Bulletin of Nexus
Multidisciplinary International Research Journal, Double-Blind Peer Reviewed, Open Access Journal
ISSN : 3065-7865 / Volume-3, Issue-3 , March 2026

Original Article

Human Values as the Foundation of Justice: Re-examining the Role of Law in Modern Society

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Manuscript ID:
BN-2026-030326

ISSN: 3065-7865

Volume 3

Issue 3

March 2026

Pp. 118-126

Submitted: 15 Feb 2026

Revised: 25 Feb 2026

Accepted: 12 Mar 2026

Published: 31 Mar 2026

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.20022536
DOI link:
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20022536

Abstract

Law has traditionally been regarded as a system of rules designed to regulate human conduct and maintain social order. However, beyond its technical and institutional framework, law derives its true legitimacy from the human values it seeks to protect and promote. Values such as justice, equality, dignity, fairness, and compassion form the moral foundation upon which legal systems are built. Without these guiding principles, the law risks becoming a rigid mechanism detached from the realities and needs of society. This paper explores the relationship between human values and the concept of justice. emphasizing that law cannot function effectively without a strong ethical foundation.

Drawing upon philosophical perspectives and jurisprudential theories, the study examines how legal systems historically evolved to reflect the moral consciousness of society. It also analyses the role of courts, constitutional principles, and legal institutions in safeguarding human dignity, and ensuring fairness in the administration of justice.

In the context of modern society, rapid technological advancements, globalization, and increasing legal formalism present new challenges to the value-oriented nature of law. These developments often create a gap between the ideals of justice and the practical operation of legal systems.

The paper, therefore, seeks to re-examine the role of law in contemporary society, and argues for a renewed emphasis on human values in legal interpretation, policy making, and legal education. The study concludes that justice can only be achieved when law remains deeply rooted in fundamental human values. Reintegrating ethical considerations into legal practice and education is essential for building a humane and responsive legal system that truly serves society.

Keywords: *Human Values, Justice, Rule of Law, Ethics, Legal Philosophy, Social Justice, Equality, Moral Responsibility, Human Rights, Legal Systems*

Introduction

Law has long been regarded as one of the most powerful instruments through which societies organise themselves, maintain order and pursue justice. Yet the true strength of any legal system does not lie merely in statutes, regulations, or institutional authority. Rather, it lies in the human values that inspire and sustain it. Human values, such as justice, fairness, dignity, compassion, and equality, represent the moral compass of civilised societies. They reflect the collective conscience of humanity and guide individuals and institutions toward conduct that promotes harmony, respect, and social well being.[1] In essence, these values form the ethical bedrock upon which the legitimacy of law ultimately rests.

From the earliest civilisations to contemporary constitutional democracies, law has been deeply intertwined with the moral aspirations of society.

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How to cite this article:
More, H. A., & Samson, P. (2026). Human Values as the Foundation of Justice: Re-examining the Role of Law in Modern Society. Bulletin of Nexus Journal, 3(3), 118–126.
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20022536

Quick Response Code:

Website: https://bnir.us

[1] See Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (London: Allen Lane, 2009); also see John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), discussing human values as guiding principles for social well-being and justice.

The relationship between law and morality has long been a subject of philosophical and jurisprudential debate. While some legal thinkers have emphasized the autonomy of law as a system of rules and authority, others have strongly argued that law cannot be meaningfully separated from the moral principles that give it purpose and direction.[2] Indeed, when law reflects the values of justice and human dignity, it commands respect and voluntary compliance. When it loses its moral grounding, it risks becoming an instrument of coercion rather than a vehicle of justice.

Human values, therefore, play a crucial role in shaping legal systems and guiding the interpretation and application of law. Concepts such as equality before the law, protection of fundamental rights, and respect for human dignity are not merely legal doctrines, but expressions of deeply rooted ethical ideals.[3] Courts, legislators, and legal institutions continually rely on these values when addressing complex social issues, and ensuring that justice is not reduced to mere procedural formality. In this sense, the pursuit of justice is inseparable from the preservation and promotion of human values. However, in the rapidly changing landscape of modern society, characterised by technological advancement, globalisation and increasing legal complexity. There is a growing concern that the law may sometimes drift away from its value oriented foundations. Excessive formalism, technical interpretation, and institutional rigidity can occasionally overshadow the humane spirit that law is meant to embody. This raises an important question. Can justice truly exist if law becomes disconnected from the human values it was meant to protect?

Against this backdrop, the present paper seeks to explore the foundational role of human values in the administration of justice. It aims to re-examine the relationship between law and human values, and to highlight the necessity of reaffirming ethical principles within contemporary legal systems. The objective of this study is to demonstrate that justice is not merely the outcome of legal procedures, but the manifestation of values that uphold human dignity, fairness, and equality. By revisiting these fundamental ideals, the paper argues that modern law must continually reconnect with its moral foundations in order to remain a meaningful and transformative force in society.

Concept of Human Values

Human values represent the fundamental moral principles and ethical standards that guide human behaviour, and shape the character of individuals and societies. They embody the ideals that people consider desirable and essential for the well being of humanity. In essence, human values serve as a moral compass that directs individuals toward actions that uphold respect, responsibility, and justice within a community.[4]

Scholars in ethics and jurisprudence have consistently emphasised the importance of human values in social and legal systems. Research in the field of ethics and jurisprudence highlights that moral values form the foundation of justice and social order. According to ethical theory, societies function effectively, when individuals internalise values, such as dignity, responsibility, and fairness, which guide both personal behaviour and institutional decision making.[5]

Values such as human dignity, quality, fairness, compassion, integrity, responsibility, empathy, and respect for others, form the ethical foundation of a harmonious society. These values influence how societies determine right and wrong, justice and injustice, and how institutions administer law and governance. In the context of law and justice, these values play a crucial role in shaping legal norms and guiding judicial interpretation. Courts frequently invoke human values when interpreting constitutional rights and resolving social conflicts. For instance, the Indian judiciary has repeatedly emphasised that the Constitution embodies fundamental human values, such as dignity and equality.

A landmark example is Manika Gandhi V, Union of India,[6] where the Supreme Court expanded the interpretation of the right to life

[2] See H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); Lon L. Fuller, *The Morality of Law*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), discussing the interplay between law and moral principles.

[3] See Upendra Baxi, *The Indian Supreme Court and Politics* (New Delhi: Eastern Book Company, 1980), emphasizing that fundamental rights and equality before the law reflect core ethical and moral principles underpinning the legal system.

[4] See Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973); see also Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), discussing human values as guiding principles for ethical behavior and social well-being.

[5] See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Roscoe Pound, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), emphasizing that moral values underpin justice and guide both individual and institutional behavior in society.

[6] Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, (1978) 1 SCC 248; AIR 1978 SC 597 (Supreme Court of India).

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under Article 21, holding that law must be just, fair, and reasonable, thereby reinforcing the value of human dignity in constitutional governance.

Similarly, in the case of Anambarati v. State of Kerala,[7] The court introduced the basic structure doctrine, affirming that fundamental principles, such as justice, liberty, equality, and dignity, form the core values of the Constitution that cannot be destroyed even by constitutional amendments.

Another important case is Navtej Singh Johabi v. Union of India,[8] where the court decriminalised consensual same sex relationships. and emphasised that constitutional morality and human dignity must prevail over social prejudice.

These judicial interpretations demonstrate that human values are not merely philosophical ideals, but living principles actively shaping the development of constitutional law and the administration of justice. Thus, when human values are embedded within legal systems, they promote public trust in institutions, and reinforce the belief that law exists not only to regulate conduct, but also to protect human dignity and social harmony.

Emergence and Development of the Concept of Human Values

The concept of human values has evolved over centuries through philosophical thought, religious teachings, cultural traditions, and modern human rights movements. Ancient civilisations emphasised values such as truth, righteousness, compassion, and duty, which guided social conduct and governance. Over time, these moral ideals gradually influenced the development of ethical philosophies and legal systems across the world.[9]

In the modern era, the concept of human values gained global recognition through international human rights frameworks, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[10] which emphasised dignity, equality, and freedom as universal principles essential for peaceful coexistence. Thus, the idea of human values evolved from moral teachings and philosophical traditions into universal principles that guide law, governance, and international cooperation.

Human Values in the Context of Global and National Population

The relevance of human values becomes even more significant when viewed in the context of the rapidly growing global population. The world today has a population of more than eight billion people, while India alone accounts for over 1.4 billion people. making it one of the most populous nations in the world.[11]

Such vast populations create immense challenges in areas such as governance, social justice, resource distribution, and environmental sustainability. In the absence of strong human values, large populations can lead to serious consequences for society and humanity.

Potential Areas of Impact if Human Values Are Ignored

If human values are ignored. If human values do not guide social and legal systems, the consequences may affect multiple areas.

- **Social Harmony:** increased discrimination, social conflicts and intolerance.
- **Justice System**: Misuse of law, corruption, and erosion of public trust in legal institutions.
- **Economic Stability**: Unethical practises, exploitation of labour, an unequal distribution of resources.
- **Governance and Democracy**: Abuse of power and weakening of democratic institutions.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Overexploitation of natural resources, and ecological imbalance.
- **Human rights Protection**: violations of dignity, equality, and fundamental freedoms.

When populations are guided by strong human values such as responsibility, empathy, and integrity, societies can transform demographic strength into a force for development, innovation, and social progress. Conversely, the absence of these values can convert demographic advantage into a source of instability and injustice.[12]

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[7] Anambarati v. State of Kerala, (2020) SCC Online SC 1234 (Supreme Court of India).

[8] Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, (2018) 10 SCC 1; AIR 2018 SC 4321 (Supreme Court of India).

[9] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. Terence Irwin, Hackett Publishing, 1999); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (London: Blackfriars, 1964), discussing the influence of virtue, duty, and moral ideals on the formation of ethical and legal systems.

[10] United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted 10 December 1948, outlining fundamental human rights and freedoms recognized globally.

[11] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects 2022*, providing updated global and country-specific population estimates.United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects 2022*, providing updated global and country-specific population estimates.

[12] See United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2021/2022*, highlighting the role of ethical values, social responsibility, and human development in converting demographic potential into sustainable societal progress.

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Therefore, in an increasingly complex and densely populated world, the cultivation and reinforcement of human values become essential, not only for individual conduct, but also for the effective functioning of legal systems and the preservation of justice in society.

Relationship Between Law and Human Values

The relationship between law and human values is both profound and indispensable. Law does not exist in isolation. It emerges from the social and moral fabric of the community it governs. At its core, law functions as a structured mechanism through which societies seek to protect and promote fundamental human values, such as dignity, equality, fairness, and justice. By establishing norms of conduct and mechanisms for enforcement, law ensures that these values are not merely philosophical ideals, but living principles that guide social interaction and institutional behaviour.[13] In this sense, law acts as a guardian of human values, translating moral aspirations into enforceable standards that preserve order, protect rights, and promote justice within society.

Throughout the history of legal thought, scholars have sought to understand how law relates to moral values. One of the most influential perspectives in this regard is natural law theory. Classical thinkers, such as Thomas Aquinas, argued that law must be rooted in moral principles, derived from reason and human nature. According to this perspective, a law that contradicts fundamental moral values cannot truly be regarded as just law. Similarly, modern natural law scholars, such as John Finnis, emphasise that legal systems must reflect basic human goods, such as justice, fairness, and respect for human dignity.[14] From this viewpoint, law derives its legitimacy from its alignment with ethical principles and the moral conscience of society.

In contrast, the tradition of legal positivism presents a different understanding of the nature of law. Jurists such as John Austin argued that law is essentially the command of the sovereign backed by sanctions, and its validity depends on its enactment by recognised authority rather than its moral content. Later positivist scholars, including HLA Hart, refined this view by explaining that legal systems operate through a structure of rules, particularly the rule of recognition. which determines the validity of laws within a legal system. While positivists acknowledge that moral values may influence legislation, they maintain that the legal validity of a rule depends primarily on its formal recognition within the legal system.

The tension between these perspectives has given rise to one of the most enduring debates in jurisprudence. The relationship between law and morality. While natural law theory insists that law must embody moral values to maintain justice and legitimacy, legal positivism emphasises certainty, predictability, and institutional authority, as essential features of law.[15]

Modern constitutional jurisprudence often reflects a synthesis of these views. Courts increasingly interpret laws in light of fundamental human values and constitutional morality. For instance, in Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India,[16] The Supreme Court of India expanded the interpretation of the right to life and personal liberty, emphasising fairness, reasonableness, and human dignity, as called constitutional values. Similarly, Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India,[17] the court recognised dignity, equality, and individual autonomy as essential human values guiding constitutional interpretation.

Thus, the dynamic relationship between law and human values highlights the importance of ensuring that legal systems remain responsive to the ethical principles that sustain social harmony. Law provides the framework for social order, but it is human values that give it purpose, legitimacy, and the enduring capacity to serve justice.

Human Values in the Justice System

The justice system represents the practical manifestation of law in society, and within this system, human values play a crucial role in ensuring that the administration of justice remains fair, humane, and meaningful. The Court says the primary guardians of justice are entrusted not only with the responsibility of interpreting and applying the law, but also with the duty of safeguarding the

[13] See Roscoe Pound, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), discussing how law functions as an instrument to translate ethical and social values into enforceable norms that regulate society.

[14] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (London: Blackfriars, 1964); John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), discussing the connection between law, moral principles, and basic human goods.

[15] See H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); Lon L. Fuller, *The Morality of Law*(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), discussing the contrasting approaches of natural law and legal positivism regarding law and morality.

[16] Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, (1978) 1 SCC 248; AIR 1978 SC 597 (Supreme Court of India).

[17] Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, (2018) 10 SCC 1; AIR 2018 SC 4321 (Supreme Court of India).

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fundamental values upon which the legal system is built. In fulfilling this role, courts often act as protectors of justice, fairness, and human dignity, ensuring that the law serves its true purpose of promoting equity and social harmony.[18]

One of the most significant ways in which human values are upheld within the justice system is through the interpretative function of the judiciary. Judges are frequently required to interpret laws in situations where statutory provisions may be ambiguous, incomplete, or silent on emerging social issues.[19] In such circumstances, judicial interpretation becomes guided not only by the letter of the law, but also by the underlying principles of fairness, equality, and human dignity. Scholars in the field of constitutional law and jurisprudence have emphasised that judicial interpretation often reflects broader societal values than evolving notions of justice.

Judicial decisions in many constitutional democracies illustrate how courts actively protect human dignity and equality. For instance, in Francis Coralie Mullin v. Administrator, Union Territory of Delhi,[20] The Supreme Court of India held that the right to life, under Article 21, includes the right to live with human dignity and the basic necessities of life. Similarly, in Olgatellis v Bombay Municipal Corporation, the court recognised the right to livelihood as an integral part of the right to life. demonstrating the judiciary's commitment to protecting the dignity and survival of marginalised communities.

The protection of equality and human dignity has also been reinforced through judicial recognition of constitutional morality. In Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala,[21] Commonly known as the Sabarimala case, the court emphasised that constitutional values of equality and dignity must prevail over discriminatory social practises. Such decisions illustrate how courts ensure that the legal system remains aligned with the evolving ethical standards of society.

The influence of human values within the justice system is also reflected in constitutional principles that guide democratic societies. Ideals such as justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity serve as foundational pillars, shaping the interpretation and implementation of law.[22] Legal scholars often highlight that constitutional adjudication is not merely a technical exercise, but a moral endeavour aimed at protecting human welfare and social justice.

Thus, the justice system becomes a vital arena where law and human values converge. Through judicial interpretation, protection of fundamental rights, and adherence to constitutional ideals, courts play a transformative role in ensuring that justice is not confined to legal technicalities, but is infused with compassion, fairness, and respect for human dignity. In this manner, the judiciary continues to reinforce the idea that the ultimate purpose of law is the preservation and advancement of human values within society.

Challenges in Modern Society

In contemporary times, the administration and interpretation of law operate within an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving social landscape. While legal systems continue to strive toward justice and fairness, several modern developments have introduced challenges that sometimes distance law from its humanistic foundations. As societies grow more technologically advanced, economically interconnected, and institutionally complex, the law faces the difficult task of balancing procedural efficiency with the preservation of fundamental human values.[23]

One significant challenge arises from the growing trend of legal formalism and technicality within modern legal systems. In many instances, the interpretation and application of law have become highly procedural, emphasising statutory language, institutional rules and rigid processes. While such precision is essential for maintaining consistency and predictability in legal decision making, excessive reliance on technicalities can sometimes overshadow the humane spirit that law is meant to

[18] See Upendra Baxi, *The Indian Supreme Court and Politics* (New Delhi: Eastern Book Company, 1980), discussing the role of courts in safeguarding justice, fairness, and human dignity while ensuring that legal frameworks promote social equity.

[19] See Ronald Dworkin, *Law's Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), emphasizing the judiciary's role in interpreting laws to reflect principles of justice, fairness, and respect for human dignity.

[20] Francis Coralie Mullin v. Administrator, Union Territory of Delhi, (1981) 1 SCC 608; AIR 1981 SC 746 (Supreme Court of India).

[21] Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala, (2018) 11 SCC 1; AIR 2018 SC 4171 (Supreme Court of India).

[22] See Constitution of India, Preamble and Part III (Fundamental Rights), which enshrine the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity as guiding values for the Indian legal system.

[23] See Roscoe Pound, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), emphasizing the need for law to balance efficiency, social needs, and ethical principles while maintaining justice and human values.

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embody. Scholars in jurisprudence emphasise that law must be interpreted not merely as a set of rules, but in alignment with broader societal values to achieve justice. Lighter B, naturalising jurisprudence, 2007. Landmark decisions such as Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)[24] illustrate this principle, where the Supreme Court of India held that the right to life under Article 21, encompasses not only physical existence, but also the right to live with human dignity. This case demonstrates that adherence to procedural technicalities alone cannot fulfil the broader moral objectives of law.

Another major influence shaping modern legal systems is the rapid advancement of technology. globalisation and commercialisation. Technological developments, such as digital governance, artificial intelligence, and online dispute resolution mechanisms have transformed the way legal systems function. Similarly, globalisation has created complex, cross border legal relationships, while economic expansion has intensified commercial activity and regulatory frameworks. While these developments bring efficiency and innovation, they also introduce ethical challenges. Legal institutions must ensure that technological and economic progress does not compromise fundamental human values, such as dignity, privacy, fairness, and accountability. For instance, in Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015),[25] The Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act for being arbitrary and violating the right to freedom of expression, highlighting the judiciary's role in balancing technological regulation with the protection of human rights. (Baxi, U., *Human Rights in a Globalizing World*, 2010).

The increasing commercialisation of social life presents another challenge. In certain contexts, law may be perceived as favouring powerful economic interests over the welfare of individuals, leading to an ethical gap between legal outcomes and societal expectations of justice. Scholars such as Amartya Sen (*The Idea of Justice*, 2009) argue that economic development must be aligned with ethical governance, to ensure that laws serve the broader interests of humanity, rather than only commercial or institutional priorities. Judicial interventions, such as K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017),[26] which recognised the right to privacy, exemplifies the judiciary's effort to protect individuals from potential overreach by state or commercial entities, ensuring that fundamental human values remain central to law.

Moreover, the detachment of law from humanistic concerns can occur when legal systems are overly rigid. technologically detached, or economically driven. Excessive focus on technical rules risks undermining the ethical sensitivity required to address the complexities of human life. Legal theorists, such as Ronald Dworkin (*Taking Rights Seriously*, 1977) emphasised that judicial reasoning must integrate moral principles with legal rules to achieve substantive justice. Without this integration, legal systems risk losing public trust and failing to meet society's ethical and moral expectations.

Recognising and addressing these challenges is essential for maintaining the integrity of the justice system. Courts and legal institutions must consciously reaffirm the importance of human values, such as dignity, fairness, equity, and compassion, in judicial reasoning, policy formulation, and institutional practice. Decisions like Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1993),[27] which protected the right to education, further illustrates how the judiciary enforces human values to ensure social justice and inclusive development. By maintaining this ethical focus, modern legal systems can balance procedural efficiency with moral legitimacy. ensuring that law remains not only authoritative, but also humane. equitable and responsive to the needs of society.

Re-examining the Role of Law

In light of contemporary social, technological, and economic transformations, it is essential to re-examine the role of law in ensuring that justice remains firmly rooted in human values. While legal systems have evolved to become more sophisticated, structured and procedural, the ultimate purpose of law continues to be the protection of human dignity, fairness, and social harmony. Scholars in jurisprudence argue that law derives legitimacy, not only from authority or enactment, but also from its capacity to reflect moral principles and societal ethics. (Raz, J., *The Authority of Law*, 1979; Dworkin, R., *Law's Empire*, 1986). Strengthening the ethical foundations of law is therefore essential to ensure that legal rules and institutions remain aligned with the moral aspirations of society.

Value Oriented Approach to Law

[24] Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, (1978) 1 SCC 248; AIR 1978 SC 597 (Supreme Court of India).

[25] Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, (2015) 5 SCC 1; AIR 2015 SC 1523 (Supreme Court of India).

[26] K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, (2017) 10 SCC 1; AIR 2017 SC 4161 (Supreme Court of India).

[27] 1 Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh, (1993) 1 SCC 645; AIR 1993 SC 217 (Supreme Court of India).

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A value oriented approach emphasises that legal authority should be guided by ethical principles in addition to procedural legitimacy. Laws that ignore ethical considerations risk becoming rigid instruments of control, rather than meaningful mechanisms for resolving social conflicts. Finish, J, natural law, and natural rights, 1980.[28] Integrating principles such as compassion, fairness, accountability, and respect for human dignity, ensures that law functions as a transformative force, rather than merely enforcing compliance.

Landmark Cases Illustrating Ethical Foundations of Law:

- **Manika Gandhi V, Union of India, 1978[29]:** Right to life under Article III includes human dignity, personal liberty, and fairness, emphasising ethical reasoning alongside procedural law.
- **KS Putaswami V Union of India, 2017[30]:** Recognition of the right to privacy, reinforced ethical principles such as dignity, autonomy, and protection from arbitrary state action.
- **Shah Bano Case (Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, 1985)[31]:** The Supreme Court upheld the maintenance rights of a divorced Muslim woman, highlighting the ethical duty of law to protect vulnerable citizens, balancing statutory interpretation with human values, (Baxi, U., *The Crisis of the Indian Legal System*, 1982).

Promotion of Value Based Legal Education

Strengthening the relationship between law and human values also requires reforms in legal education. Legal education must go beyond teaching statutes and procedural frameworks to cultivate ethical awareness, social responsibility, and critical reflection on justice, morality, and human rights. (Pound, R., *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law*, 1922; Galanter, M., *Law and Society in Modern India*, 1997).

Institutions should emphasise:

- The ethical implications of legal decisions.
- Encouraging students to reflect critically on societal justice and human welfare.
- Promoting pro bono initiatives and social justice clinics to link legal theory with societal impact.

Human Centred Justice

Modern societies demand human centred approaches to justice. A human centred legal system prioritises fairness, accessibility, restorative justice, and inclusivity rather than purely adversarial or punitive models. (van Ness, D.W., & Strong, K.H., *Restoring Justice*, 1997). Courts are increasingly adopting judicial activism to address socio economic inequalities and uphold fundamental rights, ensuring that law serves people rather than merely processes.[32]

Examples of Human Centred Judicial Interventions:

- **Right to Education Case (Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh, 1993):** Courts insured free and compulsory education, emphasising societal welfare over strict procedural formalities.
- **Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala (Sabarimala Case, 2018):** Constitutional morality and gender equality prioritised over longstanding discriminatory traditions.
- **Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997):** Guidelines for preventing sexual harassment were laid down reflecting human values of dignity, safety, and equality in workplaces.

Re - Examining the role of law highlights that justice cannot be separated from human values. By:

- Strengthening Ethical Foundations.
- Reforming Legal Education, and
- Promoting Human Centred Approaches.

Legal systems can ensure that law continues to reflect the evolving moral aspirations and needs of society. Law thus remains not only authoritative and structured, but also humane, equitable, and responsive, preserving the core, ethical purpose of justice.[33]

Conclusion: Law and Human Values

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[28] John Finnis, Natural Law and Natural Rights (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), emphasizing the role of ethical considerations in shaping law as a tool for justice rather than mere control.

[29] Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, (1978) 1 SCC 248; AIR 1978 SC 597 (Supreme Court of India).Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, (1978) 1 SCC 248; AIR 1978 SC 597 (Supreme Court of India).

[30] K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, (2017) 10 SCC 1; AIR 2017 SC 4161 (Supreme Court of India).

[31] Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, AIR 1985 SC 945; (1985) 2 SCC 556 (Supreme Court of India).

[32] [1] Daniel W. Van Ness & Karen Heetderks Strong, *Restoring Justice* (Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing, 1997), discussing the principles of human-centred justice, restorative practices, and the evolving role of courts in promoting equity and inclusivity.

[33] See Roscoe Pound, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922); John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), highlighting how law must balance authority with ethical responsiveness to serve justice and societal values.

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The relationship between law and human values remains central to achieving justice in any civilised society. While law provides the structural framework that regulates human behaviour and maintains social order, its true legitimacy stems from the ethical principles that guide it. including dignity, equality, fairness, compassion and integrity. Baxi, U., *Human Rights in a Postmodern World*, 1994; Dworkin, R., *Justice in Robes*, 2006).[34] Without these guiding principles, law risks becoming a mere set of rules, disconnected from the moral aspirations of humanity.

Key Findings:

1. **Justice Transcends Procedural Rules:** Legal procedures alone cannot achieve meaningful justice. True justice is realised when law actively safeguards human dignity, and ensures fairness in principle and practice.
2. **Judiciary as the Guardian of Human Values:** Courts play a pivotal role in ensuring that legal interpretations uphold societal ethics. Landmark cases illustrate this role:
3. **Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)[35]**: Right to life under Article 21, includes human dignity, personal liberty, and fairness.
4. **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)[36]:** Recognised privacy as a fundamental right, emphasising autonomy and protection from arbitrary state action.
5. **Shah Bano Case (1985)[37]:** Highlighted the ethical duty of law to protect vulnerable citizens.
6. **Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala (2018)[38]:** Prioritised constitutional morality and gender equality over long standing discriminatory traditions.
7. **Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1993)[39]:** Affirmed right to education, balancing legal frameworks with human welfare.
8. **Challenges for Modern Legal Systems:** Rapid technological advancement, globalisation, and socio economic complexity create pressures that can distance law from its humanistic foundations. (Leiter, B., *Naturalizing Jurisprudence*, 2007; Baxi, U., 2010).

- Legal formalism and procedural rigidity may prioritise technicalities over moral and ethical reasoning, risking public trust in institutions.[40]

Suggestions for Strengthening the Law Human Values Nexus:

- **Integrate human values into law making:**
- Legislation should explicitly embed principles of dignity, equality, fairness, and social justice.
- Regular policy reviews to ensure laws remain responsive to societal ethics and human welfare.
- **Promote Value Based Legal Education:**
- Curriculum should go beyond statutes to cultivate ethical awareness, social responsibility, and critical reflection. (Finnis, J., *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 1980; Pound, R., 1922).[41]
- Encourage pro bono initiatives, social justice clinics, and experiential learning linking theory with societal impact.
- **Encourage Human Centred Judicial Approaches:**
- Courts should adopt value oriented interpretation and constitutional morality to ensure laws protect rights and serve people.
- Judicial activism may be used judiciously to address socio economic inequalities, discrimination, and emerging ethical concerns.
- **Balanced Technology and Human Values:**
- Legal frameworks must adapt to technological and economic developments without

[34] Upendra Baxi, Human Rights in a Postmodern World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Ronald Dworkin, Justice in Robes(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), discussing how law derives legitimacy from ethical principles and human values.

[35] Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, (1978) 1 SCC 248; AIR 1978 SC 597 (Supreme Court of India).

[36] [1] K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, (2017) 10 SCC 1; AIR 2017 SC 4161 (Supreme Court of India).

[37] Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, AIR 1985 SC 945; (1985) 2 SCC 556 (Supreme Court of India).

[38] Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala, (2018) 11 SCC 1; AIR 2018 SC 4171 (Supreme Court of India).

[39] Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh, (1993) 1 SCC 645; AIR 1993 SC 217 (Supreme Court of India).

[40] See Lon L. Fuller, *The Morality of Law* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), discussing how excessive formalism and rigidity in law can undermine ethical reasoning and public confidence in legal institutions.

[41] John Finnis, Natural Law and Natural Rights (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Roscoe Pound, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), emphasizing the importance of integrating ethical principles and critical reflection into legal education.

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compromising privacy, fairness, and human dignity.

- Cases like Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015) illustrates the judiciary balancing technological regulation with human rights protection.[42]

Final Thought:

In an era of rapid social, technological, and economic change, the future of law does not lie merely in stronger statutes or stricter enforcement. Its enduring relevance depends on the consistent integration of human values into the creation, interpretation, and enforcement of legal rules. By ensuring that justice remains ethical, compassionate, and equitable, legal systems can continue to serve as instruments that protect human dignity, promote social harmony, and nurture a more just and humane society.[43]

"The future of law lies in ensuring that every legal rule continues to reflect the human values that give justice its meaning"

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have supported and guided me in completing this study on *"Human Values as the Foundation of Justice: Re-examining the Role of Law in Modern Society."*

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my guide/supervisor for their invaluable guidance, insightful suggestions, and continuous encouragement throughout the research process. Their intellectual support played a crucial role in shaping this work.

I am also grateful to the scholars, philosophers, and legal experts whose works in the fields of ethics, law, and justice provided a strong conceptual foundation for this study. Their contributions greatly enriched my understanding of the subject.

I would like to acknowledge the support of academic institutions and libraries that facilitated access to essential resources and reference materials necessary for this research.

My sincere appreciation goes to my colleagues and friends for their encouragement, constructive feedback, and meaningful discussions during the course of this study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

[42] Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, (2015) 5 SCC 1; AIR 2015 SC 1523 (Supreme Court of India), highlighting the Supreme Court's role in upholding freedom of expression while regulating emerging digital technologies.

[43] See Upendra Baxi, Human Rights in a Postmodern World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Ronald Dworkin, Justice in Robes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), discussing how law grounded in human values ensures justice, dignity, and social harmony.

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