



CHAPTER

12

## *Case Studies of Ethical Life*

**Ethical living** is the philosophy of making decisions for daily life, which take into account ethics and moral values. This includes living according to moral principles that govern the person's behaviour or conduct of any activity. The idea is to dedicate oneself for the observance of moral values and thus bring about a positive change in the life of self as well as others, which would ultimately result in the welfare, progress and upliftment of the society.

*Albert Schweitzer describes certain key issues of Ethical Living which can be summarised as follows :*

1. A man will not find peace until he includes all living things in his circle of compassion. One must accept and practice the philosophy of interrelation among all living beings.
2. A man is ethical only when life is sacred to him, this means life of all for which he should be ready to help. Helpfulness is prime code of ethical life.

3. Think about suffering of others, try to feel their pain and make attempts to give relief.
4. The first step in the evolution of ethics is a sense of solidarity and compassion for other human beings.
5. A truly ethical man always feels the compulsion to help others and avoids injuring or harming anybody. One of the most dignified qualities of the human being is expressed through the inherent will to help others.
6. Realize that every act committed by you has a wide effect in all spheres of life you directly and indirectly participate in. The quality of your intention can improve quality of life of all beings on the planet.
7. Example is the only thing that can influence others. Lead by setting examples and remain as a role model and guiding light for all generations.
8. Ethics is the activity that secures the inner perfection of personality. Recognize that your own perfection and spiritual evolution is connected with well-being of others. As we perfect ourselves as ethical humans, we shift the standards of spiritual and social success.
9. Know that the gentleness of your soul can be felt, and is expressed through acts of kindness, and selfless service.
10. High ethical and moral standard of behaviour includes understanding of humanitarian values and never sacrificing human being or human interests for consumerism, self interest or any sort of power.
11. No body should be treated as stranger and dialogue with people whom we do not know, is the beginning commitment to peaceful and understanding co-existence.
12. Always seek and maintain the dignity of individual human beings, their communities and the entire environment.

There are several examples of enlightened individuals who by their ethical living and noble values have set remarkable examples for others. The following are a few examples among the many that are worth following:

1. **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi** (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948) was the leader of the Indian independence movement against British rule. Mahatma

Gandhi is universally accepted as an exemplary model of ethical and moral life, with a rare blending of personal and public life, the principles and practices, the immediate and the eternal. He believed in a single standard of conduct based on **truth** and **non-violence**. He successfully led non violent struggles against colonial rule, economic and social exploitation, racial discrimination, and moral degradation.

Among the vital messages of Gandhi's leadership are:

- *Even one person can make a difference;*
- *Strength comes not from physical capacity but from an indomitable will;*
- *Given a just cause, victory is certain through nonviolence, capacity for self-suffering, and fearlessness;*
- *Leadership by example is the one most effective.*

A central quality of Gandhi's leadership was its natural evolution through intense interaction with the people and the events. He was acutely conscious of his own imperfections. Gandhi single-handedly made non-violence a universal substitute for violence and the bed-rock of his leadership. His non-violence was the way to counter injustice and exploitation. Gandhi's leadership was a running ethical lesson to his followers as well as his opponents on 'how to live'. An outline of the basic ethical tenets of Gandhian leadership, are given below :

1. Truth
2. Nonviolence
3. Right Means and Right Ends
4. Primacy of Duties over Right
5. The Deed, not the Doer
6. True Religion (Universality and Brotherhood)
7. Aparigraha or Non-possession (Voluntary Poverty)
8. Yajna (Sacrifice and Service)
9. Satyagraha or Nonviolent Conflict Resolution.

**2. Mother Teresa** — *"Humility is the mother of all virtues; purity, charity and obedience. It is in being humble that our love becomes real, devoted and ardent.*

*If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are. If you are blamed you will not be discouraged. If they call you a saint you will not put yourself on a pedestal.*"

— **Mother Teresa**

Agnes Goxa Bojaxiu better known as Mother Teresa, came from Yugoslavia to Calcutta in January 1929 and never left this country. Her aim in life was to serve the sick and the poor and she dedicated her full life towards this purpose.

She managed to open several institutions to help the downtrodden e.g. 'Missionaries of Charity', 'Nirmal Hriday', and 'Shishu Bhavan'. Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and the Bharat Ratna in 1980.

Despite all the public acclaim, national and international honours, mother Teresa remained humble, kind and generous till the end.

Mother Teresa gave these rules to her Sisters to help them develop humility :

1. Speak as little as possible about yourself.
2. Keep busy with your own affairs and not those of others.
3. Avoid curiosity.
4. Do not interfere in the affairs of others.
5. Accept small irritations with good humor.
6. Do not dwell on the faults of others.
7. Accept censures even if unmerited.
8. Give in to the will of others.
9. Accept insults and injuries.
10. Accept contempt, being forgotten and disregarded.
11. Accept injuries and insults.
12. Be courteous and delicate even when provoked by someone.
13. Do not seek to be admired and loved.
14. Do not protect yourself behind your own dignity.
15. Give in, in discussions, even when you are right.
16. Always choose the more difficult task.

3. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam popularly known as the **Missile Man of India and People's President** is one of best examples of ethical living. Coming from a very humble background, he rose to become a renowned space scientist and President of India through his sincere, dedicated, moral and ethical life style. He had received honorary doctorates from 30 Universities and institutions and many awards including India's highest award Bharat Ratna. Simplicity was one of his greatest virtues and while occupying the highest position in the country, Abdul Kalam was not swayed by power, but used love and peace as tools to be one among the masses. He gave maximum importance to ethics and ethical values in the life of an individual as well as society for the progress of the nation.

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam defined human virtues and ethics in most functional manner.

- Individual characters ethics- Gratitude, courage, self-discipline, reliability, kindness, caring, and sincerity.
- Work characters ethics- Honesty, creativity, trustworthiness, coworker appreciation, task competition, empathy, cooperativeness, supportiveness, and tolerance.
- Professional character ethics- Self-regulation, trust, independence of judgment, and impartiality.
- Total commitment is not just hard work, it is total involvement.
- To succeed in your mission, you must have single-minded devotion to your goal.
- To put the heart and soul into the mission.
- Willingness to use inner resources to invest in life, especially imagination, will bring success.

He commented that :

- The nation needs to have ethics in all its tasks, for great economic prosperity and peace.
- If the nation is to have ethics; society has to promote ethics and value system.

- If society is to have ethics and value system, families should stick to ethics and value system.
- If families have to get evolved with ethics and value system, then the parent should have inbuilt ethics.
- Parental ethics come from great learning, value based education, and a creation of the clean environment that leads to righteousness in the heart.

4. **Lal Bahadur Shastri** was a man best known for his integrity, honesty, hard-work, simplicity and austerity in Indian politics. In the history of Indian politics which is dominated by dynasty, corruption, wealth and raw power, Lal Bahadur Shastri stood out as an odd man by virtue of his ethics, integrity, simplicity and austerity. He was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and took part in the freedom struggle.

While he was jailed under the British, he was informed that his daughter was sick. He requested for 15 days to visit her and was granted under the condition that he must not participate in freedom struggle in those 15 days. Unfortunately, by the time he reached his home, his daughter had died. After performing the funeral and last rites for 3 days, he immediately returned to jail in spite of having 12 more days of freedom from jail.

Similarly, in another event, while in jail, he was informed of his son's serious sickness and this time he got a permission of 7 days of leave from jail. He stayed with his son all the 7 days and although his son had still not recovered, Shastri went back to jail to keep up with his words!!

He served as the Railway Minister under Jawahar Lal Nehru. Such was his moral standards at his job that immediately after a train accident, he took moral responsibility and submitted his letter of resignation.

5. **Kisan Baburao Hazare** popularly known as **Anna Hazare**, is an Indian social activist who led movements to promote rural development, increase government transparency, and investigate and punish corruption in public life. Hazare served the Indian Army, where he initially worked as an army truck driver and later as a soldier. During the Indo-Pak War of 1965, Hazare was posted at the border in the Khem Karan sector and was the sole survivor of an enemy attack.

Inspired by the book by Swami Vivekanand "*Call to the youth for nation building*" besides other works of Vivekanand and Vinoba Bhave, he decided to dedicate his new life to serving people. He started with the development work of his own village Ralegaon Siddhi, which was suffering from acute poverty, deprivation, a fragile ecosystem, neglect and hopelessness. He began his campaign with setting up a grain bank, watershed development, drive against untouchability and alcoholism. He worked to increase literacy rates and education levels. He campaigned between 1998 and 2006 for amending the Gram Sabha Act, so that villagers have a say in the village's development. The state government initially refused, but eventually gave in to public pressure. It became mandatory to seek the sanction of the Gram Sabha (an assembly of all village adults, and not just the few elected representatives in the gram panchayat) for expenditures on development works in the village.

In 1991 Hazare launched the Bhrashtachar Virodhi Jan Andolan (BVJA, People's Movement against Corruption), a popular movement to fight against corruption, in Ralegaon Siddhi. This fight against corruption has become his life goal, for which he suffered hardships, was imprisoned, but his determination and tireless sustained efforts have established him as one of the most recognised leader against corruption at the national level. His major efforts include Rig'it to information movement, Lok Pal Bill movement, Electoral Reforms movement. A true follower of Gandhian philosophy he professes non violence and uses hunger strike as his main instrument to achieve his mission.

**6. Anand Kumar** is an Indian mathematician and a columnist for various national and international mathematical journals. He is best known for his Super 30 **programme**, which he started in Patna, Bihar in 2002 for coaching economically backward students for the entrance examination for the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). By 2017, 396 out of the 450 had made it to IITs. He has been invited by the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University to speak on his globally acclaimed effort to mentor students from the underprivileged sections for admission to IIT.

In 1992, Kumar began teaching Mathematics. He rented a classroom for Rs. 500 a month, and began his own institute, the Ramanujan School of Mathematics (RSM). Within the span of year, his class grew from two students to thirty-six, and

after three years there were almost 500 students enrolled. Ramanujan School of Mathematics holds a competitive test to select 30 students for the 'Super 30' program. Many students appear for the competitive test, and eventually thirty intelligent students from economically backward sections are selected. Anand Kumar, tutors them, and provides study materials and lodging for a year. Whole programme is conducted as a dedicated social service without any commercial interest. His mother, Jayanti Devi, cooks for the students, and his brother Pranav Kumar takes care of the management.

Anand Kumar has no financial support for Super 30, from any government or private agency, and manages on the tuition fee he earns from the Ramanujam Institute. After the success of Super 30 and its growing popularity, he got many offers from the private – both national and international companies — as well as the government for financial help, but he always refused it. He wanted to sustain Super 30 through his own efforts.





