



# ETHICS

## 2.1. Meaning And Relevance

'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. It includes both the science of the good and the nature of the right.

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."

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.

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. The Western thought is full of ethical guidelines to rulers, whether in a monarchy or a democracy.

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. 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.