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Ethics of Public Interest Litigation

Context

- People are increasingly resorting to PIL to ensure that their rights are not violated. PIL is interpreted as a mechanism to fulfil the Constitutional objectives extending beyond the interests of individual litigants in a case. It is the litigation to represent the unrepresented/under-represented, while extending the *locus standi* regime, in the public interest.

Ethical Analysis of the PIL

- **Transformative Constitutionalism:** This principle requires that individuals and groups pursue their own conceptions of the good. The very objective of the PIL is to imbibe those goods transformations in their lives. But the success of PIL lies in the entitlements to the resources and capabilities to be free from threats to survival.
- **Litigation alone is not sufficient:** There is no doubt in saying that the rights are not self-implementable; hence, the litigation is not a panacea for all the cures. The question here is how far the vigilant state is considering these judgments.
- **Judicial Overreach vs. Judicial Constraint:** The PIL system promotes the philosophy of judicial activism. However, while doing so, the Court sometimes blurs the *Lakshman Rekha* between the judiciary and the legislature. Hence, it is the ethical dilemma for the Indian judiciary whether to entertain a case or where to restrain to prevent judicial overreach.
- **Clogging of the Cases:** In the backdrop of poor infrastructure and pending cases, excessive filing of PIL has increased the workload of the courts. Moreover, the lack of a mechanism to segregate the frivolous complaints also makes the task of the Court more difficult.

Way Forward

- **Judicial Restraints:** The judiciary should evolve a method to segregate the PILs of genuine concerns; at the same time, the judiciary should self-restraints herself from entertaining each and every case considered to be of public interest.
- **Rejuvenating Judicial Infrastructure:** National Judicial Infrastructure Authority will lighten the burden of the judiciary through technological evolution; moreover, the appropriate infrastructure will also pave the way for the segregation of the PILs.
- **State's Intervention:** Majorly, the PILs are filed against the state or state entities; the state and the administration should understand their duties and act in an appropriate manner to protect, and preserve the public interest.
- **Ethical Duties of the Citizens:** Lastly, it is the duty of the common public to judiciously avail the route of the PIL. They should restrict themselves from filing false, frivolous, and trivial matters in the PIL.

Conclusion

- The accountability of PIL activists should be increased more so that the abuse of PIL can be prevented and will further lower the burden of the overburdened Judiciary. Lastly, we need to understand that the PIL is not a pill to the injustices; transformative constitutionalism is needed to be imbibed in the system.

Just war theory

Context

- The on-going Russia-Ukraine war has brought forth the issue of just conduct of war. The just war theory is a doctrine of military ethics. The purpose of the doctrine is to ensure that a war is morally justifiable through a series of criteria, all of which must be met for a war to be considered just.

Analysis

■ What is 'just war theory'?

- ▶ Just war theory deals with the justification of how and why wars are fought. The justification can be either theoretical or historical.
- ▶ The just war theory postulates the belief that war, while it is terrible but less so with the right conduct, is not always the worst option. Important responsibilities, undesirable outcomes, or preventable atrocities may justify war.
- ▶ **Theoretical aspect:** The theoretical aspect is concerned with ethically justifying war and the forms that warfare may or may not take.
- ▶ **Historical aspect:** The historical aspect, or the "just war tradition," deals with the historical body of rules or agreements that have applied in various wars across the ages.

■ Opponents of Just War theory

- ▶ All wars are unjust and have no place in any ethical theory. Morality must always oppose deliberate violence. Just war ideas tend to make violence OK, rather than restrain it.
- ▶ In a conflict "the strong do what they will, and the weak do what they must". The decision to wage war is governed by realism and relative strength, not ethics. Morality thus has no use in war.
- ▶ The overriding aim of war should be to achieve victory as quickly and cheaply as possible. If the cause is just, then no restrictions should be placed on achieving it
- ▶ the rules of conduct of war are mere camouflage because they are always over-ruled by 'military necessity
- ▶ The existence of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction requires a different approach to the problem. Using these weapons guarantees civilian casualties, and thus breaks a basic rule of the conduct of war
- ▶ Terrorists are inherently uninterested in morality, so following any ethical theory of war handicaps those whom terrorists attack - thus a different approach is needed.

Conclusion

- The Just War theory bridges theoretical and applied ethics, since it demands an adherence, or at least a consideration of meta-ethical conditions and models, as well as prompting concern for the practicalities of war. The theory helps the nation-states to assert their power and control where they believe their national interest resides.

Effect of the internet on values and morals of children

Context

- Internet has become a crucial part of our daily lives and also the children especially after the pandemic. The Internet exposes us to varied ideas and provides us with the means to express our creativity by allowing our potential to engage in a range of experiences. However, every such revolution comes with its own consequences.

Analysis

Positive Effect of the Internet on Children's Morals and Values

- It enhances the area of knowledge, and incentive them to innovate, invent, and create. Inspirational information paves the way for a child to become a civilized, and ethical person.
- Accessing of positive information, and interactions with the positive personalities on the internet imbibe the qualities of empathy, compassion, and moral aptitude.
- Interactions with peers help in developing skills like setting boundaries, learning cooperation, and empathy.

Negative Effect of the Internet on Children's Morals and Values

- The unethical websites and content makes children vulnerable to cyber-bullying, abuses, and security risks resulting in the degradation of moral and value-centric development.
- Face-to-face interaction that aids in building social relationships is not possible on the internet.
- The readymade information restricts the scope of critical learning which affects their cognitive development.
- The internet detaches the children from the societal reality, which may create societal apathy, indifference, etc. among them, which ultimately results in the diminishing of our moral, and cultural values.
- Societal detachments negatively impact their decision-making, and leadership skills.
- Overdose of the internet can cause a delay in the emotional skills, and generate several other emotional problems.

What needs to be done?

- **Balanced Approach:** The restrictions on internet usage should be balanced with need to access the internet to keep abreast with the latest developments in various fields.
- **Role of the Adults:** Any recommendation to guide parents, educators, and health professionals should take into account the needs and rights of children in the context of internet usage.
- **Communication is the key:** Raising awareness through communication, and explanation about all the good, and evil characteristics of the internet will reduce the negative emotional impact of technology on children.
- **Utilitarian Approach:** Accessibility of the internet should be provided as per their cognitive requirements, which is more feasible than that banning the access for them.

Conclusion

- It is clear that the internet and the online environment is a moral terrain that requires sustainable navigation. By understanding how effectively such moral disengagement can be avoided, we can help to create a safer and more even path for young people to negotiate.

Shallow and Deep Ecologism

Context

As the world continues to grapple with the unrelenting climatic changes, it becomes necessary to understand two kinds of environmental philosophy that reinvent the relationship between Nature and human beings. In this context, a Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, in the 1970s, while placing humans at the heart of the environmental crisis, emphasized for the deep ecologism for imbining the role of the individual in Nature.

Analysis

Shallow Ecologism

- Shallow Ecology is a regime, which promotes powerful and fashionable conservation strategies against pollution and the haphazard depletion of resources.
- Shallow ecologism takes an anthropocentric approach to conservation. It believes that nature should be conserved for the sake of human welfare.
- It advocates for the exploitation of Nature but with specific short-term solutions using R&D to find ways to manipulate and exploit Nature such as hybrid vehicles.
- It follows the utilitarian principle of maximizing the benefits to the majority.
- This branch of ecologism leads to inequitable distribution of resources, and undue benefits dwelling in the developed countries at the cost of environmental degradation.

Deep Ecologism

- Deep ecologism is a movement while keeping conservation at its heart, regards human lives as just one of the equal components of the global ecosystem.
- This approach believes that the environment carries with itself a certain intrinsic worth that obligates human beings to take care of it.
- It promotes "ecological wisdom", which is based on the principle of ecological harmony or equilibrium and emphasizes the policy acknowledging the inherent values of life.
- This philosophy stresses that humans have no right to reduce the richness, and diversity except to satisfy the vital human needs.
- Indian culture propagates the idea of deep ecologism in her practices.

Challenges

- Taking the example of acid rain, the shallow reaction of acid rain is to demand more trees that will tolerate increased levels of acidity; while the deep ecology advocates to fight against the economic conditions, and technology producing acid rains.
- Carbon credit works on the same shallow approach, as it promotes the higher emissions countries to exploit the environment at the cost of the least developing countries.

- Shallow approach is more influential than that of the deep ecology as it focuses on human health, and affluence rather than deep-seated respect for ways and forms of life. And humans are more prone to the practice, which is less hectic and more influential.

Way Forward

- **Socialism is the key:** A narrow focus on pollution and conservation projects, though, prone to solving pollution, generates evils of a different kind. Such projects may lead to an increase in the cost of living, and promote class differences. Hence, an ethically responsible ecology is one that operates in the interest of all economic classes.
- **Inclusive and decentralized decision-making:** As Mahatama Gandhi stressed the promotion of local governance, and cooperation, the solution to the environment can be found in decentralizing the decision-making process and strengthening local participation. The participation of the local communities will pave the way for more inclusive decision-making, social auditing and social impact assessment that will promote the idea of deep environmental ethics.

Conclusion

- To address environmental degradation, there is a need to place humans at the heart of the environmental crisis with emphasis on the deep ecology for imbibing the role of the individual in Nature.

Marital Rape

Context

- A 2-judge Bench of the Delhi High Court has delivered a split verdict in a batch of petitions challenging the exception provided to marital rape under Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). One of the Judges held that the exception as unconstitutional, while the other Judge held that the provision is valid. The Judgment has again ignited the debate about criminalization of marital rape in India.

Analysis

Marital Rape: Against legal provisions

- **Violation of freedom:** Non-criminalising status of marital rape emanates from British rule, which was derived from the doctrine of merging identity of women with her husband.
- **Violation of Right to Equality:** Article 14 of the constitution provides Right to equality, but the exception 2 to the section 375 of the IPC creates two different classes of women on the basis of marital status of the women.
- **Violation of Article 21:** Protection of life and personal liberty includes right to life with dignity, right to health, right to privacy and right to safe environment etc.

Ethical Dilemma

- The ethical dilemma arises from the roots of conflicts of values: Right to privacy, liberty, dignity and bodily integrity of the wife **v/s** Family Institution and right of husband to have safe and private conjugal relation with wife.

Interest of the wife:

- Article 21 provides Right to life with dignity which includes privacy, liberty and bodily integrity. Right to life the epitome of the human existence which should be available to everyone irrespective of gender and marital status.
- Right to privacy includes decisional privacy of intimate relations. Merging the identity of married women with that of her husbands and not recognizing wife's independent identity is a direct attempt to the liberty of the women.
- Any non-consensual attempt to have sexual relation irrespective of marital status of the women should be considered as attempt to sexual violence and rape.

Interest of the husband:

- Marital relations between two individual provides a perpetual consent to have sexual intercourse from both the sides. Right to have sexual relation with wife also becomes essential agenda to protect the family institution of the society.
- It is also important to protect the right of husbands to get immunity from false complaints of sexual assault.

Who are prone to major losses?

- **Wife:** 'Marital Rape', non-consensual sexual intercourse with wife, violates the right to privacy and bodily integrity of the married woman.
- **Husband:** Instances of false and fake complaints violates the right of the husband to live with dignity and right to have sexual relation to protect the family institution.
- **Society:** Conflict of values and ethical dilemma between of having conjugal rights negatively impact the social structure of the society and hinders the family institution.

Conclusion

- The principle of equality and non-discrimination is important, and it is enshrined in our Constitution. This should permeate through each law of the country including Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code. It is high time that India realizes that a marriage license cannot be a substitute for a woman's consent.

State as a moral agent

Context

- It has become quite noticeable that modern world politics across the globe has lacked a guiding morality in which we can hold states morally accountable in both the international and domestic spheres. This can be seen in the never-ending wars and occupations across the Middle East, South-East Asia, and the recent one in Ukraine.

Analysis

Scholar and philosophical perspectives supporting State as a moral agent:

- **Phillip Pettit** establishes conditions that must be met for a collective entity to hold moral responsibility. This will include deciphering what the state owes its citizens and how to decipher whether an action

taken by the state, in the domestic sphere, is morally right or wrong. While doing this, we can lay the groundwork for holding states morally responsible for their actions, which can be rarely seen in the world anymore, and help craft the image of a morally just state.

- While traditionally agential theory arguments have been running through **Kantian** and **Rights-Based moral framework**, we can see that the argument can better be laid out using a form of Virtue Ethics.
- Virtue Ethics is rarely used within the political philosophy and global justice spheres because it has been traditionally focused on an individual actor. However, by successfully establishing the agential theory of moral agency for collective entities, like states, we can talk about states in the same sense that we talk about individual moral actors within **Virtue Ethics**.
- **Locke** wrote that all individuals are equal in the sense that they are born with certain “inalienable” natural rights such as “life, liberty, and property.” Locke believed that the most basic responsibility of the state is the preservation of mankind. To serve that purpose, he reasoned, individuals have both a right and a duty to preserve their own lives.

Scholar and philosophical perspectives negating the role of State as a moral agent:

- **Machiavelli** contended that the state is not a means but an end in itself with its own interest. The interest of the state justifies everything. The state has no ethics. State actions are not to be judged by individual ethics. In exercising political power, Machiavelli opines that a ruler should give priority to what is good for the state rather than what is moral or immoral.
- While dealing with the selfish nature of human beings, **Hobbes** gives exceptional powers to the state and gives away its requirement to be in a moral obligation to serve the ultimate purpose of securing the right to life of its citizens.
- **Realism** school of thought in IR often site National Interest as the ultimate tool to advance the state policies, irrespective of moral obligations of the state. It can be seen in the context of the Russia Ukraine war, where India is forced to take a balanced stand despite major international opinion against Russian military operation.

Conclusion

- The role of the state in modern times undeniably goes beyond securing the territorial integrity of the nation-state and maintaining law and order. In recent times, mechanisms like Universal Declaration on Human Rights and UN Human Rights Council can be strengthened to implement the moral obligations of the states, for which there needs a broad international consensus.

Ethics of Deepfake and Synthetic Media

Context

- Technological advancement that has fueled media creation today, has provided opportunities for all people. However, as access to synthetic media technology increases, so does the risk of exploitation. One such aspect of media creation is deep fakes.

Analysis

What is deepfake or synthetic media?

- Deepfakes are digital falsifications of pictures, videos, and audios created exploiting an editing process that is automated through AI techniques.

- Synthetic media content is different from “deep fakes,” these are “people” created by AI algorithms that manipulate faces, speech patterns, tones, and other data to produce a human entity.

What are the ethical issues encircling deepfake/synthetic media?

- **Threat to Individuals:** Pornographic deepfakes can threaten, intimidate, and inflict psychological harm on an individual. Deepfake can depict a person indulging in antisocial behaviors and saying vile things that they never did. Those deepfakes can have severe implications on their reputation.
- **Threat to Society:** Deepfakes can be used to exacerbate social division by using fake video and audio to spread disinformation about a community. False information about the institutions, policy, and public leaders powered by a deepfake can be exploited to spin information and manipulate belief.
- **Threat to Businesses:** They are used to impersonate identities of business leaders and executives to facilitate fraud. It could pose unique labor and employment risks. Employees are relying increasingly on secret video/audio recordings to support their claims of harassment.
- **Threat to Democracy:** A well-executed deepfake, a few days before the polling, of a leading political candidate spewing out racial epithets or indulge in an unethical act, can damage their campaign.

Deepfake/Synthetic Media for the good

- **Accessibility:** AI-Generated Synthetic media can help make the accessibility tools smarter and, in some cases, even affordable and personalizable, which can help people augment their agency and gain independence.
- **Education:** AI-Generated synthetic media can bring historical figures back to life for a more engaging and interactive classroom. Deepfakes can help an educator to deliver innovative lessons that are far more engaging than traditional visual and media formats.
- **Autonomy & Expression:** Synthetic media can help human rights activists and journalists to remain anonymous in dictatorial and oppressive regimes
- **Reach and Message Amplification:** It can be used to create natively localized video and audio content for learning tools, brand marketing, audience engagement, customer service, and public messaging to broaden the reach and amplification of the message.
- **Public Safety & Digital reconstruction:** Reconstructing the crime scene is a forensic science and art, using inductive and deductive reasoning and evidence with the interrelationship of spatial and temporal artefacts.

Way forward

- **Consent:** No-one should be synthesised without consent. We propose implementing a digital consent system to streamline the process.
- **Control:** Actors should be in control of their likeness and should have access to a record of all synthetic media content they appear in.
- **Collaboration:** A general willingness, within reasonable means, to engage in public discourse and education around synthetic media.

Conclusion

- To defend the truth and secure freedom of expression, there is a need for a multi-stakeholder and multi-modal approach. Collaborative actions and collective techniques across legislative regulations, platform policies, technology intervention, and media literacy can provide effective and ethical countermeasures to mitigate the threat of malicious deep fakes.

Ethics in Judiciary

Context

- In India, the Supreme Court justices have no official code of conduct with clear ethical obligations. The Supreme Court is one of the most powerful and least accountable body in the government. It brings to the notice the role of ethics in judiciary.

Analysis

Ethical issues in Judiciary

- **Public Speech:** Judges must be cautious of their role, position and responsibilities in society while engaging in public speech.
- **Public Trust:** Judicial office is an institution of public trust and he must endeavour to leave such office with higher respect and public confidence than when he inherited it.
- **Family Conduct:** Judges are bestowed with the responsibility of judging the conduct of fellow citizens. Therefore, it is only natural that they be expected to make truthful decisions in their own lives. Otherwise, they lose the moral authority to judge the lives of others.
- **Recusal:** A judge may often encounter situations where a conflict of interest arises which may require him to recuse himself from the matter. Bias is one of the factors that may require recusal. While considering the question of bias a judge may have to evaluate not only whether he would indeed be influenced in his decision but also whether he may be perceived as being biased which may weaken public trust ultimately.
- **Compassion and Conscience:** While upholding the rule of law if a judge can award a patient hearing to both the parties and be compassionate in his application of law, it often alleviates their suffering and certainly enhances their respect for the judiciary.
- **Avoiding Bias:** The strength of our judiciary also depends on their ability to treat citizens of various religious, social and economic backgrounds without bias or prejudice. A judge like any other individual must guard against succumbing to biases.

Six principles to establish ethical conduct of judges

- **Judicial independence** is a prerequisite to the rule of law and a fundamental guarantee of a fair trial. A judge shall therefore uphold and exemplify judicial independence in both its individual and institutional aspects.
- **Impartiality** is essential to the proper discharge of the judicial office. It applies not only to the decision itself but also to the process by which the decision is made.
- **Integrity** is essential to the proper discharge of the judicial office.
- **Propriety**, and the appearance of propriety, are essential to the performance of all of the activities of the judge.
- Ensuring **equality** of treatment to all before the courts is essential to the due performance of the judicial office
- **Competence** and diligence are prerequisites to the due performance of judicial office.

Conclusion

- Despite enormous changes in the country the Supreme Court's structure has not changed for nearly a half century. Addressing how judicial candidates are identified and selected, the structure of decision-

making on the Court, the duration of service, and the conduct of the Court itself will help us resolve bottleneck issues and make Indian judiciary more ethical in justice delivery.

The Pegasus Project and the question of Ethics

Context

- Recently, it has been reported that Pegasus, the malicious software, has allegedly been used to secretly monitor and spy on an extensive host of public figures in India. This has sparked the debate on the state's right to surveillance and people's right to privacy.

Analysis

- Pegasus:** It is a type of malicious software or malware classified as spyware, developed by the Israeli company NSO Group. It is designed to access devices, without user information, and collect personal information and retrieve it from anyone using spy software.

Is it ethical to spy a friendly country to serve one's national interests?

- Spying or Espionage on friendly countries is unethical because it:**
 - impinges on the Sovereignty of nation states
 - transgresses the Right to Privacy of individuals
 - furtheres vested interests often and destabilises governments
 - creates a trust deficit among allies and enemies alike (e.g. US-Russia in Cold War)
 - can be used to seek political vendetta/leverage or cause massive harm
- Spying can be ethical when:**
 - Already facing a full scale war with friends turning foes.
 - acting against a non-state actor that's dangerous to global harmony and sheltering in a "friendly" state (eg. LeT, ISIS)
 - for regular security monitoring and within permissible limits (eg. RAW, CIA)

Ethics of Surveillance

- Monitoring simply places a person's attention and / or caution. The emergence of a French word by looking at this word includes not only visual perception but also an examination of all behaviours, speech, and actions.
- Outstanding examples of employment include surveillance cameras, phone calls, GPS tracking, and online surveillance.
- These technological advances have had a profound effect on the morality of putting individuals under the scrutiny of our modern society.
- Today many of our actions are visible, recorded, searchable, and even more closely monitored than ever before.

Moral issues involved

- Violation of privacy:** - Monitoring is basically based on this principle as it involves collecting, viewing and collecting personal information without their consent. It is one of the most cherished and natural human rights.

- **Trust and independence:** - As privacy is violated, people find it difficult to trust the government to protect their rights. It breeds mistrust between rulers and subjects. It impairs one's physical and emotional independence.
- **Reason for observation:** - The purpose of the observation, or any other assurance of observation, may be the most important ethical question to be asked. Security may be the simplest answer but it has been observed and met by all that surveillance often has the illegal use associated with it.
- **Officer:** - The preparation of the appointment, and in particular the cause of the surveillance, will depend on who is conducting the inspection. State security may be and must be conducted by the state intelligence agency with the assurance of ethical conduct but the consideration of private organizations for their benefit is inappropriate.

Conclusion

- An unrestricted collection of electronic spying destroys civil liberties and creates dictatorial conditions. But the continued freedom of our society ultimately depends on our willingness to see that appropriate measurement action is needed. We must respect the work of our intelligence agencies that keep us safe, and be happy that in our democratic societies we are subject to the law and we must also ensure that the monitoring process is upheld and ethical.

Ethics of Vegetarianism: Human Interest Vs Animal Interest

Context

- Conversations regarding the ethics of eating meat are focused on whether or not it is moral to eat non-human animals. Ultimately, this is a debate that has been ongoing for millennia, and it remains one of the most prominent topics in food ethics.

Analysis

Arguments for moral vegetarianism

- Contemporary arguments for moral vegetarianism are based around the wrongness of producing meat and move to conclusions about the wrongness of consuming it.
- They are two moral problems that arise due to eating animals:
- Wrongness in raising animals for self-consumption, and
- Wrongness in doing the same process, if carried out humanely.

Nature of Animal Rights and how to look at it?

- The principle of equality does not necessarily require subjecting animals and humans to equal or identical treatment.
- On the contrary, it requires equal consideration of interests. It must be noted that we can only give **equal consideration where we have similar interests.**
- An example of similar interests could be: All animals can suffer from pain as humans do. So, we are morally obligated to consider all of it while considering their rights.
- Only prejudice gives us an excuse to deny others the rights that we expect or reserves for ourselves.

Human Interests versus Animal Interests:

- **Violated Rights:** The moment we accept that animals have rights, then the act of raising and killing them for food is morally wrong. Irrespective of how humanely the animal has been treated, it will be a moral wrong to raise them for killing and consumption.
- **Violated Interests:** Even the most humane of the rearing practice cannot violate the most basic of animals- of staying alive. Modern agricultural practices often leave animal interest unattended such as to eat a natural diet; to live in its habitat; to remain free from pain and fear, etc.

Arguments against eating Animals:

- **Rights-based argument:** Raising animals for consumption and using them as a mean to gratify human, that does not treat them respectfully as ends in themselves.
- **Consequentialist Argument:** Raising and killing animal is cruel. If everyone is vegetarian, then there will be no demand for meat. If the demand ceases to exist then the total goodness of the world will be higher.
- **Virtue Argument:** Virtuous people exhibit virtues as they have traits like kindness; generosity; and compassion. People who participate in animal cruelty, and behave selfishly are far from being virtuous people.

Conclusion

- The dichotomy of right or wrong view of meat is unproductive. It is crucial to advance the research on plant-based and cellular meat to reduce the suffering of animals. Like human rights, overseeing animal rights is a must. The intellectual superiority of humankind cannot be the criteria to supersede the living rights of another species. The co-existence of all life forms is essential to prevent an imbalance in our ecosystem.

Moral and Philosophical implications of Artificial womb

Context

- Scientists have developed an artificial womb to incubate healthy baby lambs. However, this technology has also sparked fierce ethical-legal debate across the globe.

Analysis

How artificial wombs can help?

- The primary purpose of the artificial womb is to support the gestation and organ development of an infant born prematurely before 37 weeks of age in an artificial liquid-based environment.
- This is highly preferable as opposed to a neonatal unit where there is still a high rate of morbidity.

Ethical Consideration

- There is much contention around the socio-ethical connotations of partial ectogenesis. It is likely to be expensive and restricted to highly equipped neonatal intensive care units.

- The inception of this science global disparity in health outcomes for pregnant people and infants are in danger of being increased, as is racial inequality within the wealthiest nations.
- Equal care for all should be fundamental to the development of partial ectogenesis. Particularly in those regions suffering high maternal death rates and/or race-based discrepancies.
- A fetus would not have the advantage of antibodies transferred from its mother until it started breastfeeding.

The moral and philosophical implications of the artificial womb

- The legal definition of the termination of pregnancy may be redefined once the fetus is transferred from the host to an artificial womb.
- This increased window of viability, where the fetus can be transferred to an artificial womb at an earlier stage of development than the latest stage allowed for the termination of pregnancy, may also be deemed criminal depending on the abortion laws in the region.
- In that event, women could be required to provide legal justification for their decision to opt for artificial gestation.
- Examples may include a dangerous pregnancy or severe injury risk during childbirth – although it is unlikely that the fetal transference would be legally sound based on a short-term health risk to a woman. Possibly meaning any long-term risks must be proven before the pregnancy is terminated and the fetus transferred to the artificial womb; this will not be an easy task.
- Another ethical dilemma posed by the ectogenetic future is a case scenario where fetuses aborted by mothers are then rescued and adopted. In that reality, some women might seek out dangerous backstreet abortions rather than using a legal transference to give their child up for adoption.
- Ectogenesis may also heighten economic inequality – where wealthy prospective parents may opt to pay for artificial wombs – while the less financially secure will rely on women to gestate their babies. The potential for serious human rights breaches is once again regurgitated from the mouth of this purported liberating technology.

Conclusion

- To conclude, full ectogenesis will likely not exist for decades, but artificial wombs (and partial ectogenesis) are coming up fast. We need to ensure that, when they do arrive, we're ready — and society values women for more than just their reproductive capacity. Moreover, authorities should ensure that this technology benefits people who can't get pregnant for biological rather than psycho-addictive reasons.

We Need a 'Values Vaccine'

Context

- Beyond safety and efficacy, there are many other factors that determine whether a vaccine is perceived as value vaccine. The privileged must look within and ask themselves if they can take help and take responsibility of those less privileged.

Analysis

Why do we need Values Vaccine?

- We need an institutionalized system to ensure that vital indicators are being tracked in real-time because nobody from the top in the health establishment visited villages before the pandemic, and nobody counted them with such excitement and sense of purpose.

- The values determine the things that people consider to be important and worthwhile.
- They guide intentional behavior and motivate people to pursue ideas and activities consistent with their values and to avoid those that go against them.
- Cultural values motivate people to engage in practices that are consistent with their values and to avoid practices that are contrary to these values.
- The conservation values represent one of the key elements explaining the population's adherence to government measures in times of pandemic.

Change in values and circumstances

- Values will likely change in response to external circumstances because their function is to channel energy and skills to effectively cope with upcoming challenges and normative forces.
- The negative situations result in changes towards focusing on security, while positive changes bring attention to self-expression.
- The worldwide financial crisis in 2008 impacted the values of youth and young adults; specifically, values such as security, tradition, benevolence, and conformity significantly increased, while the importance of hedonism, self-direction, and stimulation decreased.
- The communal values of cooperation, consideration and caring are prioritized, whereas individualistic ones of prestige, popularity and power lose some of their cachets.
- Openness values, seeking stimulation excitement and challenge in life, had been decreasing in importance; however this decrease accelerated at the start of the pandemic.

Importance of Values in Human Life

- Values are generally regarded as the moral standards of human behaviors in the society. It is a kind of quality of humans, which is applied to human activities.
- The knowledge of our values helps us achieve clarity regarding why we do what we do, and accordingly stay on track and live a consistent life.
- The values help us design our life goals since we know what is most important for us today and they are as important as competencies to achieve our goals.
- The terminal values provide us a sense of fulfillment, richness, and reward, and the instrumental values provide us a direction to achieve our life goals sticking to the terminal values.

Conclusion

- The individuals who attach higher importance to self-transcendence (e.g., responsibility) and conservation (e.g., security) values are likely to be more compliant with COVID-19 behavioural guidelines. The communications to promote COVID-19 mitigating behaviours could seek to tailor messages to the motives underlying people's values. The interventions may encourage individuals to reflect on links between their own values and COVID-19 mitigating behaviours themselves, thereby embedding the behaviours more deeply in their values and facilitating long-term commitment.

Investigative Journalism and elements of Ethics

Context

- Investigative journalism is the reporting, through one's own work, product and initiative, matters of importance which some persons or organizations wish to keep secret. It should be based on ethical

principles such as Aristotle's Golden Mean; Kant's Categorical Imperative; Mill's Principle of Utility; and Judeo-Christian Principle.

Analysis

How investigative journalism can be considered as a 'Public Service'?

- Exposes corruption at the level of the government
- Reveals abuse of official power
- Brings out the denial and delay of justice
- Questions the official facts and figures
- Shows how laws are violated and circumvented
- Discloses cover-ups
- Identifies shameful societal practices

Major Principles of Ethical Journalisms

Ethical journalists should seek truth and report it: Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

- They can do this by using original sources when available and verifying information as they go. Furthermore, journalists should never plagiarise but always credit their sources.
- Journalists should clearly identify their sources — ensuring that they are reliable and have no hidden motives.
- Moreover, journalists should take a source's motives into account before promising anonymity. Sources should only remain anonymous if they face danger, retribution or harm as a result of coming forward with information.

Ethical journalism minimizes harm: Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.

- Exercising compassion is one of the key themes under this principle. Journalists should strike a balance between the public's need for information, while remaining aware of any possible discomfort or harm this information may cause them.
- This compassion should be extended to the groups that may be affected by reporting, such as minors or victims of sexual abuse. Additionally, awareness and sensitivity towards different cultures when covering a story is key.
- Another theme in this pillar is consent. Journalists need to be aware that civilians may not be as inclined to share personal information like public figures would.
- Journalists should exercise caution regarding the details they share with the public, as content that is published is permanent and will accumulate a significant reach with time.

Ethical journalists act independently: This pillar is centred on journalists avoiding special treatments or gifts given in an effort to sway reporting. This helps to avoid biased reporting.

- To remain ethical, journalists should decline gifts, favours and any special treatment that they may be offered as this will "compromise integrity or impartiality, or may damage credibility." In the same breath, they should also avoid giving information in exchange for money or favours.

Be accountable and transparent: This pillar of ethical journalism is all about being accountable for yourself and your work, as well as remaining transparent in your reporting.

- It is crucial to "take responsibility for one's work and explain one's decisions to the public."
- This pillar could be considered the core of ethical journalism because if you are being accountable and transparent, you are unlikely to act unethically in other aspects of your career.

Conclusion

- Journalism is not only a profession but also a noble vocation. Journalist should adhere to highest standards of morality while conducting their research and reporting it.

Low Ethical Standards Are Common in Medical Education in India

Context

- Prevention of patients from exploitation and protecting their human rights is the aim of modern medical ethics but the objectionable attitude of Indian doctors towards informed consent is a worrying trend.

Analysis

Instances of ethical divergence:

- Medical students introducing themselves as doctors.
- Clinical Implication:** The possibility that the mentioned doctor may not be knowing the answers to every question of their patient cannot be ruled out. This raises questions of mistrust.
- Legal Implications:** A medical student in the eyes of law is not qualified to provide treatment or to suggest intervention.
- Feeling of Mistrust:** Although the whole exercise, solely meant to evaluate the patients for the purpose of learning but they are either unaware of it or has not been asked for consent may reason that the doctors were not able to diagnose the ailment and compel him to consult another doctor.
- Feeling of Humiliation:** The patient who is either recuperating or struggling with the ailment often gets the feeling of him getting subjected to humiliation, where he is being treated as a "doctors' toy".
- Induction of marginalised people for phase 3 trial of Covaxin:** In Bhopal marginalised and illiterate people were inducted in phase 3 clinical trial of Covaxin without their consent and with promises of money.

The core reason behind this problem: It is the consent

- The concept of consent is the foundation stone of the relation that a medical practitioner and the patient mutually share with each other.
- The patient has a legal right to autonomy and self-determination enshrined within Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. He can refuse treatment except in an emergency situation where the doctor need not get consent for treatment.
- The concept of consent comes into existence from the principle of patient autonomy and basic human rights.**

The problem in India:

- Objectionable attitudes:** Despite being trained to understand the importance, the doctors continue to show objectionable attitudes towards the informed consent. There is a need for doctors to change their attitude and acknowledge the patient's autonomy.

- **Dysfunctional system:** In general, the Indian medical ecosystem disregards patients' rights. A survey of doctors in North India, in 2013 concluded that 90 percent of doctors believe that the health status of patients necessarily is disclosed to their close relatives irrespective of consent.

Possible solution:

- National Medical Commission (NMC) **new MBBS curriculum** includes 'attitudes, ethics and communication'. It aims at producing doctors who practise ethical medicine.
- The doctors need to explore the practical implications of unethical medicine in a clinical setting as making them to study the theories involved will only do justice to studies ahead of the exam and not more than that.
- The doctors in government hospitals need to pay attention to patient privacy and avoid consulting more than one patient at a time.
- Doctors should refrain from disclosing their patient's personal information while doing intramural case presentations or discussing the case with peers or colleagues.
- The government of India is also planning to launch a **National eHealth Authority** which will work towards enforcing the standards to ensure security, confidentiality and privacy of patient's health information and records.
- The security of the personal data of the patient must be secured through the use of administrative and technological control.

Conclusion

- Consent is a lawful right of a patient that makes a decision their involvement in clinical procedures. The knowledge and approach of consent are foremost important for the general population as well as to the medical field practitioners.

The climate crisis gives science a new role. Here's how research ethics must change too

Context

- One of the most daunting problems facing the world today is climate change. As we move forward in finding ways to adapt and mitigate climate change, recognising the ethical problems associated with it is crucial.

Analysis

Necessity to consider the ethical dimensions of Climate Change:

- Climate change has significant implications for international equality, as both the causes and effects of climate change are unequally distributed around (and within) nations. In general, countries that are least responsible for climate change have the lowest socio-economic capacity to cope with the adverse consequences of climate change.
- Climate change, mobilised by the search for scarce resources, has the ability to cause conflict.
- Other ethical concerns include: how present and future generations, developed and developing countries, etc., can identify and distinguish obligations.

What are the principles of research ethics?

- Environmentalists are proposing a move from a negative ethics focused on avoiding harm to a positive research ethics. The three main principles of research ethics are:
- **Do no harm:** According to the “do no harm” imperative, researchers have a responsibility to avoid hurting humans or animals directly involved in their research. It questions the carbon footprint of academic activities, ranging from flying to conferences to developing artificial intelligence. The “do no harm” principle should thus be broadened in two ways:
 - ▶ It should include humans, animals and ecosystems that are traditionally not considered part of the research process, but can be negatively affected by it.
 - ▶ It should better account for the long-term, indirect or unintended consequences of research projects or new technologies.
- **Act with integrity:** The principle of integrity asks researchers to follow rigorous protocols, disclose conflicts of interest, refrain from manipulating data, and abstain from plagiarism. For example, by focusing heavily on GDP growth, mainstream economics portrays our planetary habitat mostly as a resource to use or exploit. The idea of geo-engineering also largely rests on an understanding of our life-support systems as a set of disconnected pieces that can be engineered. Ultimately, “integrity means wholeness”. It implies acknowledging that we are parts of a fragile and interconnected web of life, which we need to preserve.
- **Take responsibility:** According to the “responsibility” principle, research should be relevant to society and communicated to the public. But in a climate crisis, findings can be so dramatic, their implications for society so huge and controversial, that the word “responsibility” takes a new, heavier meaning.

The “responsibility” principle should therefore be enriched in three ways:

- Scientists should take their own findings seriously and stand up for their societal implications.
- Researchers must defend the scientific process from the influence of political and economic interests.
- Scientists can remain humble as to what science can achieve. This means acknowledging the limits to our knowledge of an infinitely complex world, as well as the slow pace and unpredictable consequences of technological development.

Conclusion

- Academic research will be at the heart of any solution to the climate and ecological crises. Embracing this responsibility and facing these existential threats requires change in research ethics than just the adoption of sustainability plans.

Ethics of a leader

Context

- A leader is a person who spearheads an organization/task to lead it towards the intended direction. He/she has to be driven by the right motivation and make a positive impact on not just the organization but also the people around them. “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.” - John C Maxwell

Analysis

Why ethics is an important element for a leader?

- **Loyalty from the followers-** When leaders are fair and just, followers develop an inherent trust in the leader, establishing a culture of loyalty and respect. For example- Bhagat Singh develop a band of trusted revolutionaries willing to lay their lives for their nation as well as their leader.
- **Higher motivation-** When people know that the government is operating ethically and for the benefit of the greater good, they will want to do their part to further the cause of the entire nation. For example- Role of Nelson Mandela in bringing about reconciliation among the blacks and whites despite the decades of animosity.
- **Higher morale-** Ethical leadership raises the morale of the people when the chips are down. People know the cause they are behind and can trust the leader. For example- Gandhiji through his satyagraha prepared people for the hardship that they had to endure at the hands of the British.
- **Earning respect from society and communities-** Nations that are led by ethical leaders set a good example for others, and are respected and valued as a result. This became evident when the third world looked up to India for leadership during the cold war era. India under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru duly obliged through a Non-aligned movement.
- **Increased sense of belonging-** When the values of a leader and individual values are aligned and ethical principles are adopted, everyone's general well-being increases. This leads to a positive atmosphere, which reinforces and fosters ethical behaviors, creating a virtuous loop where everyone will feel at home and in the right condition to give their best.

What are the qualities of an ethical leader?

- **Justice-** He/she must be fair and just. An ethical leader must treat everyone equally. He should be free from personal bias. Differential treatment must be fair, clear, and built on morality only.
- **Integrity-** It is the characteristic of being honest and having strong moral and ethical principles. A leader of integrity abides by the values of the organization, commands respect amongst his team as well as prevents deviance from the values even in trying circumstances.
- **Dignity and respectfulness:** He/she respect others. An ethical leader does not use one's followers as a medium to achieve his personal goals. He respects their feelings, decision, and values. Respecting the followers implies listening effectively to them, being compassionate to them, as well as being liberal in hearing opposing viewpoints.
- **Alignment of organization's values and personal values-** to avoid conflict of interest in the working of the organization.
- **Commitment to goals and values-**For him/her, it is not just the goal that matters but staying true to the values to reach that goal matters just as much. In this way, they not only earn the respect of the people but also instill that same hardworking energy among everyone.
- **Community building-** He/she considers the goal of the organization as well as that of his teammates, aligning to help them both. In this way, he/she creates a community with unifying values and goals.

Conclusion

- It is often said, Character of an institution is reflected in its leader. But the vice versa hold just as 'true'. A leader's character is just as well reflected in the direction that organization he/she takes. For the values to run through the organization, they must begin right from the very top. Thus ethics must begin at the top of every organization and in this regard, it is the leader of the organization who must lead by his ethics.

Global Agreement on Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Context

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is more present in our lives than ever. From predicting what we want to see as we scroll through social media to helping us understand weather patterns to manage agriculture, AI is ubiquitous. UNESCO's global agreement on the ethics of AI can guide governments and companies alike to regulate the entire AI system life cycle, ranging from research, design and development to deployment and use.

Analysis

AI ethics

- AI ethics is a system of moral principles and techniques intended to inform the development and responsible use of artificial intelligence technology.
- An AI ethics framework is important because it shines a light on the risks and benefits of AI tools and establishes guidelines for its responsible use.

What are the ethical challenges of AI?

- Explainability:** When AI systems go awry, organizations using AI should be able to explain the source data, resulting data, what their algorithms do and why they are doing that.
- Responsibility:** Decisions made by AI systems can have catastrophic consequences, including loss of capital, health or life. Responsibility for the consequences of AI-based decisions needs to be sorted out in a process that includes lawyers, regulators and citizens.
- Fairness:** In data sets involving personally identifiable information, it is extremely important to ensure that there are no biases in terms of race, gender or ethnicity.
- Misuse:** AI algorithms may be used for purposes other than those for which they were created.

What is an AI code of ethics?

- Policy:** This includes developing the appropriate framework for driving standardization and establishing regulations. Example, Asilomar AI Principles.
- Ethical AI policies also need to address how to deal with legal issues when something goes wrong. Companies may incorporate AI policies into their own code of conduct.
- Education:** Executives, data scientists, front-line employees and consumers all need to understand policies, key considerations and potential negative impacts of unethical AI data.
- Technology:** Executives also need to architect AI systems to automatically detect fake data and unethical behavior. This requires not just looking at a company's own AI but vetting suppliers and partners for the malicious use of AI.
- Examples include the deployment of deep fake videos and text to undermine a competitor, or the use of AI to launch sophisticated cyber attacks.
- To combat this potential snowball effect, organizations need to invest in defensive measures rooted in open, transparent and trusted AI infrastructure.

Conclusion

- The world needs rules for artificial intelligence to benefit humanity. The Recommendation on the ethics of AI sets the first global normative framework while giving States the responsibility to apply it at their level.

Code of Ethics in digital media space

Context

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology presented a report on 'Ethical Standards in Media Coverage' in the Parliament. The parliamentary panel asked the government to ensure code of ethics is followed in the digital media space while preserving the 'right to freedom of expression'.

Analysis

Digital media and Ethics

- Digital news media includes online journalism, blogging, digital photojournalism, citizen journalism and social media.
- Digital media ethics deals with the distinct ethical problems, practices and norms of digital news media. It includes questions about how professional journalism should use this 'new media' to research and publish stories, as well as how to use text or images provided by citizens.

Need for Ethics for Digital media

- **Anonymity:** While online media allows more anonymity, in offline media usually requires to disclose identity of writers. The question arises that what should be the ethical guidelines for anonymity offline and online.
- **Fake news:** The ethical challenge is to articulate guidelines for dealing with fake news in an online world that are consistent with the principles of accuracy, verification, and transparency
- **Defining journalism:** The ethical challenge is to redefine what independent journalism in the public interest means for a media where many new types of journalism are appearing and where basic principles are being challenged.
- **Social media commentary:** The ethical challenge is to develop social media guidelines that allow reporters to explore the new media world but also to draw reasonable limits on personal commentary.
- **Using citizens content:** Digital Newsrooms need to put in place a process for citizen-supplied material, which may be bogus or biased. And citizens should be given due credit for the content. It should also be done without encroaching on the privacy of citizens.
- **Reach of Social Media:** All significant social media platforms with more than 50 lakh (5 million) users, which means Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Koo, for instance, are very much categorized as large social media platforms.

Other ethical issues emerging out of digital media

- Plagiarism has become an often-accepted practice and international cultural norm due at least in part to the ease and temptation of copying online sources.

- Digitally altering images or video is common in advertising and sometimes in news.
- Using anonymous sources is frequently an accepted practice in journalism.
- Omni-directional imaging is more than science fiction.
- WikiLeaks and the transparency of public records have changed how the public understands government, the military and big business around the world.
- Artificial intelligence and computerized news writing are commercial realities.

Conclusion

- There is a need to bring code of ethics for digital media such that the credibility of media improves and transparency and accountability increases in the digital media sphere.

How Pandemic affected our ethics

Context

- In the face of the pandemic, we have been required to obey demanding new rules and accept new risks, debates continue to rage over the ethics of vaccine mandates, restrictions on civil liberties, the limits of government power and the inequitable distribution of vaccines globally. These disruptions can challenge us to think differently about ethics – about what we owe each other.

Analysis

Why ethics is becoming more 'visible' nowadays?

- In daily life, ethical decision-making often is not in front of mind. We can often just coast along. But the pandemic changed all that.
- Because the rules were being rewritten, we had to work out where we stood on all manner of questions:
 - ▶ Is it OK – or even obligatory – to “dob” on rule-breakers?
 - ▶ Is it morally wrong to ignore social distancing rules or refuse a newly developed vaccine?
 - ▶ How far can our freedoms be rightly restricted in the name of the public interest and the greater good?
- Ultimately, the pandemic made ethical thinking and discussion more common than ever — a change that might well outlast the virus itself.

How pandemic highlighted the question of 'trust'?

- Trust has always been morally important. However, the pandemic moved questions of trust to the very center of everyday decision-making.
- We all had to make judgments about the government, scientists, news and journalists, “big pharma”, and social media. The stance we take on the trustworthiness of people we’ve never met turns out to be pivotal to the rules we will accept.
- One good thing about trustworthiness is that it’s testable. Over time, evidence may confirm or refute the hypothesis that, say, the government is trustworthy about vaccine health advice but untrustworthy about cyber privacy protections in contract tracing apps.
- Perhaps more importantly, one common concern throughout the pandemic was the unprecedented speed with which the vaccines were developed and approved.

- As the evidence for vaccine safety and effectiveness continues to mount, quickly developed vaccines may be more readily trusted when the next health emergency strikes.

How fair decision-making is hard during crisis?

- The development of inclusive, informed, nuanced and fair rules is hard when swift responses are needed.
- It's even more challenging when our understanding of the situation – and the situation itself – changes rapidly.
- This doesn't excuse shoddy political decision-making.
- But it does mean leaders can be forced to make hard decisions where there are no ethically sound alternatives on offer. When they do, the rest of us must cope with living in a deeply imperfect moral world.

Conclusion

- It's possible current social shifts will "snap back" once the threat recedes. Emergency situations, like pandemics and war, can have their own logic, driven by high stakes and the sacrifices necessary to confront them. Equally though, learned lessons and ingrained habits of thought can persist beyond the crucibles that forged them.

CVC's 'Integrity Pact' against Corruption

Context

- The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has again modified the criteria for the nomination of Independent External Monitors (IEM) in government bodies, months after it had issued a revised standard operating procedure for adoption and implementation of the 'Integrity Pact' clause, which is meant to prevent corruption in public procurement.

Analysis

What is integrity?

- "Integrity" is about the ethics of behaviour of everyone involved in governance.
- Integrity refers to the moral quality of the governance process, which is important for the legitimacy and credibility of (public) power.

What is an Integrity Pact (IP)?

- The Integrity Pact (IP) is an anti-corruption tool to help governments, businesses and civil society intent on fighting corruption in the field of public contracting and procurement.
- It is mandatory for all government organisations, public sector enterprises, public sector banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions and autonomous bodies etc.
- It is essentially envisages an agreement between the prospective vendors/bidders and the buyer, committing the persons/officials of both sides not to resort to any corrupt practices in any aspect/ stage of the contract.
- The IP sets out their rights and obligations to the effect that neither side will pay, offer, demand or accept bribes, and/or collude with competitors to obtain the contract, or while carrying it out.

- Only those vendors/ bidders, who commit themselves to such a Pact with the buyer, would be considered competent to participate in the bidding process. In other words, entering into this Pact would be a preliminary qualification.

What is the need of 'integrity' in government functioning?

- Integrity has become a concept and topic with more prominence in research on government and governance, as well as in actual policy making at all levels.
- Significance for all sectors: However, it is to be noted that integrity is not only important in government and governance, but it has become more important in all sectors of society.
- Integrity is a cornerstone of a system of sound public governance. It assures citizens that the government is working in their interest, not just for the select few, and is vital for the economic prosperity and well-being of society as a whole.
- Integrity is a crucial determinant of trust.
- Integrity policies, aimed at preventing corruption and fostering high standards of behaviour, help to reinforce the credibility and legitimacy of those involved in policy decision making, safeguarding the public interest and restoring confidence in the policy making process.

Conclusion

- Integrity is essential for building strong institutions and assures citizens that the government is working in their interest, not just for the select few. Integrity is not just a moral issue, it is also about making economies more productive, public sectors more efficient, societies and economies more inclusive. It is about restoring trust, not just trust in government, but trust in public institutions, regulators, banks, and corporations.

Ethical issues associated with travel ban from Omicron variant

Context

- In the wake of new variant Omicron many countries have imposed travel restrictions on South Africa and other countries which have reported cases of this variant. This raised debate about the efficacy and morality of these bans.

Analysis

How ethical is the new travel rules (ban or full vaccination)?

■ Arguments to support travel ban

- ▶ **Protection:** It would prevent further introduction, transmission, and spread of COVID-19. Most importantly, it would slow the spread of COVID-19
- ▶ **Saving lives:** Ethically, the reason to contain the spread is to protect health and save lives. It could be argued that a country's first duty is to keep its own people safe.
- ▶ Johan Rawls in his book "The Law of Peoples" while discussing international morality said that state should have the right to self-defence and in this case banning the flight is actually a self-defence measure against the unknown variant.
- ▶ **Time to reformulate vaccines:** A travel ban gives scientists more time to assess how well existing vaccines fare against new variants, and to begin reformulating vaccines if needed.

■ Arguments against travel ban

- ▶ **De-motivate countries to share information:** Travel bans could backfire if they are seen as punitive, and could make countries less likely to share information about new variants.
- ▶ **Making sole accountable:** Travel bans could the country a scapegoat for a “worldwide problem”.
- ▶ **Attack on solidarity:** Targeting the countries with travel bans “attacks global solidarity”.
- ▶ **Disparity in vaccination:** Travel bans and vaccine rules also raise equity concerns, given the dramatic disparity in vaccination rates across the globe. Travel restrictions disproportionately impact people from low-income nations where few vaccines are available.
- ▶ **Partial responsibility:** Equity concerns are intensified by wealthy nations’ partial responsibility for poorer nations’ difficulty accessing vaccines.
- ▶ Early in the pandemic, rich countries struck advance market agreements and secured as much as 500% of their predicted vaccine need, exacerbating global vaccine scarcity and bidding up prices.

Assessing the role of ‘transparency’ in Pandemic: Ethical responsibilities of reporting countries:

■ Towards the international community:

- ▶ **Global safety:** It becomes unethical on part of countries to suppress the information just thinking about the reactionary response of other nation states.
- ▶ **Impact on travel and business:** The decision by governments to report the variant of Covid-19 instantly and transparently might prima facie seem as a bad one for their own good. As the travel bans and restrictions imposed by other nations will not only affect the air travel but also the business transaction of the country at large.
- ▶ **Securing trust:** But actually maintaining transparency in times of pandemic is even more crucial to bolster the country against an uncertain future. It also maintains and secures stakeholder trust.

Towards its own citizens:

- **Earning people’s trust:** Transparency also comes with accountability not only for international community but also for its citizens. If the country proactively shares the information it will not only increase trust by its own people but of international community.
- **Protection:** The transparent and timely sharing of information with the public, on both a proactive and reactive basis, is crucial for protecting public health.
- **Better policy and decisions:** It would improve policy and-decision-making.
- **Greater good for all:** The ethical doctrine of greater good for greater number of people also justifies the action.
- **Long-term benefits:** It will help in long term not only in international relations but also in garnering business opportunities. Hence, in long term this transparency of countries will garner more business, cordial international relations and also increase international standing of these reporting nations.

Ethical responsibilities of countries imposing travel ban:

■ Towards reporting countries:

- ▶ **Against international morality:** It might seem that imposing travel ban on countries which transparently and proactively reported new variant is a harsh treatment. It even seems to be against international morality.

- ▶ The tenet of international morality is quite aptly described in **United Nations charter**.
- ▶ It underlines that succeeding generation shall be protected from scourge of war or similar situations by international cooperation in solving various problems. This is one such challenge which requires cooperation and understanding of all.

Towards its citizens:

- The UN charter though outlining concept of international morality keep its focus on fundamental human right and right to life is fundamental to any citizen.
- Thus, a country imposing proactive bans to protect its citizens is an ethical and just measure even if it causes some loss of finance or creates some friction in international relations.

Conclusion

- The countries imposing travel ban can access the situation judiciously and decide to allow at some airports bubble flight for emergency services. They can strengthen their own health infrastructure at airports for testing arriving passengers. Even the international community can help these reporting countries financially as a good gesture to overcome the loss meted out in this period.

Ethics of Boycott

Context

- US announced a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. As per USA, these games could not be treated as such because of China's human rights abuses and atrocities in Xinjiang against the Uyghur population and the other religious and ethnic minority groups.

Analysis

The Ethics of Boycotts

- **A boycott:** is an attempt to persuade other people to have nothing to do with some particular person or firm either socially or in agreeing not to purchase the firm's product.
- **Morally:** a boycott may be used for absurd, reprehensible, laudatory, or neutral goals.
- **Voluntary:** The important thing about the boycott is that it is purely voluntary; an act of attempted persuasion, and therefore that it is a perfectly legal and licit instrument of action.
- **Values:** a boycott may well diminish a firm's customers and therefore cut into its property values, but such an act is still a legitimate exercise of free speech and property rights.
- **Immoral:** The boycott is a device that can be used by people who wish to take action against those who engage in activities that we consider licit but which they consider immoral.

Boycotts Can't Be a Test of Moral Purity

- **Cutting ties:** For some people, when they hear about some bad practices, their first reaction is to consider cutting ties.
- **Wrong belief:** If someone is not strong enough to boycott, they lack standing to object to the behavior of lawmakers and petition them for change.
- **Guilt:** gets in the way of protest, and complicated chains of self-justification take the place of simple chains of democratic demand.

Are boycotts successful?

- **Few changes:** Very few boycotts have led to changes. Most boycotts lack a sustained effort and people lose interest or stop paying attention.
- **Media attention:** most boycotts achieve the more modest goal of attracting media attention.
- **Boycotts are rarely the precipitating factor for change:** Rather, they bring attention to an issue and signal the magnitude and intensity with which a group feels a particular way.
- In most cases, a small minority of people call for a boycott that the wider community fails to support by taking substantive action.
- **Penalize sportsmen and women:** An international consensus seems to have emerged that sweeping boycotts that include athletes are ineffective and serve only to penalize sportsmen and women.
- **Risk of reprisals:** While boycotts may not change policy, they do run the risk of reprisals.

Issues

- **Power struggle:** It is a reminder of the current state of ties between the world's two biggest powers, which have clashed over trade, Taiwan and the South China Sea among other issues.
- **Clash of values:** What has complicated that task is a growing clash of values, with ideological differences adding another element to a relationship already in trouble over trade and geopolitical leverage.

Conclusion

- Unfortunately, not all boycotts fit the ethical mould, and often they are founded on illogical premises or myopic hatred for others.

Political Patronage of Bureaucrats and Ethics in Public Life

Context

- The proposed model of lateral entry of joint secretary doesn't inspire confidence about its fairness and transparency and is open to serious abuse, more so since the recruitments will not be done by UPSC but by DOPT or the departments concerned. It fails when evaluated on the touchstone of legality, fairness, transparency, objectivity, and bona fides.

Analysis

What is Political patronage?

- Political patronage is the appointment or hiring of a person to a government post based on partisan loyalty. Elected officials at the national, state, and local levels of government use such appointments to reward the people who help them win and maintain an office.

Ethical concerns

- In each government service, there are various factions based on language, religion, caste, and region. To gain promotion and perks for their faction, they'd bend to the wills of politicians.

- There will be more secrecy in official functioning. As a result, there develops nexus between the political executive and civil servants to fulfill their illegitimate gratifications.
- Due to the lack of an independent board, civil servants align with one or the other political party to get their favorite postings and other perks.
- Transfers have been used as instruments of reward and punishment, as tools for controlling and taming the bureaucracy and there is no transparency.
- Some civil servants are deeply involved in partisan politics: they are preoccupied with it, penetrated by it, and now participate individually and collectively in it.
- As a civil servant, one has the responsibility towards the public and must adhere to constitutional principles. His primary job is to perform Nishkama Karma (selfless and desire less duty). Over the years, virtues of officers are showing signs of decay.

Ethical Principles in Public life

- **Rule of law** –This brings consistency and predictability to the conduct of civil servants. For example, Civil servants are expected to honor the due process of law concerning investigation, inquiry, and arrest in criminal cases. They should restrain from torturing accused and encounter killings.
- **Fairness & Justice** –This directs politicians and civil servants to frame a policy framework to accommodate all sections of society based on the Principle of Equity. For instance, Affirmative Actions (Provisions of Reservation) for weaker sections have been incorporated through various legislations.
- **Transparency and Accountability** – Public relationships require transparency and accountability in order fairness in public dealings and increase public confidence.
- **Honesty, integrity, and Probity** – These values direct a civil servant to show the highest standards of moral behavior while engaging with the public at large. For instance, Mere non-involvement in coercive and collusive corruption (Honesty and Integrity) is not enough but civil servants are expected to expose and fight corruption (Whistleblowing) till the end (Probity).
- **Impartiality and Non-Partisanship** – This helps civil servants to restrain from personal biases, engaging in nepotism or potential conflict of interest situations. For instance, In JantaDarbar (Public hearings) organized by various Chief Ministers, every citizen is allowed to raise their grievances without any preferential to the minimum
- **The minimum level of Courtesy** – It is highly important in the official conduct of civil servants. This induces a sense of belongingness among the common masses. For instance, Prashanth Nair's (IAS) style of engaging with the public at large earned him the title of 'Collector bro'.
- **Spirit of service** – This is closer to serving the purpose of service. Civil servants are expected to go beyond the call of duty to serve the public interest. This has dual benefits – inner satisfaction to the person concerned and inspiration for his colleagues to fulfill the service goals.
- One of the most comprehensive statements of what constitutes principles of public life came from the Nolan Committee, which outlined the following seven principles of public life Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership.

Conclusion

- Thus it can be established that principles of public life are important for every democracy. Guidelines of public behavior arising from such principles can play a crucial role in creating trust between the public functionaries and the common public. Therefore any person who is privileged to guide the destiny of the people must not only be ethical but must be seen to practice these principles of public life.

Opinion Poll & Ethical Issues

Context

- Opinion Polls are the highlight of modern day elections of every thriving democracy, often extrapolated and extended they have the potential to influence voting behaviour and here lies the problem. Hence, raising a pertinent point about ethics of free and fair elections. During the election times, opinion polls are stimulating considerable debate among the voters, politicians and the media. Since this exercise has become more of a ritual, it is required to connect such polling directly to **morality** and democratic processes.

Analysis

How opinion polls interfere with 'free and fair elections'?

- Paid agenda:** Today, "paid news" are very common action, therefore, it is highly possible that some opinion polls may be sponsored, motivated and biased.
- Undue influence:** Opinion polls directly affect the sanctity and integrity of the electoral process. They are able to influence electoral behaviour and distort electoral outcomes.
- Disinformation:** Almost all polls are non-transparent, providing little information on the methodology. It is a "corrupt practice" under Section 123 (2) of the RP Act.
- Suspicious affair:** A survey getting some elections right is not proof of its credibility or robustness.
- Bandwagon effect:** The bandwagon effect claims that voters "jump on the bandwagon," which means that if a party is gaining in the polls, the party will gain additional support from the voters, and vice versa if the party is losing in the polls.

Case Study

- Cambridge Analytica scandal:** Once at the centre of a global storm for allegedly manipulating elections in the US and other countries. It does hold the rather dubious distinction of being synonymous with misuse of personal data and harvesting data from online firms.
- Austria's Sebastian Kurz scandal:** Austria's conservative Chancellor was charged with orchestrating fake surveys and bribing the news media to show them as genuine opinion polls.

Point for opposition to the ban

- Freedom of speech and expression:** The opposition to the ban in India is mainly on the ground that freedom of speech and expression is granted by the Constitution (Article 19).
- A 'must' in modern democracy:** It is needed to be recognised that systematic collection of public opinion is a must in modern democracies. Since elections are not a private act, citizens wish to, and need to, know how others are making up their mind.
- Affecting morale:** More than the voters, opinion poll-based forecasts do affect the morale of party workers and supporters. This makes a big difference during the campaign.

What would be the most appropriate and efficacious intervention?

- Effective alternative method:** Efforts are required to explore alternatives to a ban, alternatives that have been successfully used all over the world.
- Regulatory framework:** What we need is a regulatory framework for election-related opinion poll — comprising a code of conduct, mandatory disclosures and independent inquiry — to be enforced by an independent agency. Every election-related poll, or any opinion poll for that matter, must be required to make the following disclosures:

- ▶ the ownership and track record of the organisation carrying out the survey, details of the sponsor
- ▶ sampling frame, sample size and the exact technique used to draw the sample; the social profile of the achieved sample
- ▶ where, when and how were the interviews conducted
- ▶ the exact wording of the question and sequence of questions asked
- ▶ raw vote shares reported in the survey and how they were converted into vote estimates and seats forecast.

Conclusion

- Opinion polls do not just reflect the opinions of people but influence them to create an aura of winnability. Analyzing vulnerability of voters to such influence, there is a crying need to regulate this danger and protect the sanctity of India's democracy. Once in place, such a mechanism would help the public tell the difference between a genuine and rogue poll and incentivise transparent practices. That would be a significant step forward in democratic public culture. After all, public opinion polling is too valuable and consequential to be left to politicians, or pollsters.

Constitutionality and Morality of Abortion

Context

- The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) has privately voted to strike down the constitutional right to abortion. Access to health services and the right to make a decision about managing the pregnancy or obtaining an abortion has a lot to do with individual rights. So, it becomes relevant to unearth the Abortion Ethics, which often gets ignored or subjected to misinterpretations.

Analysis

Indian Provision in Abortion Right

- **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021:** in the year 1971, Indian legislators had passed the law, 'Medical Termination Pregnancy Act' to regulate the procedure of termination of Pregnancy. Recently, Government of India has passed an amendment act to the
- **K S Puttuswami v/s Union of India:** In the landmark judgment in KS Puttaswamy v Union of India, the Supreme Court recognised women's constitutional right to make reproductive choices and the right to "abstain from procreating" was read into the **right to privacy, dignity and bodily autonomy**.

Arguments in favour of Abortion:

- A female is considered a moral person, that is entitled to rights, including the right to life. So, abortion is deemed acceptable as the foetus is not a person. **A list of criteria of personhood is identified, which includes consciousness, reasoning, activity, communication and self-awareness. A foetus undeniably is incapable of fulfilling these criteria.**
- The mother has a right to life and it supersedes the rights of the foetus to choose whether or not it remains connected to her body.
- Also, pregnancy is assumed to be a foreseeable consequence of heterosexual intercourse, that too when there is no intention to 'have a baby'. So, denying her the right to abort the child when she was not planning for it is unwarranted.

- **Abortion in self-defence:** It may be ethical for a mother to have an abortion to defend herself from the danger to her mental or physical health than continuing with the pregnancy would cause. Abortion is considered in relation to the '**Doctrine of double effect**'.
- **The doctrine of double effect:** The doctrine says that if performing something morally good has a morally bad side-effect it's ethically righteous behaviour to do it provided the bad side-effect wasn't foreseeable.

Arguments Against abortion:

- '**Future like ours**' argument: Abortion is wrong because it deprives the foetus of a potential 'future like ours' such as the experiences, enjoyments, opportunities that would make up their future personal life. So, the foetus has an intrinsic potential future value and killing a foetus is wrong as killing an adult is wrong.
- **Killing people is wrong:** Killing an innocent human being is a moral wrong. Those who are against abortions believe that human life begins at conception, and by drawing the same analogy, the foetus is an innocent human being.

It's her right whether to bring the pregnancy to term or abort it:

- Abortion concerns the autonomy and dignity of the pregnant woman herself. "Autonomy" derives from Greek and means, literally, "self-rule". If a woman who is pregnant wishes to stop being pregnant, it cannot be taken away from hers.
- Attitudes to pregnancy are, however, intertwined with how society views sex, women, and the fertile woman specifically. Pregnancy and birth are not trivial inconveniences, such as having a headache. They constitute a major life event, which even when are desired causes immense discomfort and disruption to many women.
- While pregnancy increases the personal responsibilities of a woman it does not plummet her prerogative to decide whether or not to undergo medical treatment. **Her right is not diminished merely because her decision to exercise it may appear morally contrary to the existing or imposed beliefs of the society.**

Conclusion

- The decision of whether or not to bear a child is central to a woman's life, to her well-being and dignity. She ought to be the one deciding it for herself. When Government superintends that decision for her, she is being treated as less than a fully adult human accountable for her own choices. Criminalising abortions do not stop abortions; it just makes them more unsafe.

Panopticonism & the Ethics of Technological Surveillance

Context

- In today's digitalised world, panopticism is getting used as a metaphor to define "**technological surveillance.**" The present-day CCTV camera is a candid example of how the theory works with people being cautious about how they behave irrespective of whether the camera is functional or not.

Analysis

Understanding Panopticonism

- Panopticonism was a theory introduced by Michel Foucault in one of his most influential books, "**Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison**". It is a concept that explains a new model of surveillance in society.
- Elaborated by **Jeremy Bentham**, the panopticon was a circular building with cells built into its circular walls with an observational tower at the centre.
 - ▶ A guard could observe every move of all the prisoners from the observational tower.
 - ▶ The prisoners, in turn, could see the tower but could not see anything inside it on account of the difference in height as well as the shutters and blinds.
 - ▶ The ambiguity about whether or not they were being observed forced the prisoners to conduct themselves inside their cells with the assumption that the guards could be observing them at any point in time.
- This was the perfect idea for a prison, according to Bentham, as it was visible yet unverifiable. He believed that the fear of constant surveillance could help bring order and discipline, alter and reform groups and preserve morals inside the four walls of the prison.

Ethical Concerns of Technological Surveillance

- Since power is exercised over us and our decision-making is invisible and unverifiable we do not explicitly feel being violated.
- While downloading an app, or giving acceptance to certain access on our phone we do not analyse the consequences of it.
- As our human mind is conditioned to focus on results and to maximise desires, we tend to ignore threats that are certainly looming over us all the time.
- Data is controlling our search optimisation techniques.

USA case Study:

- After the infamous revelation of the surveillance system of United States investigative agencies by the whistleblower Edward Snowden, people and scholars started to identify the ethical issues surrounding privacy, big data, and Governance.
- Further, after the US Presidential elections in 2016, this concern was alleviated by a controversy. Scholars have termed this kind of technology as persuasive technology. Digital panopticism is controlling and changing our behavioural patterns.
- Russian hackers targeted US voter rolls in several states as part of the Kremlin's broader efforts to undermine the integrity of the 2016 elections.

Chinese Case Study: China's surveillance is particularly suffocating in Xinjiang, where the authorities use mobile apps, biometric collection, artificial intelligence, and big data, among other means, to control 13 million Turkic Muslims.

India's Case Study: Recently, a list of persons allegedly targeted by Pegasus spyware was released. The list includes over 1,000 Indians, including at least 40 journalists, and several members of Parliament. It said the Indian government used it to spy on around 300 people between 2017 and 2019.

Response to Technological Surveillance

- Many countries have now adopted digital media codes or rules and regulations to restrict the misuse of the data collected by various online platforms.

- In India, the recent Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 is also laid down on similar lines. The government has described these rules as a soft-touch self-regulatory mechanism.
- All media platforms will have to set up a grievances redressal and compliance mechanism.
- Platforms have to submit monthly reports on complaints received from users and actions taken.
- Finally, instant messaging apps will have to make provisions for tracking the first originator of a message in case it is asked by legitimate authorities.
- Human dignity and the right to privacy under Fundamental Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) must guide the policies and actions of various entities. Values such as autonomy, equal power relationships, and control over technology are not explicitly named in the treaties but can be seen as part of following these fundamental and human rights.

Conclusion

- Not only are existing protections weak but the proposed legislation related to the personal data protection of Indian citizens fails to consider surveillance while also providing wide exemptions to government authorities. In order to satisfy the ideal of due process of law, there needs to be an oversight from another branch of the government. As surveillance spyware becomes more affordable and interception becomes more efficient, there will no longer be a need to shortlist individuals. Everyone will be potentially subject to state-sponsored mass surveillance. The only solution is immediate and far-reaching surveillance reform.

‘Rule of Bulldozer’: Threat to principle of natural justice

Context

- The recent demolition of houses in backdrop of communal clashes the raises question of principles of natural justice in the light of administrative law, incorporating the basic principle of fairness, and the right to be heard.

Analysis

Principle of Natural Justice

- It involves a procedural requirement of fairness. The principles of natural justice should be **free from bias** and parties should be given a fair opportunity to be heard.

Three principles of natural justice have been recognized

- Rule against bias (No man shall be a judge in his own cause). This principle is more popularly known as the *Doctrine of Bias*.
- Rule of fair hearing (hear the other side).
- Judges must **act judicially** and decide the case **without considering anything other than the principles of evidence**.

Justifying the Demolitions:

- **Violate scope of Criminal Law:** Neither the Parliament nor any State Legislative Assemblies, allow the demolition of property of those accused of being involved in riots and damage to public/private property.

- In a 2009, the Supreme Court judgment had noted that since there was no law to recover damages for losses caused by violence, the high courts can take cognisance of such incidents of mass damage to public property on their own and set up a machinery to investigate and award compensation.
- Resorting to the **destruction of the properties** of alleged wrongdoers by means of **bulldozing** is clearly **against our constitutional ethos** and the criminal justice system, as also in **violation of the rights of accused persons**.
- **Law violates freedom of expression: Impartial implementation of laws** not only violates the fundamental rights enshrined in **Article 19** of the Constitution of **freedom of expression**.
- **Violation of the Right to Property: Article 300A**, which was added to the Constitution after the repeal of Article 19(1)(f), says: **“No person shall be deprived of his property save by authority of law.”**

Conclusion

- The contentious practise of using bulldozers to pull down residential and commercial properties of persons “suspected” goes against the spirit of impartial justice and results in irreparable harm to the residents of the area. It is important that the court should send a message indicating that the rule of law firmly prevails in India.
