ‘ethics’
- Bring out the evolution and context of ethics and relate it to public administration
- Throw light on the foci and concerns pertaining to the issue of ethics
- Understand the nature of work ethics and the necessity to evolve a Code of Ethics; and
- Analyse the obstacles to ethical accountability

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### **21.1 INTRODUCTION**

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‘Ethics’ is a difficult term to define. The meaning, nature and scope of ethics have expanded in the course of time. ‘Ethics’ is integral to public administration. In public administration, ethics focuses on how the public administrator should question and reflect in order to be able to act responsibly. We cannot simply bifurcate the two by saying that ethics deals with morals and values, while public administration is about actions and decisions. Administering accountability and ethics is a difficult task. The

levels of ethics in governance are dependent on the social, economic, political, cultural, legal-judicial and historical contexts of the country. These specific factors influence ethics in public administrative systems. This Unit will discuss the meaning, evolution, foci and concerns of ethics. It will bring out the different dimensions of ethics and their relevance for public administration. The significance of an ethical code for administrators will be analysed and the nature of work ethics will be discussed. This Unit will also examine the obstacles to ethical accountability.

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## 21.2 ETHICS: MEANING AND RELEVANCE

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‘Ethics’ is a system of accepted beliefs, mores and values, which influence human behaviour. More specifically, it is a system based on morals. Thus, ethics is the study of what is morally right, and what is not. The Latin origin of the word ‘ethics’ is *ethicus* that means character. Since the early 17th century, ‘ethics’ has been accepted as the “Science of morals; the rules of conduct, the science of human duty.” Hence, in common parlance, ethics is treated as moral principles that govern a person’s or a group’s behaviour. It includes both the science of the good and the nature of the right.

The ethical concerns of governance have been underscored widely in Indian scriptures and other treatises such as *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagvad Gita*, *Buddha Charita*, *Arthashastra*, *Panchatantra*, *Manusmriti*, *Kural*, *Shukra Niti*, *Kadambari*, *Raja Tarangani*, and *Hitopadesh*. At the same time, one cannot ignore the maxims on ethical governance provided by the Chinese philosophers such as Lao Tse, Confucius and Mencius.

In the Western philosophy, there are three eminent schools of ethics. The *first*, inspired by Aristotle, holds that virtues (such as justice, charity and generosity) are dispositions to act in ways that benefit the possessor of these virtues and the society of which he is a part. The *second*, subscribed to mainly by Immanuel Kant, makes the concept of duty central to morality: human beings are bound, from a knowledge of their duty as rational beings, to obey the categorical imperative to respect other rational beings with whom they interact. The *third* is the Utilitarian viewpoint that asserts that the guiding principle of conduct should be the greatest happiness (or benefit) of the greatest number (Hobson, 2002). The Western thought is full of ethical guidelines to rulers, whether in a monarchy or a democracy. These concerns are found in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Penn, John Stuart Mill, Edmund Burke, and others.

Rawls’s theory of justice revolves around the adaptation of two fundamental principles of justice, which would, in turn, guarantee a just and morally acceptable society. The first principle guarantees the right of each person to have the most extensive basic liberty compatible with liberty of others. The second principle states that social and economic positions are to be: (a) To everyone’s advantage, and (b) Open to all. A key issue for Rawls is to show how such principles would be universally adopted, and over here his work borders on general ethical issues. He introduces a theoretical ‘veil of ignorance’ in which all ‘players’ in the social game would be placed in a situation, which is called the ‘original position’. Having only a general knowledge about the facts of ‘life and society’ each player is to make a ‘rationally’ prudential choice concerning the kind of social institution they would enter into contract with. By denying the players any specific information about themselves it forces them to adopt a generalised point of view that bears a strong resemblance to the moral point of view. This view point revolves around moral conclusions can be reached without abandoning the prudential standpoint and posting a moral outlook merely by pursuing one’s own prudential reasoning under certain procedural bargaining.

The gist of wisdom on administrative ethics is that the public administrators are the “guardians” of the Administrative State. Hence, they are expected to honour public trust and not violate it. Two crucial questions raised in this context are “why should guardians be guarded? And “Who guards the guardian?” (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2005). The administrators need to be guarded against their tendency to misconceive public interest, promote self-interest, indulge in corruption and cause subversion of national interest. And they need to be guarded by the external institutions such as the judiciary, legislature, political executive, media and civil society organisations. These various modes of control become instruments of accountability.

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### **21.3 EVOLUTION OF ETHICAL CONCERNS IN ADMINISTRATION**

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It is essential to recognise that the discipline of Public Administration has been broadly influenced in the initial stages of its growth, by Political Science and the science of Management. While the philosophical premises of Public Administration were influenced primarily by Political Science, its technological facet was designed by Management Sciences. The early Political Science was taught as Moral Philosophy and Political Economy, while its current curriculum is the product of secular, practical, empirical and scientific tendencies of the past century. The American students of Political Science, in the early years of the last century, were dismayed at the inadequacies of the ethical approach in the Gilded Age. As a result of their interaction with the German universities and the influence on their thinking by scholars such as J.N Burgess, E.J. James, A.B Hart, A.L Lovell, and F.J Goodnow, they sought to recreate Political Science as a true science. They became increasingly interested in observing and analysing ‘actual governments’. Natural and Social Sciences substantially influenced their ideas and approaches.

Later, Logical Positivism of the Austrian School influenced scholars such as Herbert Simon and thus there emerged a booming faith in developing a Science of Politics and a Science of Administration that would be able to ‘predict and control’ political and administrative life. As Dwight Waldo comments, the old belief that good government was the government of moral men was thus replaced by a morality that was irrelevant and that proper institutions and expert personnel were the determining factors in shaping good government. ‘The new amorality became almost a request for professional respect’.

The eminence of Behaviouralism until the mid-1960s further marginalised the ethical issues in the study of Political Science and Public Administration. It was only after the advent of Post-behaviouralism in Political Science and of the accent on New Public Administration in Public Administration that the scientific methods of Behaviouralism and humanistic (read ‘ethical’) values struck a homogenous chord with administration and the dispute between facts and values was resolved substantially.

The current discipline of public administration accords primacy to the ‘values’ of equity, justice, humanism, human rights, gender equality and compassion. The movement of Good Governance, initiated by the World Bank in 1992, lays stress, *inter alia*, on the ethical and moral conduct of administrators. While the New Public Management movement is more concerned with administrative effectiveness, the New Public Administration focuses on administrative ethics in its broader manifestation. Both the movements are complementary to each other. This complementarity of foci

is as truer today as it was a hundred years ago when the industrial world was experiencing the rise of Scientific Management amidst a strong acceptance of the notion of administrative responsibility. John Kennedy, during his Presidency (1961-1963) had averred: “No responsibility of government is more fundamental than the responsibility of maintaining the higher standards of ethical behaviour.

The ideal-type construction of bureaucracy, propounded by Max Weber also highlighted an ethical imperative of bureaucratic behaviour. Weber (1947) observed: In the rational type, it is a matter of principle that the members of the administrative staff should be completely separated from ownership of the means of production and administration. Officials, employees and workers attached to the administrative staff do not themselves own the non-human means of production and administration.... These exists, furthermore, in principle complete separation of property belonging to the organisation, which is controlled within the sphere of office, and the personal property of the official, which is available for his own private uses”.

Weber’s analysis underscores the need to prevent the misuse of an official position for personal gains. Although his ideal-type construct on bureaucracy is not empirical, yet it has an empirical flavour, for it appears to have taken into account the existential reality of bureaucratic behaviour. From a normative angle – knowing that Weber was not normative in his ideal type constructs – also, the message is clear: Don’t misuse official property for personal benefit.

Most critics of real-world bureaucracies, including Harold Laski, Carl Friedrich, Victor Thompson and Warren Bennis, have criticised bureaucrats for violating the prescribed norms of moral conduct. Even Fred Riggs, while discussing the traits of a prismatic society like ‘formalism’ and ‘nepotism’ points out the yawning gap between the ‘ideal’ and the ‘real’ in administrative behaviour. The deviations from the norms and mores have been too glaring to be ignored. Immoral behaviour thus has become an integral component of ‘bureaupathology’

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## **21.4 CONTEXT OF ETHICS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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Ethics, whether in an entire society, or in a social sub-system, evolves over a long period of time and is influenced, during its nurturance and growth, by a variety of environmental factors. Administrative ethics is no different. It is the product of several contextual structures and it never ceases to grow and change. Let us now look at some of these contextual factors that influence ethics in the public administrative systems:

### **The Historical Context**

The history of a country marks a great influence on the ethical character of the governance system. The Spoils System in the USA during the initial phase of the American nation vitiated the ethical milieu of the American Public Administration. “To victor belong the spoils” asserted American President Jackson. Things would have continued the same way had not a disgruntled job seeker assassinated President Garfield in 1881. Garfield’s assassination spurred the process of civil service reforms in the USA, and the setting up of the US. Civil Service Commission in 1883 was the first major step in this direction.

India has witnessed a long history of unethical practices in the governance system. Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* mentions a variety of corrupt practices in which the administrators of those times indulged themselves. The Mughal Empire and the Indian princely rule were also afflicted with the corrupt practices of the courtiers and

administrative functionaries, with 'bakashish' being one of the accepted means of selling and buying favours. The East India Company too had its share of employees who were criticised even by the British parliamentarians for being corrupt.

The forces of probity and immorality co-exist in all phases of human history. Which forces are stronger depends upon the support these get from the prime actors of politico-administrative system. What is disturbing is that a long legacy of unethical practices in governance is likely to enhance the tolerance level for administrative immorality. In most developing nations having a colonial history, the chasm between the people and the government continues to be wide. In the colonial era, the legitimacy of the governance was not accepted willingly by a majority of population and therefore, true loyalty to the rulers was a rare phenomenon. Although the distance between the governing elite and the citizens has been reduced substantially in the transformed democratic regimes, yet the affinity and trust between the two has not been total even in the new dispensation. Unfortunately, even the ruling elite does not seem to have imbibed the spirit of emotional unity with the citizens. The legacy of competitive collaboration between the people and the administrators continues to exist. The nature of this relationship has an adverse impact on 'administrative ethics'.

### **The Socio-cultural Context**

Values that permeate the social order in a society determine the nature of governance system. The Indian society today seems to prefer wealth to any other value. And in the process of generating wealth, the means-ends debate has been sidelined. Unfortunately, ends have gained supremacy and the means do not command an equal respect. A quest for wealth in itself is not bad. In fact, it is a mark of civilisational progress. What is important is the means employed while being engaged in this quest.

We seem to be living in an economic or commercial society, where uni-dimensional growth of individuals seem to be accepted and even valued, where ends have been subdued by means, and ideals have been submerged under the weight of more practical concerns of economic progress. Can we change this social order? Mahatma Gandhi very much wanted to transform the priority-order of the Indian society, but there were hardly any takers or backers of his radical thinking that was steeped in a strong moral order. To put it bluntly, ever since Gandhi passed away, there has been not a single strong voice in independent India challenging the supremacy of 'teleology and unidimensionalism'. Neither have our family values questioned this unilinear growth of society nor has our educational system made serious efforts to inject morality into the impressionable minds of our youth. We have starkly failed on these fronts. The need is to evolve fresh perspectives on what kind of the Indians we wish to evolve and how? Till then, efforts will have to be focused on the non-social fronts.

The issues of morality may or may not be rooted in the religious ethos of a society. Indian religious scriptures do not favour pursuit of wealth through foul means. Interestingly, Thiru Valluvar's *Kural*, written two thousand years ago in Tamil Nadu, emphasises that earning wealth brings fame, respect and an opportunity to help and serve others, but it should be earned through right means only. Can this dictum form the basis of our socio-moral orientation?

The level of integrity among Protestants and Parsees is believed by some to be relatively higher when compared to other religions and one can find the roots of such integrity in the well-ingrained mores of these religions. Nevertheless, it is only one point of view, as there are several other religious and secular groups, which are known for their high moral conduct. The cultural system of a country, including its religious orientation, appears to have played a significant role in influencing the work ethics of its people. For instance, the stress on hard work, so characteristic of the Protestant ethics, has helped several Christian societies to enhance their per capita

productivity. While Judaism has valued performance of physical labour by its followers, the Hindu and Islamic societies, on the other hand, have generally considered physical labour to be of lower rank than the mental work.

Work ethics may or may not be linked with religious moorings. These are subjective issues but make for an interesting study. The family system and the educational system are influential instruments of socialisation and training of the mind in its impressionable years. If the values inculcated through the family and the school have underscored honesty and ethics, the impact on the mind-set of citizens is likely to be highly positive and powerful.

### **Legal-judicial Context**

The legal system of a country determines considerably the efficacy of the ethical concerns in governance system. A neatly formulated law, with a clear stress on the norms of fair conduct and honesty, is likely to distinguish chaff from grain in the ethical universe. Conversely, nebulous laws, with confusing definition of corruption and its explanations, will only promote corruption for it would not be able to instill the fear of God or fear of law among those violating the laws of the land and mores of the society. Besides, an efficient and effective judiciary with fast-track justice system will prove a roadblock to immorality in public affairs. Conversely, a slow-moving judiciary, with a concern for letter rather than the spirit of the law, will dither and delay and even help the perpetrators of crimes by giving them leeway through prolonged trials and benefits of doubt.

Likewise, the anti-corruption machinery of the government, with its tangled web of complex procedures, unintendedly grants relief to the accused who are indirectly assisted by dilatory and knotty procedures. In India, there is hardly any effective anti-corruption institution. As we have read in Unit 7 earlier on in this Course, the Lok Pal is yet to be established, Lok Ayuktas are feeble and toothless agencies, while the state vigilance bodies are low-key actors. The consequences are too obvious to warrant any explanation.

### **The Political Context**

The political leadership, whether in power or outside the power-domain, is perhaps the single most potent influence on the mores and values of citizens. The rulers do rule the minds, but in a democracy particularly, all political parties, pressure groups and the media also influence the orientation and attitudes on moral questions. If politicians act as authentic examples of integrity, as happens in the Scandinavian countries, or as examples of gross self-interest, as found in most South Asian countries, the administrative system cannot remain immune to the levels of political morality.

The election system in India is considered to be the biggest propeller to political corruption. Spending millions on the elections 'compels' a candidate to reimburse his expenses through fair or foul means – more foul than fair. While fair has limits, foul has none. It is generally argued that the administrative class – comprising civil servants at higher, middle as well as lower levels – emerges from the society itself. Naturally, therefore, the mores, values and behavioural patterns prevalent in the society are likely to be reflected in the conduct of administrators. To expect that the administrators will be insulated from the orientations and norms evidenced in the society would be grossly unrealistic.

The argument, propounded here, has a convincing logic, yet there can be a counter-point that the rulers are expected to possess stronger moral fibre than the subjects. Since there are hardly any instrumentalities to protect and nurture administrative

morality vis-à-vis the general social morality, such an expectation remains at the most an elusive ideal. Hence, there is an obvious need to go deeper into the problem.

The behaviour of politicians has a demonstration effect on civil servants. Besides, the capacity of the less honest political masters to control civil servants is immense. It is ironical that the moral environment in a country like India is designed more by its politicians than by any other social group. The primacy of the political over the rest of systems is too obvious to be ignored. If the media is objective and fearless, its role in preventing corruption can be effective. It can even act as a catalyst to the promotion of ethical behaviour among administrators. Hence, those who own and manage the media should understand their wider social and moral responsibilities. The trend in this direction is visible now with many television channels regularly airing their 'expose' on malpractices in the system. This role of the media is important if performed with intent of social responsibility rather than sensationalism.

### **The Economic Context**

The level of economic development of a country is likely to have a positive correlation with the level of ethics in the governance system. Even when a causal relation between the two is not envisaged, a correlation cannot be ruled out. A lower level of economic development, when accompanied with inequalities in the economic order, is likely to create a chasm among social classes and groups. The less privileged or more deprived sections of society may get tempted to forsake principles of honest conduct while fulfilling their basic needs of existence and security. Not that the rich will necessarily be more honest (though they can afford to be so), yet what is apprehended is that the poor, while making a living, may find it a compelling necessity to compromise with the principles of integrity.

It is interesting to note that with the advent of liberalising economic regime in developing nations, there is a growing concern about following the norms of integrity in industry, trade, management and the governance system on account of the international pressures for higher level of integrity in the WTO regime. This is what Fred Riggs would call 'exogenous' inducements to administrative change.

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## **21.5 ISSUE OF ETHICS: FOCI AND CONCERNS**

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An important question arises in connection with the moral obligation of an administrative system. Is the administrative system confined to acting morally in its conduct or does it also share the responsibility of protecting and promoting an ethical order in the larger society? While most of the focus on administrative morality is on the aspect of probity within the administrative system, there is a need to consider the issue of the responsibility of the governance system (of which the administrative system is an integral part) to create and sustain an ethical ambience in the socio-economic system that would nurture and protect the basic moral values. Moral political philosophy assumes that the rulers will not only be moral themselves, but would also be the guardians of morality in a society. Truly, being moral is a prerequisite to being a guardian of wider morality. Both the obligations are intertwined.

It is a truism that the crux of administrative morality is ethical decision-making. The questions of facts and values cannot be separated from ethical decision-making. Thus, the science of administration gets integrated with the ethics of administration. And in this integrated regime, only that empirical concern is valued, which respects the normative concerns in the delivery of administrative services.

Which are the essential concerns in regard to administrative ethics? There can be a long list of values that are considered desirable in an administrative action. However, in being selective, one has to focus on the most crucial values. Let us now concentrate on the values of justice, fairness and objectivity. Woodrow Wilson, “The Study of Administration” (1887), in his inaugural address averred that justice was more important than sympathy. Thus, he placed justice at the top of value-hierarchy in a governance system. Paradoxically, there has been a lot of discussion on the formal-legal aspects of administrative law since then, but very little analysis has been made of the philosophical dimension of administrative justice.

The other two issues of ethical decision-making, viz. fairness and objectivity are, in fact, integral components of administrative justice. When administrators are true to their profession, they are expected to be impartial and fair and not get influenced by nepotism, favoritism and greed while making decisions of governance. Objectivity should not be misconstrued as a mechanical and rigid adherence to laws and rules. From the decision-making angle, it has undoubtedly wider ramifications encompassing a set of positive orientations.

Currently, the notion of ethics has expanded itself to involve all major realms of human existence. Let us attempt to outline certain salient aspects of ethics in public administration. Broadly, they could be summarised as following maxims:

- **Maxim of Legality and Rationality:** An administrator will follow the law and rules that are framed to govern and guide various categories of policies and decisions.
- **Maxim of Responsibility and Accountability:** An administrator would not hesitate to accept responsibility for his decision and actions. He would hold himself morally responsible for his actions and for the use of his discretion while making decisions. Moreover, he would be willing to be held accountable to higher authorities of governance and even to the people who are the ultimate beneficiaries of his decisions and actions.
- **Maxim of Work Commitment:** An administrator would be committed to his duties and perform his work with involvement, intelligence and dexterity. As Swami Vivekananda observed: “Every duty is holy and devotion to duty is the highest form of worship.” This would also entail a respect for time, punctuality and fulfillment of promises made. Work is considered not as a burden but as an opportunity to serve and constructively contribute to society.
- **Maxim of Excellence:** An administrator would ensure the highest standards of quality in administrative decisions and action and would not compromise with standards because of convenience or complacency. In a competitive international environment, an administrative system should faithfully adhere to the requisites of Total Quality Management.
- **Maxim of Fusion:** An administrator would rationally bring about a fusion of individual, organisational and social goals to help evolve unison of ideals and imbibe in his behaviour a commitment to such a fusion. In situation of conflicting goals, a concern for ethics should govern the choices made.
- **Maxim of Responsiveness and Resilience:** An administrator would respond effectively to the demands and challenges from the external as well as internal environment. He would adapt to environmental transformation and yet sustain the ethical norms of conduct. In situations of deviation from the prescribed ethical norms, the administrative system would show resilience and bounce back into the accepted ethical mould at the earliest opportunity.



- **Maxim of Utilitarianism:** While making and implementing policies and decisions, an administrator will ensure that these lead to the greatest good (happiness, benefits) of the greatest number.
- **Maxim of Compassion:** An administrator, without violating the prescribed laws and rules, would demonstrate compassion for the poor, the disabled and the weak while using his discretion in making decisions. At least, he would not grant any benefits to the stronger section of society only because they are strong and would not deny the due consideration to the weak, despite their weakness.
- **Maxim of National Interest:** Though universalistic in orientation and liberal in outlook, a civil servant, while performing his duties, would keep in view the impact of his action on his nation's strength and prestige. The Japanese, the Koreans, the Germans and the Chinese citizens (including civil servants), while performing their official roles, have at the back of their mind a concern and respect for their nation. This automatically raises the level of service rendered and the products delivered.
- **Maxim of Justice:** Those responsible for formulation and execution of policies and decisions of governance would ensure that respect is shown to the principles of equality, equity, fairness, impartiality and objectivity and no special favours are doled out on the criteria of status, position, power, gender, class, caste or wealth.
- **Maxim of Transparency:** An administrator will make decisions and implement them in a transparent manner so that those affected by the decisions and those who wish to evaluate their rationale, will be able to understand the reasons behind such decisions and the sources of information on which these decisions were made.
- **Maxim of Integrity:** An administrator would undertake an administrative action on the basis of honesty and not use his power, position and discretion to serve his personal interest and the illegitimate interests of other individuals or groups.

There could be many more tenets added to the above catalogue of maxims of morality in administration. However, the overall objective is to ensure 'Good Governance' with a prime concern for ethical principles, practices, orientations and behaviour. There are no dogmas involved in defining administrative ethics. The chief concern while doing so is the positive consequence of administrative action and not just ostensibly rational modes of administrative processes. In the following Section, a few of the salient concerns and foci of ethics are being dealt with briefly.

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## 21.6 PERTINENCE OF CODE OF ADMINISTRATIVE ETHICS

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The concept of ethics has been a latecomer in the realm of public administration. For too long, doing one's duty well was considered to be an equivalent of bureaucratic ethics. Interestingly, in the United States, the original city managers' and federal code of ethics placed notable stress on efficiency as ethical concept. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the perspective began to change. In 1924, the International City/Country Management Association adopted the public sector's first code of ethics that reflected anti-corruption and anti-politics facets of the municipal reforms movement.

In 1958, the US Congress imposed a code of ethics on the Federal Government and in 1978, founded the Office of Government Ethics as an upshot of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978. In 1992, the Office of Government Ethics released the Federal Government's first comprehensive set of standards of ethical conduct, comprising standards pertaining to gifts, conflicts of financial interest, impartiality, misuse of office, seeking outside employment, and outside activities. Almost all the American states have also promulgated their respective codes of ethics, though compared to the federal initiative, they are less comprehensive.

Today, codes of ethics, ethics boards, and ethics training have been accepted as integral aspects of public administration in the U.S. Moreover, ethics education has also permeated the discipline of public administration. The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Public Administration has made ethics education a required component of a Public Administration Programme for its accreditation and has prescribed that all introductory text-books in public administration should include a discussion on ethics (Browman, Berman and West, 2001). Eminent professional associations of public administration also offer training programmes on ethical conduct for public managers.

In India, there are a few training programmes on administrative ethics offered by the Indian Institute of Public Administration and other institutions for civil servants, but there is hardly any similar initiative taken up in the realm of education in Public Administration. The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) had adopted in 1984 a Code of Ethics for its members (comprising intellectuals as well as practicing administrators). It was revised in 1994. Certain salient points of the ASPA's Code of Ethics are as follows:

- Exercise of discretionary authority to promote public interest
- Recognition and support to the public's right to know the public business
- Exercise of compassion, benevolence, fairness and optimism
- Prevention of all forms of mismanagement of public funds by establishing and maintaining strong fiscal and management controls, by supporting audits and investigative activities
- Protection of Constitutional principles of equality, fairness, representativeness, responsiveness and due process in protecting citizens' rights
- Maintenance of truthfulness and honesty and not to compromise them for advancement, honour, or personal gain
- Guarding zealously against conflict of interest or its appearance: e.g. nepotism, improper outside employment, misuse of public resources or the acceptance of gifts
- Establishment of procedures that promote ethical behaviour and hold individuals and organisations accountable for their conduct

There are several other 'commitments' that form a part of the ASPA's Code of Ethics. The document can serve as a model for various public sector organisations in India and other countries, which can draft and follow similar codes of ethics. In fact, it would be ideal if all public administrative agencies – ministries, departments, boards, commissions, public enterprises, urban administrative authorities, rural administrative organisations and other public institutions – adopt and honour such codes of ethics, allowing minor variations in view of the specific nature of their functional areas and

organisational requirements. The whole thing has to turn into a movement, which will certainly take some time to muster popular acceptance and credence.

In this context, it has been pointed out that even though no ethical code can provide a sure shot answer for every decisional dilemma, such a code can certainly provide broad guidelines while dealing with critical moral paradoxes in administrative decisions and actions (Dhameja, 2003). Surely, it may not be possible to draft comprehensive or exhaustive ethical codes for administrative decision-making, yet efforts can be made to make them as inclusive as possible. More importantly, such codes should be drawn up by the administrators themselves and not imposed from above. These have to strike a balance between what is ideal and what is possible. Extremities are generally resisted in the empirical world of human affairs.

The conduct rules should not be confined to the 'don'ts' of administrative behaviour but should also be helpful in resolving ethical dilemmas. Cases and illustrations can be helpful in guiding administrators in complex decisional situations. However, no conduct rule can be absolutely specific. Certain generalities will always enter the drafting of such rules. But what is of importance is to scan and scrutinise them at regular intervals and modify them in tune with the changing social imperatives, revised economic parameters and the prevailing cultural milieu. A code that is impractical or archaic is rarely honoured in practice (*ibid.*). We are not advocating laxity in the enforcement of codes of ethics, but only highlighting the essentiality of 'realism' while defining morality. A judicious blend of 'ought' and 'possible' will make an ethical code a helpful instrument in sustaining an ethical order.

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## **21.7 NATURE OF WORK ETHICS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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An important dimension of ethics in public administration is work ethics. It represents a commitment to the fulfillment of one's official responsibilities with a spirit of dedication, involvement and sincerity. It also implies that a government functionary would love his work and not treat it as a burden or a load. And that efficiency, productivity and punctuality will be the hallmark of his administrative behaviour.

Efficiency has been a constant concern of administrative analysis and good governance. The notion, transcending the Classical School, has permeated the New Public Management philosophy. Efficiency implies doing one's best in one's job, with a concern for maximum possible utilisation of human, material and financial resources and even for time to achieve the prescribed and desired objectives (Arora, 2004).

Let us take a fresh look at the notion of efficiency. Can we treat efficiency as 'ethics'? Truly yes, for a genuinely efficient person has a regard for the higher goals of governance, including public welfare and he devotes himself to the expeditious achievement of those goals. Thus, an 'efficient person is also an ethical person. He or she possesses administrative morality that is essentially rooted in a conviction in the desirability of ethical conduct. Here, we are not equating efficiency with mechanical productivity but with higher levels of performance that juxtaposes the ideal with the applied facets of organisational functions.

This raises another question. Why is that the quality of services and goods produced by the government organisations relatively poorer than normally observed in non-governmental sector? Government schools, government dispensaries and government offices provide an unsatisfactory look and render dissatisfactory services. In fact, the overall work culture in public systems in India is relatively lower than that prevailing

in the public sector and that existing in the government systems in most developing countries. Even when we compare India with China, South Korea and Japan, we have staggeringly low per capita productivity. The answer might lie in systemic flaws – poor infrastructure, sloppy monitoring, lackluster control and evaluation and almost an absence of reward and punishment system. Yet, the major factor behind the poor quality of output of public systems is the carelessness and callousness on the part of government functionaries. Most of them do not have a feeling of 'one-ness' with their organisation and their job. They do not put in their best in their work and are half-heartedly involved in their duties. Resultantly, there are unrealistic policies, irrational decisions, erratic changes in government systems and an indifference towards the beneficiaries of the system. All this may not be illegal, yet it is grossly immoral. In rendering public service, sometimes even being amoral is being immoral.

Once we agree that work ethics is important to organisational morality and once we accept that sound time management and a respect for punctuality and promptness (as against procrastination) in work disposal is a valued attribute, we should devise strategies for improving work ethics in developing countries including India. A few corrective steps may be considered in this context. There should be prescribed specific norms of productivity and work performance for organisational units and even individuals. A comprehensive and inclusive performance appraisal system should be adopted. This would be feasible only if job is descriptive and role and responsibilities of each position are specified. There should be maximum delegation of powers at every level with a concurrent system of effective monitoring and work audit.

Punctuality and promptness in administrative affairs must be valued and along with the quality of work performed; these should become the criteria for reward and punishment in organisations. The seniors should lead by setting an ethical example. They should motivate their juniors to take initiative, and responsibility, and also be enterprising and efficient. Conversely, those suffering from indolence, indecision, inefficiency and dishonesty should be punished. This would set an example and create a healthy work culture for those who conduct the public business. The same spirit pervades the pronouncements of public leaders at the helm of governments in most nations.

Thus, ethics has regained its status as a distinctive characteristic of Good Governance. The trend is not likely to reverse in the foreseeable future. Hopefully, there would be a greater concern for quality in public affairs and public service, and the movement of Total Quality Management (TQM) will pervade the governmental functioning and influence the performance of governmental structure. Ethics means good service and this maxim applies most to public systems.

Public administration is designed to serve 'public'. By its very nature, it ought to be people-oriented and even people-centred. While bureaucracies are expected to be guided by laws and rules, it is not necessary to make them mechanistically rule-centric. Public administrative organisations are human organisations and they ought to be humane in their policies, decisions, orientation and behaviour. Being responsive to people's needs enjoins upon civil servants to be responsive to their psychological needs of being cared for, nurtured, and helped. It is in this context that administrators ought to evolve and demonstrate a higher level of emotional as well as spiritual intelligence that would make them empathetic as well sympathetic to feelings of a common person.

Despite all the visible prosperity in India, one cannot ignore massive and deplorable poverty in the country. As long as there is a single poor person in this country, the moral responsibility of administration remains to help him. But the larger issue of

empathy and compassion is not confined to demonstrating positive behaviour towards the less-privileged sections of society. It transcends this orientation. In fact, anyone having access to administration should be meted out a treatment of respect. This treatment should not be just ostensible, but real, authentic and profound. Ethical behaviour emanates from a pure and kind heart, and therefore, those who are in the business of serving people should train their heart to be sensitive and compassionate.

Compassion involves a sense of empathy. It does not end with pity. It invokes sensibilities to understand and even feel the pain of others and motivates one to be truly helpful in overcoming this pain. Hence, administrative ethics in public affairs envisages that the domain of feelings and the universe of rationality should find a happy blending in thought as well as actions of civil servants.

A positive and healthy approach to services entails courtesy and politeness in administrative behaviour, a desire to help resolve their problems, and satisfy them even when, extra help cannot be rendered and matters have to be disposed off in accordance with the legal and formal requirements of the system. A citizen-centric administration would be strengthened through such an attitude.

Two areas where administrators ought to show an attentive and caring attitude is to provide correct and useful information to clients when they need it and to redress satisfactorily the citizens' grievances. Even when a grievance cannot be redressed, at least a citizen needs be given an explanation as to why it cannot be redressed. What is important is a positive approach in dealing with people and being helpful to them, and not avoiding them or considering them as burdensome. Ethics entails a respectful attitude to the citizens.

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## **21.8 TOWARDS NEW DIMENSIONS OF ETHICS**

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Fostering "sunshine" in public administration is one of the finest methods of ensuring higher standards of administrative ethics. Openness is the enemy of corruption. Almost all countries of the world have Freedom of Information or Right to Information Acts. In the U.S., at the federal level, freedom of information and open hearing provisions are an integral part of the Administrative Procedure Act. In India, the Freedom of Information Act of 2002 was redesigned as Right to Information Act, which was enacted in 2005. Besides, a number of state governments including Goa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have enacted legislations that help in securing accountability of public employees through this device.

Legislation alone is not enough. Its enforcement would require a will on the part of the State, willingness on the part of administrators and an initiative coupled with courage on the part of citizens themselves. The State machinery should be ready to punish those civil servants who obstruct the implementation of Right to Information Act. The age-old orientation to treat every information, as 'secret' must give way to greater openness and transparency. This would require a substantial transformation of the mind-sets of administrators in order to reorient the thinking of administration at all levels, more particularly at the cutting-edge level.

The movement for the Right to Information cannot succeed unless people themselves become motivated to ask for the fructification of this Right. Even though, it has culminated in the Right to Information Act, there are miles to go before we can ensure its effective implementation. People's groups, such as the one led by Aruna Roy, will have to continue to take initiative on a massive scale. Even the educational system and the media will need to play a purposive role in this realm.

In the American system, 'whistle blowing' by public employees is considered as legitimate and statutorily protected. Public employees are expected to use their voice to protest administrative activities that are illegal or immoral. They can even resort to resignations from their positions to give vent to their protests. And these acts are considered moral and appropriate.

In the American federal government, there functions a hotline, called 'Fraud Net', for preventing fraud, waste and abuse. Through this hotline, employees and others can anonymously report instances of misconduct for investigation to the General Accounting Office. Besides, the American public employees enjoy Constitutional protection on speaking out on matters of public concern like dangers to public health or safety.

In Britain, a new appeals procedure for civil servants has come into effect. Under this procedure, a civil servant could raise concerns, confidentially, with an individual outside his normal hierarchy. When he believes that the response is not satisfactory or reasonable, he may report the matter to the Civil Service Commissioner. The Constitutional Review Commission in India considered the possibility of whistle-blowing a statutory activity, but it was not accepted as a viable choice. The need is to develop a fresh perspective on this issue.

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## **21.9 OBSTACLES TO ETHICAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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Accountability and ethics are closely related. Effective accountability helps the achievement of ethical standards in the governance system. Legislative or parliamentary control through questions, debates and committees provide ample opportunity to the people's representatives to raise, among other things, issues of ethics and morality in the governance system. More particularly, the Public Accounts Committee in India, which gives its comments on the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in its reports, raises matters that directly or indirectly relate to ethics and good governance.

In the USA, the Office of Government Ethics, an independent agency, helps the Senate in the process of confirming or rejecting Presidential appointments, particularly in matter of financial decisions. "Ethics can be considered a form of self-accountability, or an 'inner-check' on public administrators' conduct" (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2005). Self-accountability and external accountability are interrelated for it is the latter that imposes expectations on the former. However, there are certain time-tested norms of moral conduct that determine the nature of self-accountability. These precepts of moral philosophy may be considered as internal checks. Essentially, however, it is the synthesis of external as well internal checks that determine the parameters of administrative ethics. The higher the level of ethics, the lower the need for strong instruments of external accountability and control. Conversely, lower the level of ethics, higher the need for potent external means for ensuring accountability.

Max Weber had maintained that the outside (extra-agency) checks on public administration were inadequate. Hence, the value of self-accountability is immense. The desire to be ethical in one's profession should spring from within. Seventy years ago, John Gaus in his book, *The Frontiers of Public Administration* (1936) had remarked that public employees were expected to exercise an "inner check" rooted in professional standards of administration and ideals. This type of emphasis needs to be seriously reasserted.

David Rosenbloom and Robert S. Kravchuk (*op.cit.*) raise a pertinent question: “Why is it difficult to guard the guardians?” There are certain intrinsic features of the administrative system that make it difficult for the external regulating institutions to control it and also ensure its accountability. A few of these imponderables are discussed below:

### **Special Expertise and Information**

Public administrators are often experts in their specific area of functioning and it is difficult for any outside agency to surpass them in their areas of specialisation. Moreover, they generate and control crucial information that may be difficult to be accessed or even comprehended by law regulators, much less by the common citizens. Although the Right to Information Act (or similar legislations) is there in most countries, there is cost to be paid for obtaining information and verifying its authenticity. The administrators do not easily part with such information and are too keen to let their citadels remain impregnable.

### **Full-Time Status**

Most public administrators are full-time, while outsiders cannot devote equal amount of time in overseeing their activities – legislators, judiciary, Comptroller and Auditor General of India and even the media have relatively less time to keep a watch over the actions of administrators. They cannot seek all the crucial information from administrators and even if they get it, they do not have sufficient time to process and use it effectively.

### **Massive Expansion of Bureaucracy**

In a country such as India, the role of public administration has been increasing incessantly. Its regulatory, developmental, promotional and entrepreneurial responsibilities have been multiplying and with that also its size. The number of public personnel as well as the agencies they work for have gone up so much that it is difficult for the political executive or the legislature to exercise effective control over them. Likewise, in large-sized organisations like Public Works Department, Income Tax Department, Police Department, etc., it is impossible for higher officials to keep an eye on the conduct of their subordinates. The geographical distribution of government agencies also makes the span of control too wide to be handled effectively. Even computerisation of all personnel records cannot ensure surveillance over the conduct of all personnel.

### **Lack of Coordination**

The number and kinds of agencies to ensure probity in public administration have also been increasing continually. In India, for instance the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Central Vigilance Commission, State Lok Ayuktas, State Vigilance Bodies and Anti-Corruption Departments are co-existing *sans* effective coordination among them. There are lacunae in the working of the vigilance machinery and absence of harmony among the variegated anti-corruption agencies. For years altogether, the permission to prosecute government officials is not granted to the Anti-Corruption Departments. The Lok Pal is yet to be appointed at the national level and there is no agency that is doing the job supposed to be undertaken by him. The judiciary is slow and there are no fast-track courts for dealing with cases of corruption.

As mentioned already, in the United States, the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 created an Office of Government Ethics (OGE) in the Office of Personnel Management. The Ethics Reforms Act of 1989 strengthened the OGE, now an

independent agency within the executing branch. No such institution exists in India or in other developing countries.

### **Excessive Security**

Most countries grant protection to civil servants and refrain from punishing them for the common lapses in the performance of their duties. Besides, there are no punishments prescribed for non-performance or for low productivity. Article 311 of the Indian Constitution makes it almost impossible to remove a civil servant. A sense of over-security pervades the personnel system and the inquiry system is so dilatory and cumbersome that it is devoid of any threat or fear. Resultantly, a low level of discipline in most government organisations is witnessed. And when corruption permeates all the echelons of administrators in the organisations, the potential efficacy of internal control becomes woefully meager.

### **Misinterpretation of Role and Obligation**

Civil servants frequently engage themselves in actions that are unethical and against public interest. Over time, they get used to defining their role and responsibilities in a parochial manner that is either self-centered, group-centred or organisation-centred and never people-centred. Since all-important professional groups, including the politicians, also adopt a tunnel vision in perceiving social reality, there are hardly any countervailing forces for the prevention or correction of a parochial interpretation of public interest by the administrative personnel. As a result, both ethics and accountability suffer.

There is a general tendency among administrators to view public interest from a narrow angle and tunnel vision. Their specialisation and the specific goals of their organisations prompt them to focus on the achievement of narrow organisational goals. In this process, the issue of public interest may get submerged under organisational interest. The Excise Department of a state, for example, may be interested in opening more wine and beer shops in order to earn more revenue and thus may ignore the impact this expansion of sale network of intoxicants will have on the physical and moral health of citizens.

The political pressures imposed from above also colour the vision of administrators. Occasionally, one notices that the Police Department, because of pressure from its political bosses is caught between the compulsion of hierarchy and the obligation of duty. The police officials generally succumb to political pressures in order to save their own interests and that of their families. Occasionally, 'inconvenient' civil servants are punished with transfers to 'difficult' locations or postings that may cause problems to their families.

### **Orthodox Loyalty**

In India and in most developing countries, public employees are socialised into developing loyalty towards the organisation that they serve and to the superior authority under which they work. It is customary in the Indian society to show respect to the superior and to refrain from criticism of one's boss in a public organisation. Any voice against the superiors is considered as an act of insubordination. In such a cultural climate, even the honest and conscientious employees do not speak out against unethical practices of their peers and seniors. And the undue compassion occasionally shown to the subordinates on their errors of omission and commission also tend to strengthen the sinews of a 'soft state'. All this represents a misplaced loyalty and magnanimity that eats into the vitals of the ethical order in public administrative system. As the Indian democracy becomes more mature, it is hoped that whistle blowing will be considered a legitimate and rational activity in the future, and will be protected under the laws and rules.



## **Trivial and the Substantive Ethics**

The conduct rules for civil servants emphasise upon meticulously following the norms of good conduct. Some of these rules have remained unchanged since long and now appear to be ridiculous. No wonder, these are ignored by all. Likewise, there is a stress that official property; equipment and stationery should not be used for personal purposes. These relate, *inter alia*, to the use of official vehicles and phone. Such rules are 'conspicuous, more in their violation than in their enforcement, and compared to broader issues of ethics and morality, these are at best, examples of trivial or petty morality. Not that they should be ignored but they must not be permitted to replace the more crucial ethical concerns of duty, fairness, objectivity and commitment. In matters of administrative ethics, occasionally we tend to be 'penny wise and pound foolish'. It means we delve into the trivial rather than more pertinent and serious issues of ethics. We need to guard against this trend.

## **Employees' Unions**

Another impediment in the way of enforcing discipline and codes of conduct is the tendency of employees' unions to resist the managerial action against their members even when they have blatantly violated ethical norms. Assertive or aggressive unions can throttle any action, even a legitimate one, against their members. As a result, the supervisory level leadership in public systems gets exasperated and starts ignoring the unethical actions of their subordinates. In a political system, where employees' unions are aligned with powerful political parties – whether in power or in opposition – administrative leadership refrains from taking a tough stand even against the culprit employees for fear of compulsive back-tracking or humiliation. It has been observed that collective bargaining agreements seriously jeopardize the authority of managers to discipline their employees. Occasionally, the courts also show greater concern for the protection of the so-called 'Constitutional' rights of the workers than those of the citizens-irrespective of the ethical issues involved.

## **Corruption**

Corruption is the abuse of official authority for personal gains. It is betrayal of public trust for protecting private interests. Corruption is currently viewed as a universal phenomenon, although the nature and quantum of corruption differ from nation to nation. The international and the Indian national press is replete with instances of corruption in government. Politicians and administrators are generally in league with each other in perpetuating corruption. Citizens thus become the victims of immorality in governance. It also denotes the existence of corruption in cross-national settings.

In the Middle East and in India, because of the Mughal influence, *baksheesh* is a tip that is used to seek the favours of an administrative functionary at the lower level; Its name changes to *dash* in Western Africa. 'Speed money' in India implies a fee to expedite the processing of a governmental favour; *la mordida* or 'the bite' are popular forms of bribes in the Latin America; *shtraff* is the Russian version of a small bribe; *la bustarella* connotes a little envelope (containing bribe) in Italy; while in Israel, '*protekzi*' refers to the exploitation of personal contracts to achieve a favourable treatment from administrators (Rosembloom and Kravchuk, op.cit). In the United States – a country rated high on the integrity index of the Transparency International, one comes across strange term such as Watergate, Iran-Contragate and White-Watergate which refer to carrying favours and bribery.

Unfortunately, in India the standards of ethics in the governance system have differed staggeringly in proclamations and in practice. The Constitution, laws, policies, manifestoes of political parties and speeches of politicians are replete with direct or indirect references to ethical basis of governance, but in practice, however, there is a gross violation of moral precepts in the functioning of the politico-administrative system. The critical reasons behind administrative corruption are scarcity of what people want from public administrators and the inconveniences involved in the normal channels of administrative decisions. As Michael Johnston (1982) explains:

The demand for government's rewards frequently exceeds the supply, and routine decision-making processes are lengthy, costly, and uncertain in their outcome. For these reasons, legally sanctioned decision-making processes constitute a 'bottleneck' between what people want and what they get. The temptation to get around the bottleneck – to speed things up and make favourable decisions more probable – is built into this relationship between government and society. To get around the bottleneck, one must use political influence – and corruption, which by definition cuts across established and legitimate processes, is a most effective form of influence.

Because of the scarcity of what people want from the government, they are willing to pay bribes in exchange for jobs, land, licences, quotas, admissions, passports, utility service connections etc. or even for getting them speedily or illegitimately. They may also bribe administrators for escaping arrests, punishments, fines or major inconveniences. All these are examples of a transactional corruption. This acquires frightening proportions when it becomes an accepted trait of the socio-cultural system.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower who was the American President from 1953 to 1961, had once warned his nation of the existence of a 'military-industrial complex', which promoted a culture of 'transactional corruption' based on *quid pro quo*. C. Wright Mills in his monumental work *The Power Elite* (1956) had also broached the issue of such alliances and their impact on government decision-making. In India, B.B. Vohra, the then Home Secretary of India, had presented in 1995, a report on the activities of crime syndicates/mafia organisations which had developed links with or were being protected by government functionaries and political personalities. The conclusions of the Vohra Committee reflect a moral crisis in the Indian governance system. Not that the decline is irreversible, strong and honest efforts can sincerely halt the process of decline. Certain Asian countries have already proven that it is possible to combat and curb corruption. It requires effective political and administrative will to do so.

Almost all kinds of political systems are affected by administrative corruption. (Heidenheimier, 1970). In totalitarian societies and military regimes, corruption might get concentrated at the higher echelons of party, military or civilian bureaucracy, while in democracies, it might spread throughout the system. In 'Soft States' particularly, political as well as administrative corruption has greater potentiality of percolating the governance system. Weak control and supervisory mechanisms cannot prevent corruption and consequently, these become its catalysts.

In a civic culture or democratic society like India's, politicians who get elected on people's support and vote, are primarily concerned with strengthening their constituencies, and thus are keen to dole out benefits to those who are their supporters. Administrators, on the other hand, are keener to follow the prescribed procedures. In situations of conflict between the politicians and administrators, there is either a stalemate, or eventually, the politicians win. But the most convenient course for the politician is to win over administration to their side and make them partners or collaborators in corruption. With the protective hands of politicians above them and with a temptation for gaining extra (illegitimate) benefits,

administrators consciously align with their political masters and indulge in corruption. Very rarely, do the honest and strong administrators stand up to the politician and refuse to succumb to politicians' pressures and cajoling. Likewise, there may be only a few politicians who actually apply brakes to the bandwagon of administrative corruption.

One can often witness 'Weather-cock' syndrome in relation to government corruption. When the top rung of the political or administrative executive gets tough on corruption, the middle and lower level hierarchy in both the systems get cautious about issues of ethics. Greed is curbed by fear but only as long as fear is genuinely feared.

### **Subversion**

While corruption is endemic in government organisation, there is another ethical blemish that afflicts, though rarely, the administrative system. Certain government servants, working in sensitive organisations like ordinance factories, nuclear energy establishments and defence forces, may pass on critical secrets to enemies in exchange for pecuniary benefits or for the sale of extra-territorial loyalty. In contemporary times of global competition, even economic subversion is possible. There may be, within the government, attempts to subvert friendly relations with foreign countries. In extreme cases, civil servants may subvert certain government programmes like family planning or prevention of illegal migration. There can be many other cases involving ethical issues in public administration. Attempts should be made to devise strategies to combat such subversions.

### **New Public Management: A Counterview**

The traditional Public Administration had laid great emphasis on efficiency and economy. Likewise, conventional Management Science was greatly concerned with productivity and performance. The New Public Management, with its Neo-Taylorism orientation, has focused almost exclusively on performance and results.

During Bill Clinton's presidency, Al Gore, the U.S. Vice President, advocated through the National Performance Review's (NPR) version of the NPM, that ethics implied achieving high degree of customer satisfaction. It believed that people – in government or outside – were basically honest and well intentioned and there was no need for wasting time and energy on focusing on corruption. Trusting them is bound to lead to a favourable climate for ethical behaviour. The cost of deterring corruption is too high in terms of red tape that such efforts create. The NPR underscored that reinventing government required innovations, which in turn implied deviations from the grooves of tradition. Distrusting and accusing people for their creative initiatives dampens their enthusiasm for innovation. Trusting the employees as well as the people they serve would help carve a more effective administrative system in the self-governing democracy (Gore 1993; 1995).

Al Gore seems to have transcended even Douglas McGregor's 'Theory Y' and created an image of a human being who is creative and honest. Naturally, such a person in government would not need measures of external control over him for he has internalised very well the canon of self-accountability. Even if we consider Al Gore's portrayal of government personnel to be too idealistic, it has a lesson to offer. Should we not question our excessive concern with prevention of corruption and instead adopt a more balanced perspective on the issue of ethics? Does not an over-concern with corruption take our attention away from the more crucial issues of people's welfare through innovative measures and well-intentioned initiatives on the part of public employees?

In other words, there are high costs of combating corruption that we should be conscious of. No doubt, such awareness should not cause a laxity in tackling corruption. Instead, it should help appreciate the value of promoting greater trust in public system. Trust begets trust. Optimum vigilance is a requisite to the reinforcement of a climate of trust for they are complementary and mutually supportive. It would appear that such an emphasis on trust and de-emphasis on control would be more applicable to societies having a higher level of integrity and probity in public life than to those, which have low standards of morality. Thus, there cannot be any uniform approach to tackling corruption in the governance system. Much would depend upon the levels of morality and rectitude prevailing in each society.

### **Training**

An important aspect of bureaucratic socialisation is training. As is well known, there are three kinds of training that an administrator undergoes. Here, we are not discussing pre-entry training such as provided in the professional educational stream. We are primarily concerned with training that is imparted and obtained after a person enters the administrative service. *First* is the induction training comprising foundational, institutional and field training organised soon after an administrator's career starts. The *second* is in-service training that is imparted throughout the service career in the form of refresher courses, orientation programmes, seminars and conferences. The *third* is on-the job training that is subtly provided by job performance and observation. What is paradoxical is that despite a great deal of talk on ethical aspect of administration, the stress on ethical training in the induction training as well in-service training is woefully meager.

There is a pervasive feeling in the administrative circles that morality cannot be taught through training. May be this is true, but there is no way to prove or disprove it, since no concrete organised research has gone into it. We must not however abandon the option of ethical training and hence not take systematic initiatives to make ethics an integral and prominent part of induction as well as in-service training. Already, national and international training institutions have prepared modules on this theme. The need is to establish our faith in this kind of training and execute the idea with appropriate acumen and skill.

As for the on-the-job training, the impact on the mind-set of a government functionary of the immediate work-environment around him is immense. Principled and honest superiors and members of the peer group are bound to promote morality in the conduct of a government servant. Conversely, if the official ambience encourages ethical laxity and compromises, it becomes easier for the personnel to join the bandwagon of immorality. No wonder, certain departments such as Income Tax, Excise, Customs, Commercial Taxes, Public Works Department and Police are infamous for their low ethical standards, for the countervailing and corrective forces therein are feeble.

The question, which needs deliberation, is that can this situation change? No doubt, it can. The will and the efforts, however, must match the challenge. This is a tall order, but not too formidable to be real. Many nations, whether Kamal Pasha's Turkey or contemporary South Korea have shown resilience in transforming their bureaucratic order and its attendant mind-set. Other countries can also follow suit, and they must.

### **The Media**

In an open society, media can play an important role in highlighting unethical practices in the governance system. The role that *Washington Post* played in exposing the Watergate Scandal in USA earned laurels from all sections of society. In India,

*The Indian Express*, *The Hindu* and a few other newspapers have performed like active watchdogs over public affairs. Vernacular press has also acted responsibly in this respect. Recently, the sting operations by a few TV channels on the Commercial Taxes and Public Works Departments in Delhi have also brought the issues of cutting-edge level corruption to the centre-stage. The best part is that the government, the legislature and even the judiciary have started taking note of such reports and even action on most occasions has been initiated. What is needed is a rigorous follow-up of the action taken on such revelations by the media itself.

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## 21.10 FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

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When A.D.Gorwala presented his report on *Public Administration in India* in 1951, he had emphasised that integrity was one of the cardinal philosophical premises of good administration. It is paradoxical that despite visible decline of moral standards in public life, the mainstream reports on administrative reforms have not focused on ethical issues. Except for the Santhanam Committee report on the Prevention of Corruption in India in 1964 and a specific segmented report on the theme, the Railway Corruption Enquiry Committee by Acharya Kriplani in 1955, there have been no major efforts at recommending strategies for integrating moral values with the administrative system at various levels. True, the ARC report on Lok Pal and Lok Ayukta was published in 1966, but that again was confined to structural changes rather than bringing about a new ethical order in public systems.

In 2005, with the announcement of the intention of appointing a second Administrative Reforms Commission by the Manmohan Singh government, ethical concerns of public services are likely to be accorded a respectable place in the emergent inquiry on administrative reforms in the country. The need is to go beyond the general statements of administrative morality and be more meticulous in recommending modifications in laws, rules, structures and behavioural patterns in the specific context of individual departments or organisations. The issues of ethics in the Police Department, for instance, carries a distinctive character and possible solutions than, say, in the Education Department. This would further require a rigorous modification in the laws and procedures pertaining to specific functional areas.

How is the administrative ethics of the twenty-first century likely to be different from that of the twentieth century? The answer is to be found in the increasing convergence of ethical concerns at the cross-national level. Globalisation of the economic order is likely to pave the way for the globalisation of governance issues. Not that there would be universally uniform configurations of the governance systems, much less the bureaucratic systems. But with the mitigation of chasm among nations in the realm of the goals, philosophy and strategies of governance, the ethical concerns are likely to transcend international boundaries.

These will reflect the classical concerns of public administration like efficiency, responsibility, accountability and integrity along with the emergent beliefs in equity, justice, openness, compassion, altruism, responsiveness, human rights and human dignity. Hopefully, this would be instrumental to the blossoming of a new citizenship committed to the sustenance of administrative morality. Even for nurturing such a positive citizenship, public administration institution will have to act as facilitators and educators. That is the biggest challenge as well as an opportunity for the administrative system in the times to come.

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## 21.11 CONCLUSION

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Ethics is a comprehensive concept, encompassing all facets of administration. Emphasis on moral and ethical norms has been an integral part of our tradition. Though vices of corruption, malpractices and bureaupathologies have slowly crept in our system, the combat measures have not been very effective. Administrative reforms measures have to be holistic enough taking into their purview questions on nature of work ethics, various dimensions of ethics, foci and concerns of ethics and also the nature of obstacles to ethical accountability.

For any governance system to be transparent, accountable, efficient and sensitive, a Code of Ethics in the form of service rules, procedural norms, and administrative strategies the requirement of the day is. It is not possible to bring into force a Code of Ethics if it is self-serving and is subject to constant external interference and manipulation. A certain degree of autonomy is a pre-requisite for any code to be successful. We are witnessing a change in the pattern of authority, obedience and discipline. Moreover, globalisation trends have brought in a kind of universalisation of ethical norms and values. Philosophy of governance has transcended international boundaries. Almost every rung of administration is involved in decision-making. The conflict between individual values, organisational standards and societal norms is clearly visible. Though the code may not reflect a consensus of opinion on ethical issues, it can still provide direction and advice with regard to ethical conduct and assist the administrators in analysing their options and alternatives in the right perspective. This Unit highlighted these very pertinent features.

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## 21.10 KEY CONCEPTS

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### **Bureaupathologies**

The major ills of bureaucracy such as red tape, conflict, duplication, waste and corruption could be called the pathologies of bureaucracy. Victor Thompson termed the negative aspects of Weberian theory of bureaucracy as ‘bureaupathologies’.

### **Logical Positivism**

It is a general philosophical position, also called logical empiricism, developed by members of the Vienna Circle on the basis of traditional empirical thought and the development of modern logic. It confined knowledge to science and used verificationism to reject metaphysics not only as false but meaningless. The importance of science led leading logical positivists to study scientific method and to explore the logic of confirmation theory, which talked of solving the problem of induction (inductive knowledge).

[www.filosofia.net/materials/rec/glosoen.htm](http://www.filosofia.net/materials/rec/glosoen.htm).

### **Post-behaviouralism**

It refers to the developments that took place as a protest against Behaviouralism. It is an approach to psychology based on the proposition that behaviour is interesting and worthy of scientific research. Behaviouralism as articulated by Easton, tries to organise research in political science on model of natural sciences. It emphasises the need to develop a pure science of politics, giving a new orientation to research and theory building exercises within the discipline. This movement remained prominent till 1960s. The Post-behavioural movement of 1970s rejected the behavioural tendency to stress on what could be easily measured rather than what might be theoretically important. The tendency in Behaviouralists to concentrate on phenomena that were readily observable rather than studying the profound structural factors that

contribute to change and stability within the political system was criticized by Post-behaviouralism.

### ***Quid pro quo***

Thing given as compensation

### **Utilitarianism**

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) made an attempt to create a liberal ethical philosophy called Utilitarianism. The case of this philosophy is the utility principle, which means greatest happiness of the greatest number is good. It is the belief that i) Value of a thing or an action is determined by its utility, and ii) All actions should be directed toward achieving the greatest happiness. This philosophy judges everything in terms of its utility or usefulness. It holds that actions are right in proportion, as they tend to promote happiness and wrong, as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness, is intended pleasure and absence of pain and by unhappiness, presence of pain and the deprivation of pleasure.

[www.disabilitymuseum.org/glossary.ph.b](http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/glossary.ph.b)

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## **21.12 ACTIVITIES**

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1. Pick up the latest newspapers and scan for write-ups / articles on 'Ethics in Public Administration'.
2. Based on Activity One, try to pen down your observations on the changing profile of 'Ethics' in public organisations.





















