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Q1

(a) What is meant by 'environmental ethics'? Why is it important to study? Discuss any one environmental issue from the viewpoint of environmental ethics. (10) (b) Differentiate between the following (10 marks) (200 Words) (i) Law and ethics (ii) Ethical management and management of ethics (iii) Discrimination and preferential treatment (iv) Personal Ethics and Professional Ethics.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS IV · 12 marks · Ethics and Human Interface

Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in-human actions; dimensions of ethics; ethics - in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators; role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.

Core demand of the question

- (a) Explain environmental ethics, why it should be studied, and discuss one environmental issue through that lens
- (b) Differentiate: (i) law and ethics (ii) ethical management and management of ethics (iii) discrimination and preferential treatment (iv) personal ethics and professional ethics

Revision summary

Environmental ethics judges human use of nature by duty to other beings and to future people, not only by this year's profit.

It matters because power and markets can destroy a river faster than custom can stop them; the dam and displacement case is one test.

Law is enforceable rule; ethics is the wider right, which may bind when the law is silent or too thin.

Ethical management is lived fairness; management of ethics is codes and cells that support it.

Discrimination is harmful bias; preferential treatment is a limited constitutional correction. Personal ethics is private conscience; professional ethics is the duty of the chair.

Introduction

Part (a) asks what we owe to nature and to people who live with damaged land and air. Part (b) asks four pairs that look similar and are not. A public servant needs both the green duty and the four distinctions.

Body**(a) Environmental ethics: meaning, importance, one issue**

- Environmental ethics is the study of right and wrong in how humans treat land, water, air, plants, animals and future generations.

- It asks whether nature has value only as a store for us, or also as a community we belong to.
- Older Indian thought already had this duty in ideas of restraint, shared rivers and sacred groves; the modern name is new, the problem is larger.
- It is important to study because technology can now empty a river or heat a climate faster than custom can stop it.
- Without this study, a project is judged only by this year's rupees, and the cost is pushed onto a village, a species, or a child not yet born.
- **Article 48A and Article 51A(g)** of the Constitution of India already treat protection of the environment as a State direction and a citizen's duty; ethics explains why those lines are not decoration.
- The **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** and the requirement of **environmental impact assessment** are law. Ethics is the habit of not treating the clearance as a purchased stamp.
- **One issue:** large river dams and inter-linking that drown forests and displace Adivasi hamlets while promising power and irrigation to distant cities.
- From a purely economic view the dam is a national good if megawatts rise. From environmental ethics the questions are: who consents, who loses the river's fish and silt, what happens to downstream flow, and whether a smaller mix of efficiency, watershed work and solar can meet the need with less harm.
- **Intergenerational justice** says a storage that silts in forty years and leaves a toxic reservoir is a theft from the next public.
- The ethical answer is not "never build". It is honest assessment, least harm, rehabilitation that is real, and a no when the forest and the people cannot be made whole.

(b) Four differentiations

- (i) Law is a rule the State can enforce with a penalty. Ethics is a standard of right conduct that may be stricter than the statute and may exist where the statute is silent.
- A man may pay every tax and still humiliate a petitioner. That is legal enough and ethically empty. Civil disobedience against an unjust law is the other mismatch.
- (ii) Ethical management is running an organisation so that daily decisions already follow fairness, honesty and care for stakeholders.
- **Management of ethics is the toolkit:** codes, training, vigilance cells, ombudsmen and disclosure forms. The toolkit without the habit is a framed pledge. The habit without some toolkit is fragile when the boss changes.
- (iii) Discrimination is unequal treatment that harms a person because of caste, sex, religion, disability or similar status, against equality.
- Preferential treatment is a lawful extra chance given to a historically excluded group so that equality becomes real; reservation under the Constitution is this, not a private bias.
- **The test is purpose and limit:** a reserved seat for a Scheduled Caste candidate is preference as justice. A clerk who rejects a file because the applicant is Dalit is discrimination.
- (iv) Personal ethics is the conscience a person carries at home: truth to family, no cruelty, keeping a promise.
- **Professional ethics is the extra duties of a role:** confidentiality of a file, impartiality at a counter, no private practice that milks the posting, duty to the patient or the court.
- They should not fight. When they do, the professional role cannot be used as a licence for a domestic vice, and a personal loyalty cannot rewrite a public tender.

Flow diagram

Environmental ethics -> Duty to nature and future
Duty to nature and future -> Dam and displacement test
Law -> Enforceable minimum
Ethics -> Right conduct
Discrimination -> Unequal harm
Preferential treatment -> Constitutional repair

Conclusion

Environmental ethics makes nature and the unborn count in a file, as the dam example shows. Law is enforceable minimum; ethics can be higher. Codes manage ethics; ethical management lives them. Discrimination harms; constitutional preference repairs. Personal and professional ethics are two rooms of the same house.

Facts & figures

Article 48A and Article 51A(g)

Directive and fundamental duty in the Constitution of India on protecting and improving the environment and showing compassion for living creatures.

Environment (Protection) Act, 1986

Umbrella statute after Bhopal that lets the Union set environmental standards and regulate polluting activity.

Environmental impact assessment

A prior study of a project's harm to ecology and people; ethically it must be honest, not a purchased clearance.

Intergenerational justice

The idea that today's public cannot spend the next generation's air, water and soil as if they had no claim.

Reservation as preferential treatment

Constitutional preference for historically excluded groups, distinct from caste or communal discrimination against a person.

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