**E-CONTENT**

**MJMC,  SEM-IV, PAPER-XIV (CC-402)  
  
 Topic : MEDIA ETHICS & LAW (INTRODUCTION).  
  
Date : 10-01-2020, TIME : 2.00 P.M.-3.00 P.M.**

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**MEDIA - ETHICS & LAW (INTRODUCTION)**

This unit is designed to give you an overview of the ethical theories of relevance

to media followed by a brief history of media ethics in different parts of the

world. Thereafter, the ongoing debate on a code of conduct for television

broadcasters in India is outlined. The cases discussed in this unit provide an

insight into some of the contemporary discussions and debates on different facets

of media ethics, the objective being to prepare you for a more detailed exposition

of issues relating to truth, fairness and objectivity. This unit further seeks to

condition you to appreciate concerns relating to sensitivity in reporting and the

invasion of privacy, and provides a curtain-raiser to issues relating to the conflict

between commercial considerations and public interest.

**ETHICS: CONCEPT AND THEORIES**

The word ‘ethics’ originates from the Greek word *ethos* which means ‘character’.

The subject of ethics has been discussed and debated by people the world over,

particularly by philosophers, for centuries. It is said that some 2500 years ago,

Greek philosophers had divided their work into three broad segments: *aesthetics*

or the study of beauty; *epistemology* or the study of knowledge; and *ethics* or the

study of choices between good and evil, truth and falsehood, virtue and vice.

Ethics is a subject that seeks to use rational and systematic principles, values and

norms to determine what is good or bad, correct or incorrect, right or wrong, as

far as human actions are concerned. Though used interchangeably on occasions,

ethics is different from morality as the latter pertains more to conventions and

customs that determine or govern behaviour and relatively less to whether the

action being judged is good or bad.

The first proponent of utilitarianism as an ethical principle was Jeremy Bentham

(1748–1832), the British jurist, philosopher, social reformer and political radical.

He noted that ‘nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign

masters, pain and pleasure’. Another English philosopher and political economist

John Stuart Mill (1806–73), whose book *Utilitarianism* was published in 1863,

argued that ethical actions are those that generate the ‘greatest good for the greatest

number of people’. In this sense, utilitarianism directly refuted the views espoused

by Italian political philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) who, in his

treatise *The Prince*, argued that ‘the ends justify the means’.

There are two main ethical theories which are frequently employed to determine

media behaviour: **consequentialism** and **deontology**.