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ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

Accountability in Government

Accountability mechanisms in functioning of the State has been engaging attention of the civil society, academicians and lawmakers in general and international financial institutions and donors in particular.

What is 'accountability'?

- Accountability refers to the process as well as norms that make decision maker answerable to ones for whom decisions are taken i.e. the decisions are taken i.e. the decision maker and the beneficiary.
- It is not limited to accountability to seniors in hierarchy only as part of chain of command but also the stakeholders including citizens and civil society. It may stem out of legal requirement or may be determined by moral and ethical framework of the organisation.
- Accountability has an answerability component to justify the action and an enforcement component that is to take action in cases where act of omission or commission is established. It provides for remedial measures including punishments in case of deviations from norms.
- Accountability helps in improving public confidence in government performance. Accountability mechanism certainly encourages responsible governance. It facilitates a feedback mechanism between the Government and its citizens.
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- There is external accountability that is between the Government and the citizens which is established through the elections. Internal accountability mechanisms refer to systems of checks and balances and oversight mechanism.

Types of accountability -

The accountability could be financial, administrative, legal or professional. The basic questions that are required to be addressed are -

1. Who is accountable to whom?
2. And for what?

Who is accountable to whom?

- Aristotle wrote, "*Some officials handle large sums of money: it is therefore necessary to have other officials to receive and examine the accounts.*"
- First and foremost, stakeholder in any case would be the citizens. The citizens are the tax payers. They have a right to know how the money paid by them has been expended by the Government. Was it used for appropriate purposes and efficiently? Did it benefit the target group? What were the outcomes? Did the government functionaries entrusted with the collection of taxes and implementing the schemes of the government follow the prescribed norms?

Accountability for what?

- Accountability is essentially an obligation to give an account of the actions taken or the decisions made by the person in authority to the stakeholders who are impacted by those decisions. While on one hand, it necessitates transparency in decision-making on the other end it also presupposes that the accurate and reliable information and data is maintained by the government agency and is available in public domain for public scrutiny.
- The government functionaries are expected to take decisions within the administrative framework provided for the same in the form of General Financial Rules (GFR), Delegation of Financial Power Rules (DFPR), Manual of Purchase of Goods and Services etc.
- A weak administrative framework would lead to weak accountability mechanism.
- The Right to Information Act, 2004 has introduced a huge element of transparency in the decision-making in the government as well as access to information. Similarly, digitisation of various services to the citizens has not only facilitated faster delivery of services but also provided a clear trail of transactions for any analysis by an oversight agency.

- The Citizen's Charter also clearly spelt out the responsibilities of various agencies of the government. By laying down the timelines for rendering the specific services they proactively make themselves accountable to the citizens.

The Institutional Mechanism -

- Existence of strong and independent accountability institutions is a necessary condition for good governance. These institutions can detect the violations and deviations from prescribed norms as well as the instances of poor administration. They can indicate the abuse of power and unconstitutional conduct.
- The institutional mechanisms in context of the Government to ensure accountability may emanate out of Constitutional provisions. Legislative Framework and administrative arrangements.
- The institutions of horizontal accountability in Indian context include the institutions of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the Election Commission, the Vigilance Commission, the Central Information Commission and the Ombudsman.
- In addition, there are a large number of Regulatory Bodies including SEBI, TRAI, CERC, CPCB etc. While the institutions of CAG and Election Commission derive their mandate from the respective Acts governing them.

Way forward -

- Accountability is a necessary condition for good governance though not necessarily a sufficient condition. It is governed by the principles of democratic traditions and moral and ethical values of the society as well as legal and regulatory and administrative framework.
- Of course, responsibilities must be fixed for violation of norms, deviation from processes etc., and acts of deliberate omission and commission should not go unnoticed and unpunished. However, the focus should be on identification of systemic errors/failures and suggesting improvements thereof.
- The accountability mechanisms also need to keep pace with developments of modern government structures particularly in the era of digitisation.
- There is also a need to sensitise the functionaries towards their responsibilities and duties in context of the accountability frameworks. For better transparency, not only there should be a Citizen's Charter but also well-defined Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for performing a job. Element of discretion needs to be minimised for ensuring responsiveness, transparency and accountability.

Fighting Corruption

In order to ensure right and good governance, it is necessary for the government to be **open, accountable, accessible, transparent, sensitive, fair and proactive**. A government that is not fair, sensitive and transparent is bound to be prone to corruption. Unfortunately, our track record in India is ensuring such corruption-free governance cannot be said to be satisfactory.

According to the **fourth report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission** on "**Ethics in Governance**", "*corruption is an important manifestation of the failure of the ethics and values systems in society.*" It would therefore imply that unless proper values are nurtured and encouraged nothing much can be done to improve the conduct of human beings in public administration.

What is 'corruption'?

- Corruption is commonly defined as **misuse of public office for private gains**. It can be either political or administrative. Public expenditure of enormous proportions in emerging democracies to fight poverty, illiteracy, poor public health and lack of infrastructure provides a grand opportunity for both politicians and civil servants to indulge in corruption.
- The **failure of executive machinery** in ensuring good quality public administration is mainly because of a feudal approach and excessive governmentalisation of public activities.
- The second factor contributing to corruption thriving in the country is the **over centralised administrative system** both at the Centre and the States. The main reason for this archaic and outdated administrative system is partly due to the colonial legacy and also due to inadequate leadership in assuring new administrative system. There is, and the rules so as to decentralise decision-making with proper monitoring checks and balances.

Impact -

- The public anger against misgovernance in the delivery of public services gets accentuated when government is insensitive to public grievances.
- The widespread public protest against lack of performance in public administration also contributes to violence and hatred between the people and the government.

Solution -

- One important step could be to **decentralise powers** - financial and administrative - in favour of local self-government so that people are not forced to go from pillar to post for redressal of grievances. The distribution of powers should start from the State government level to district and village government levels. It is worthwhile to refer to the success stories in Surat where the local government was able to raise funds locally for meeting developmental activities within the district. Similarly, a Panchayat in Coimbatore district (Tamil Nadu) was able to raise funds by generating wind energy to meet the needs of the village and to distribute the surplus for others.
- **Reducing the manpower in government offices** by outsourcing important public services with adequate checks and effective monitoring, will no doubt go a long way to improve the quality of delivery of public services. The surplus officials as a result of this measure will have to be absorbed within the government against future vacancies and without any retrenchment so as to take care of human problems arising out of such measures.
- The **working** of the government both at the Centre and the State **needs to be made time-bound** by insisting that every public grievance received should be dealt with within a time frame of say one month.
- Another important field requiring urgent action is "**top-level police administration**". Lack of impartiality on the part of enforcement agencies such as police and other regulatory authorities has also contributed to widespread corruption. The Supreme Court has already given guidelines to various state governments to implement police reforms especially in the field of training, posting and transfers in order to delink political influence in police administrative matters. This should be implemented without any further delay to ensure effective law and order administration.

Information Sharing in Government

To fulfil its multifarious responsibilities in efficient and effective manner, the Government needs to function collaboratively with all the stakeholders.

U-DISE -

- Governments have been aware of the need for information sharing and transparency to deliver on good governance. **Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE)**, for instance, is a 'government-led education management information system' on key school-level indicators.
- It generates report cards on each school every year and also publishes district and state-level data.
- The vision behind introduction of the system was 'to improve learning outcomes and enhance the capacity of stakeholders to use information as a tool for demanding accountability.'

Recent experiments -

- Recently, during COVID-19 pandemic, **the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), took the decision to set up a control room.** The purpose was real time monitoring of the status of (i) manufacturing, transportation and delivery of essential commodities to common man, and (ii) the difficulties being faced by various stakeholders in the business ecosystem during the lockdown period. The goal was to resolve these difficulties through coordination with state governments and ministries.
- Further, this information was shared with concerned Ministries and States for resolution of the issues and ensure smooth supply of essentials. To maintain quality of services, a system to monitor actual resolution on-ground was also added, through daily feedback calls to complainants/requestors and further understand whether redressal had taken place. The control room's proactive response and real-time feedback monitoring ensured a resolution rate of 73% of all queries logged in.

- At the same time, **Invest India** (India's investment facilitation national agency working with DPIIT), established a **Business Immunity Platform**, designed as a comprehensive resource to help businesses and investors get real-time updates on India's response to COVID-19. This dynamic platform maintained a regular pulse on developments in the control of the virus, provided the latest information on various central and state government initiatives, gave access to special provisions and resolved business-related queries through emails and mobile messaging platforms.
- Another powerful tool for information sharing and promoting transparency in governance in India has been **the Right to Information (RTI) Act**. It aims to underline a practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority.

Technology-led transparency -

- The **Champions of Change** platform (CoC 2.0) for aspirational districts has been introduced by NITI Aayog to 'enhance functionality of automated data-quality reports, which would enable the District Magistrate/District Collectors to take corrective action, wherever required.
- Taking resort to 49 key performance indicators (81 data points) that have been identified in a consultative manner with the Ministries (across sectors of focus), a ranking of districts has been evolved. This ranking is 'dynamic and reflects the incremental (delta) improvement made month on month; the portal provides real-time monitoring and ranking of districts.
- Similarly, the Government proposed to enact **Electronic Delivery of Services (EDS) Bill** to make it mandatory for every government organisation to deliver public services in electronic mode after a certain cut-off date. This would require each Ministry/Department to identify the list of citizen-centric services to be delivered through electronic means along with the delivery channels, stipulated timelines, and service levels.
- **Digitisation of land records** - Drawing inspiration from the States, Karnataka government's **Bhoomi Programme** used information technology to provide farmers with land documents. The land records were computerised, enabling farmers to get their land records quickly from kiosks. Land record acts as a proof of land property or lease and, therefore, this intervention of information sharing on land records in Karnataka ensures that farmers do not face any issues.
- **TSBPASS** - Similarly, the Telangana Municipal Act 2019 aims at sweeping reforms aimed at transparency and cutting down on physical touch points with regulatory authorities to facilitate building and layout approvals, property tax assessment, self-declaration-based 100 percent online time-bound building permission system, called the Telangana State Building Project Approvals System based on Self-Certification (TSBPASS). This promises to bring instant approvals for up to 600 sq yards, and within 21 days for plot size beyond and for layout approvals.

Conclusion -

To conclude sharing of information among all the stakeholders in government functioning is widely recognised to be a leading practice towards good governance. This brings further effectiveness and efficiency into the process. The critical factors for such sharing and transparency are as follows -

1. **Regularity** - Sharing the information at stages of planning, formulation, implementation and monitoring, and giving updates at pre-decided intervals is one of the critical factors.
2. **Stakeholder centric** - The exact message, format, language, medium and regularity needs to be decided based on the stakeholder.
3. **Monitoring and evaluation** - Constant monitoring of the government's initiatives, evaluation of the success/failure against the set objectives and communicating the same with all the stakeholders is of utmost importance to bring trust and transparency.

As a way forward, a nodal Ministry may be identified to issue necessary guidelines in this regard, and build capacities of the various central Ministries as well as of the state governments to undertake such communication with various stakeholders.

The Rule of Law

Law is not autonomous, it is deeply embedded within society and reflects the values of society. Society influences law, for law is but a reflection of the society it governs. Social control and

social change are the ultimate functions of law in society. It establishes peace, order, justice and equality.

Law is a powerful instrument for change. Law and legal institutions are important tools for improving functioning of institutions, enhancing growth, social and economic development and delivering justice in society.

Role of law in governance -

- In modern states, law serves three critical governance roles -
 1. First, it is through law and legal institutions that states seek to **order the behaviour of individuals and organisations**; so that economic and social policies are converted into outcomes.
 2. Second, law defines the structure of government by **ordering power** - that is, establishing and distributing authority and power among government actors and between the state and citizens.
 3. Third, Law also serves to **order contestation** by providing the substantive and procedural tools needed to promote accountability, resolve disputes peacefully, and change the rules.
- The relationship between **law, governance and development** contributes significantly to promotion of **social and individual well-being**.
- The rule of law is one of the **essential requirements of good and ethical governance**. It requires that government officials and citizens be equally subject to the law of the land and act consistently with the law.
- One of the prerequisites of the rule of law is **fair legal framework** that is enforced impartially and particularly full protection of human rights, especially of the vulnerable sections of the society.
- The **factor of transparency** also requires that information is freely available and the decisions are taken or enforced in a manner that adheres to the rules and regulations.
- Laws, rules and regulations have an important role in the governance system. By law, the democratic society can manifest itself so as to **protect the state values, the fundamental rights and freedom of citizens**.

Significance of law -

- The legal framework in a country is as vital for economic development as for political and social development. The legal framework also affects the lives of the poor and, as such, has become an important dimension of strategies for poverty alleviation. In the struggle against discrimination, in the protection of the socially weak, and in the distribution of opportunities in society, the law can make an important contribution to a just and equitable society and thus to prospects for social development and poverty alleviation.
- To achieve the deterrence effect of law, there is a need for proper compliance of law, for which the state needs effective administrative and law enforcement institutions. Finally, the sanction for violating the law must leave the perpetrator worse off than any benefits.

Constitution of India -

Constitution of India is the supreme law of the land and above all governmental actions. It envisages the principles of welfarism and moral governance. The Constitution of India enshrines - social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity, and before the law, freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality and to provide safeguards for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes. These are the basic principles to attain good governance. In addition, the Constitution provides for a system of checks and balances between the organs of the state.

Good governance -

Good governance implies an administration that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people. It includes strict rules of accountability, Rulers must be strictly bound by generally accepted norms and controlled by institutions to enforce those norms.

Conclusion -

Law is, thus, the instrumental way which groups and individuals in society use as a means of promoting, enforcing and protecting rights and interests. Effective legal system and institutions

are, therefore, needed to produce government that is legitimate, effective, and widely supported by citizens.

Ethics in Journalism

While recognising that the newspaper is a great power, Mahatma Gandhi - himself a great journalist and editor, was very clear about the objectives of journalism and why it shouldn't be 'an unchained torrent of water'. With this view, he was articulating the idea of 'social responsibility of journalism'. This simply put, means that journalism must be socially responsible, serve the people with devotion, and educate them while avoiding sensationalism, distortion and manipulation of facts in the news reports, and not compromise with ethical standards of journalism for profit.

Media freedom and responsibility -

- Napoleon Bonaparte had once famously said, "*Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.*"
- But this influence and power comes with great responsibility. In case of news media and journalism, it is far more important and crucial to **be responsible to the society and public whom it claims to be serving**. Since its credibility, reputation and respect is derived entirely from citizens, it becomes doubly important for it to be socially responsible.
- News media must also **follow the principles and norms of journalism and be transparent** and accountable for its reportage, commentary and overall functioning.
- Like other public-facing professions, journalism too has also evolved with **a set of ethical principles, standards and norms** for fulfilling its social responsibility.
- Journalistic ethics are basically **a set of principles, standards, guidelines and code of conduct prepared for professional journalists**. It deals with conduct, character and behaviour of a journalist and how s/he works before, during and after the news gathering and dissemination process.
- It is true that journalistic ethics are **non-mandatory principles and it is the news media outlet's voluntarily decision to adopt them**. But given the non-mandatory and voluntarily nature of journalistic ethics, there are always complaints of violation by journalists and news media outlets.

Background of media regulation -

- Since the days of '**Yellow Journalism**' and perhaps even before that, in the late 19th and early 20th century, many leading newspapers in the US were brazenly partisan, biased, sensational, intrusive, propagandists, manipulating and distorting the facts, passing off rumours as news, exaggerating stories and utter disregard for facts to fabricate news stories.
- Newspapers were riddled with sensational crime stories with exaggerated headlines, pictures and sketches. There was cut-throat competition and a mad rush to attract more readers and maximising the profits for newspapers owners. But this was also polluting the democratic discourse, distorting the public opinion, impairing the citizens' right to know and thus negatively affecting their democratic choices and decisions.
- Since quality of information and the public discourse based on it directly reflects the quality and health of a democracy, concerns were raised by civil society members, including writers, intellectuals as well as editors and journalists themselves about the negative impacts of "Yellow Journalism". Slowly, a concerted campaign started in the US and many other countries in the early 20th century to bring in ethics and principles with a set of guidelines and code of conduct for news media and journalists.
- In the US, for the first time, in 1922, **the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE)** adopted a set of ethical principles titled 'Canons of Journalism', which was later revised and renamed 'Statement of Principles' in 1975.
- **The ASNE proposed six key principles - *Responsibility, Freedom of the Press, Independence, Truth and Accuracy, Impartiality and Fair Play***. These principles were devised to professionalise the news media and journalism and to set it to ethical standards to monitoring and evaluating the journalistic work and its contents.
- The ASNE's '**Statement of Principles**' under Article-1 - Responsibility elaborates on this: "The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinions is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgements on the issues of the time.

Newspapermen and women who abuse the power of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust.

- Another landmark intervention came in 1940s when **Hutchins Commission in the US** (Commission on the Freedom of the Press led by Robert Hutchins, President of the University of Chicago) articulated in its report the principle of 'Social Responsibility of the Press'. This Commission was established to review the functioning of the press and the impact of media ownership on its content. The Commission reiterated that while the freedom of press is paramount, it also has a moral obligation to consider the well-being of the general public when making its decisions and choices.
- The Hutchins Commission report not only reaffirmed and expanded then existing norms but also provided a strong philosophical basis for adopting these ethical norms and standards for improving the quality of news media and journalism.

Issues in India -

One can regularly observe instances of violation of ethical norms and principles; from indulging in Paid News, spreading Fake News, engaging sensationalism and exaggerating trivial stories, running misleading headlines, breach of privacy, distortion of facts, openly taking sides and bias in reporting. Besides this, many mainstream news media outlets and their journalists are found to be engaging in one-sided media trial, lobbying for personal gains, blackmailing, manipulating news stories, engaging in malicious and defamatory reporting, running propaganda and disinformation campaigns.

What did India do?

- The **Press Council of India (PCI)**, a **statutory and quasi-judicial body**, was established by an Act of Parliament. It functions as a "*watchdog of the press, for the press and by the press*". Its two broad objectives are - safeguarding the freedom of the press and to improve its quality and standards. It works on the premise of self-regulation of print media but has no punitive powers. It can only censure, warn or ask newspapers to issue apologies and corrections.
- A similar but **non-governmental body**, the **News Broadcasting Standard Authority (NBSA)** oversees the news channels. This was established by an industry body, News Broadcasters Association (NBA). It has also issued a crisp "Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards" for its member news channels who have voluntarily pledged to follow it. Like the PCI, the NBSA too is headed by a retired Supreme Court judge and its other members comprise well-known people belonging to civil society and editors of TV news channels. It receives complaints of violation of ethical norms against member TV news channels and decides after hearing all the sides. Additionally, it has the power of imposing a fine that can go up to Rs 1 lakh against an errant channel.
- Apart from the NBSA, the news channels are also regulated by the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B)** under the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995** which contains a "**programme code**" and an "**advertising code**" to which news channels have to adhere. Their adherence to this code is, in fact, one of the preconditions for obtaining the license for a news channel.

Way forward -

- News media outlets have to understand that it is in their own interest to follow ethical norms to sustain public faith in them.
- In this context, professional bodies like the Editors Guild of India, NBA and statutory bodies like PCI can take lead and initiate debate and discussion on this issue and propose remedial measures.
- One also hopes that the saner voices within the media fraternity will see the warning signs and act fast to restore the credibility of the news media and journalism as profession by ensuring adherence to ethical norms, try to win citizens' confidence and work to strengthen the 'social contract' with the public.

Corporate Ethics

While profit remains one of the key motives of an enterprise, it is not the sole purpose of its existence. Besides growth and profitability, a major agenda being addressed within boardrooms is

around good corporate governance and the associated ethical framework. There is growing need to introduce stronger governance mechanisms and ethical practices to pre-empt malpractices.

Learning the difference -

- Good corporate governance calls for stringent compliance and pervasive ethical practices. It is a misconception that **compliance** and **ethics** are one and the same. Compliance is about doing what is required for the given process or statute.
- **Organisations can be compliant to internal processes and fulfil all statutory laws yet be unethical.** Surrogate advertising is a good example to illustrate this point, where something is legally compliant but unethical. Promoting alcohol consumption is banned on national television. If a company, however, advertises an alternative product with the same brand name, it is indirectly trying to increase brand recall to the intended product. Legally, the company is not flouting any law. However, when viewed under the lens of ethics, the practice is clearly unethical.

Ethical organisation culture - Setting the tone -

In organisations, the Board sets the tone for good corporate governance and compliance. Undoubtedly, the tone at the top is a prerequisite, but a strong ethics framework is required to drive the culture of ethics across the board.

Code of Conduct -

- One of its basic corporate ethics requirements is formulating the 'Code of Conduct' which conveys the company's value statement and defines the ethical foundation on which decisions will be made to achieve business objectives. It also specifies the general principles of behaviour which employees and other stakeholders are expected to follow.
- The Code of Conduct - an articulation of the value statement - is usually framed as a mix of rules to be adhered and aspirations towards which the organisation seeks to evolve. It is aspirational, as being ethical is a continuous journey. All levels of employees should mandatorily abide by the Code that is often incorporated for allegiance and adherence as part of the employee's contract and/or induction programme.

Building a check mechanism -

- The first step towards building a culture of ethics in an organisation is to review the integrity index of employees at two levels : the hiring process and every performance appraisal cycle.
- The second step is to institute a check mechanism to help the organisation and stakeholders navigate ethical dilemmas. The company's Code of Conduct must ideally provide adequate guidance on such matters.

Create channels to address concerns -

- Employees and stakeholders must be encouraged to speak up against any suspected or known situations or persons where the Code has been compromised and report the dilemmas faced. Managers must be trained on matters of law and regulations, company's policies, procedures, and the Code of Conduct.
- A channel to report and log concerns must be made available to all employees and stakeholders. Care must be taken to ensure confidentiality of concerns to protect the complainant from any act of retaliation or retribution.

Weaponising the Code -

- Instances are observed where the company's Code of Conduct or an applicable law is used incorrectly to settle scores with colleagues or superiors. This is nothing short of weaponising the Code/Law.
- The most extreme example is an employee alleging sexual misconduct at the workplace to deliberately inflict harm on a colleague. Such instances therefore need to be very carefully weighed.

Reviewing Ethics concerns -

- From a practitioner's perspective, reviewing reported ethics concerns is similar to fielding in a limited over cricket match - a single run can make a difference. Every single reported concern calls for a review.

- Building a team of Ethics counsellors is often seen as a good practice. It is debatable whether ethics should be an in-house function or an externally managed service, but it is observed that the best outcomes are witnessed by having a dedicated in-house team that acts as an external regulator. This team can thus receive and review concerns and act as advisors to those who experience an ethical dilemma in the course of their job.

Conclusion -

Our built-in moral compass should serve as our best guide when faced with complex ethical dilemmas in both our professional and personal lives. Ethics involves a conscious understanding of what is right or wrong, and then doing the right thing. It is important to be aware of and do what is morally right and socially responsible in a given situation. In these uncertain times, ethical behaviour and moral values that undergird an organisation are crucial not just to exist but to endure, survive and thrive.

Gandhian Perspectives on Ethics

Gandhi's twenty one years of work in South Africa and thirty-two years of campaigns subsequently in India for mass awareness and political freedom authentically restated the profound relationship between the spiritual and the material, the ethical and moral texture of our civilisation.

Science and Technology v/s Moral and Ethical fibre of an individual -

- Gandhi continues to challenge many postulations and keeps on reminding humanity that there is a 'truth' beyond all what we perceive and hold to be 'truth'. By making truth as the axis of all his endeavours, Gandhi was seeking the spirituality of truth itself which is the very basis of science. He thereby convincingly challenges those who espouse the notion that spirituality and science needs to be at war with each other.
- Gandhi who initially held the view that 'God is Truth' reversed it later as, 'Truth is God' thereby asserting the supremacy of truth over everything. He reminds us here of Einstein's statement that imagination is greater than knowledge.
- Just like science and scientists, who believe that there is nothing impossible in life, Gandhi held on to truth like a baby clinging to its mother. When he emphasised the power of love, compassion, truth, non-violence, even many of his close friends raised their eyebrows.
- Undisturbed by these barbs, Gandhi pursued his 'Experiments with Truth' with the precision and devotion of a scientist.
- He said that whoever is able to assert their mental and spiritual freedom will eventually emerge as liberated souls.

Satyagraha - Blend of ethical, moral, political, social and religious concerns -

- Gandhi's seminal contribution lies in the area of blending science and spirituality as revelled in the philosophy and practice of Satyagraha. The Satyagraha as enunciated by Gandhi seeks to integrate spiritual values, community organisation and self-reliance with a view to empower individuals, families, group, villages, towns and cities.
- Gandhi, as is known fairly now, also tried to infuse the fresh air of spiritualism in every domain of human endeavour, including politics. He earned the name of a saint trying to spiritualise politics.
- The ancient Vedic philosophy of "*Sarva Dharm Samabhav*" or "Respect for all religions" formed the basis of Gandhi's religious humanism which was rooted in ethical, moral and spiritual considerations.
- The casteless and classless society he was striving to establish aims at the realisation of both material and spiritual moorings. He described the society that he was aiming as Ram Rajya - a Divine Rajya.
- The Ram Rajya he was advocating was an ideal social order where an ideal King rules over his subjects without any distinction whatsoever. Truth, dharma and justice to be the dominant characteristics of such a society. The poorest of the poor to have equal say in the governance. Nobody will be discriminated against anybody.
- The ruler, in the modern context like Lord Ram, Gandhi's, ideal is Custodian of not only the physical domain of the people but also an inspirer of his people to higher realms of spiritual, moral and ethical attainments.

Sarvodaya -

- Sarvodaya was Gandhi's vision of a just, egalitarian, morally and spiritually strong citadel of individual liberty. Gandhi's ideal society envisages a non-violent, decentralised, people-oriented, sustainable, and flourishing social order.
- Social justice and equality to all were the cornerstones of the Sarvodaya social order. The Sarvodaya Samaj would have effectively prevented and eliminated any form of corruption, and general decay of moral, ethical and spiritual values, both in public and private life.

Seven sins according to Gandhi -

1. Wealth without work
2. Pleasure without conscience
3. Knowledge without character
4. Commerce without morality
5. Science without humanity
6. Religion without sacrifice, and
7. Politics without principle

Conclusion -

The ethical and moral standard he set for himself reveals his commitment and devotion to eternal principles and only someone like him who regulated his life and action in conformity with the universal vision of human brotherhood could describe his life, "My life is my message".