



**Centurion**  
**UNIVERSITY**

*Shaping Lives...  
Empowering Communities...*

# Introduction to Ethics

# Focus of Discussion

- Meaning and Definition of Ethics
- Introduction to Indian and Western Ethics

# Ethics

- What are they: The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group or culture.
- Where do they come from: Social system (family, religion, justice system, etc) – External
- Why we do it: Because society says it is the right thing to do.
- Flexibility: Ethics are dependent on others for definition. They tend to be consistent within a certain context, but can vary between contexts.

- Ethics is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct
- Ethics is derived from the Ancient Greek word *ēthikós*, meaning “relating to one’s character”

# Ethics across cultures

- Hindu Ethics
- Buddhist Ethics
- Islamic Ethics
- Christian Ethics
- Jain Ethics
- Sikh Ethics

# Hindu Ethics

- Ethics are explained in Hindu philosophy as something that cannot be imposed, but something that is realized and voluntarily lived up to by each individual.
- Central tenet is tolerance and respect for other faiths, peoples, nature, etc.
- Ethics that constitute a Dharmic life - that is a moral, ethical, virtuous life - evolve in Vedas and Upanishads.
- Manusamhita initially listed ten virtues necessary for a human being to live a *dharmic* life: *Dhriti* (courage), *Kshama* (forgiveness), *Dama* (temperance), *Asteya* (Non-covetousness/Non-stealing), *Saucha* (inner purity), *Indriyani-graha* (control of senses), *dhi* (reflective prudence), *vidya* (wisdom), *satyam* (truthfulness), *akrodha* (freedom from anger)

# Buddhist Ethics

- **Buddhist ethics** are traditionally based on what Buddhists view as the enlightened perspective of the Buddha, or other enlightened beings such as Bodhisattvas
- Four Noble Truths
  - *dukkha* (suffering, incapable of satisfying, painful) is an innate characteristic of existence with each rebirth
  - *samudaya* (origin, cause) of this *dukkha* is the "craving, desire or attachment"
  - *nirodha* (cessation, ending) of this *dukkha* can be attained by eliminating all "craving, desire, and attachment"
  - *magga* (path, Noble Eightfold Path) is the means to end this *dukkha*.

# Buddhist Ethics

- Noble Eight Fold Path
  - Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration
- Five Precepts (things you should not do)
  - Harming living beings, taking things not freely given, sexual misconduct, false speech and intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness



# Islamic Ethics

- **Islamic ethics** defined as "good character"
- The Quran provides a set of moral stipulations which are "among the (precepts of) wisdom, which thy Lord has revealed to thee" that can be reasonably categorized as ten in number.

# Moral Commandments (as per the Quran)

- **Worship only God**
- **Be kind, honourable and humble to one's parents**
- **Be neither miserly nor wasteful in one's expenditure**
- **Do not engage in 'mercy killings' for fear of starvation**
- **Do not commit adultery**
- **Do not kill unjustly**
- **Care for orphaned children**
- **Keep one's promises**
- **Be honest and fair in one's interactions**
- **Do not be arrogant in one's claims or beliefs**

# Christian Ethics

- Christian ethics in general has tended to stress the need for love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness because of sin.
- Christian ethical principles are based on the teachings within the Bible. They begin with the notion of inherent sinfulness, which requires essential atonement. Sin is estrangement from God which is the result of not doing God's will.

# The Ten Commandments

- You shall have no other Gods but me.
- You shall not make for yourself any idol, nor bow down to it or worship it.
- You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
- You shall remember and keep the Sabbath day holy.
- Respect your father and mother.
- You must not commit murder.
- You must not commit adultery.
- You must not steal.
- You must not give false evidence against your neighbour.
- You must not be envious of your neighbour's goods. You shall not be envious of his house nor his wife, nor anything that belongs to your neighbour.

# Jain Ethics

- **Jain ethical code** prescribes two *dharmas* or rules of conduct. One for those who wish to become ascetic and another for the *śrāvaka* (householders).
- **Maha Vratas (Major Vows)**- Applied to ascetics
  - *Ahiṃsā* (Non-violence)
  - *Satya* (Truth)
  - *Asteya* (Non-stealing)
  - *Brahmacharya* (Chastity)
  - *Aparigraha* (Non-possession)
- **Anuvratas (Minor Vows)**- Applied to Householders
  1. **Guna vratas**
  2. **Siksa vratas**

# Sikh Ethics

- The fundamental beliefs of Sikhism, articulated in the sacred scripture *Guru Granth Sahib*, include faith and meditation on the name of the one creator, divine unity and equality of all humankind, engaging in selfless service, striving for justice for the benefit and prosperity of all and honest conduct and livelihood while living a householder's life.

# Principle Beliefs of Sikh Religion

- Treat everyone equally
- Live by the three primary principles:
  - Be always absorbed in meditation and prayer
  - Make an honest income by honorable methods
  - Share earnings and selflessly serve others
- Avoid the Five sins of Ego
  - Pride, lust, greed, anger and attachment
- Keep the Code of Honor as codified in Guru Granth Sahib

# Commonalities

- Good Conduct/ Character
- Non-violence
- Universal love
- Compassion
- Value of prayer
- Respect for others and nature





**Centurion**  
**UNIVERSITY**

*Shaping Lives...  
Empowering Communities...*

# Thank You