



# **Contributions of Indian Thinkers**

# ETHICS IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

- Religion and Morality are closely connected to one another;
  - Role of afterlife in ethics
  - concept of morality seems to be based on authority and social reasoning.
- Sources of ethics
  - Vedas
  - Smriti (Dharmashastras)
  - Conscience and Reason
  - Texts and Preachings

# DHARMA

- To hold together
- Refers to the highest truth and power
- Understood as the performance of Vedic sacrifices and other rituals in the Vedas and Dharmasastras.
- Duty par excellence
- Contextual
  - Varna: Brahmin; Kshatriya; Vaishya; Shudra
  - Ashrama: Brahmacharya (Studenthood); Grihastha (the householder); Vanaprastha (the forest dweller) Sannyas (the mendicant).
- Universal (Sadharana Dharma)

# DHARMASHASTRAS

- Dharma depends on time (yuga), place (desa), varna(class), ashrama (stage of life)
- Universal Sadharana Dharma
  - Dhairya or Dhriti- Contentment
  - Kshama- Forgiveness
  - Dama- Self- control
  - Asteya- Refraining from unrighteous appropriating anything
  - Saucha- Cleanliness
- Indriyanigraha- Control of immoral desires
- Dhi- Wisdom
- Vidya- Knowledge
- Satya- Truthfulness
- Akrodha- Refraining from anger



# RTA

- A conception of unifying order or moral law, pervading all things. It has given rise to two other important concepts, the concept of Dharma and the concept of Karma.
  - The concept of Dharma has divergent meanings, but generally it is known as duty.
  - The concept Karma signifies that there is a uniform moral law, governing the actions of man and the rewards and the punishments appropriate to their actions.
- The more important and essential element in the Vedic ethics is that of love and worship offered to the gods in complete submission.
- Moral order or law is reflected in the right performance of sacrifices and so one who performs these sacrifices and the ceremonial duties laid down in the scriptures, would achieve the goal of eternal happiness in heaven.
- So the ethics of the Vedic Hindus is primarily a god-oriented ethics

# UPANISHADIC ETHICS

- Intellectual in nature
- Atman –centric
- Move away from ritualistic sacrifices;
- Individual liberation
- Avoidance of evil;

# BHAGVAD GITA

- Brahmajnana as the goal of life
  - Devotion, Renunciation, and Self-surrender
  - Attachment-> Desire-> Wrath -> Infatuation->Loss of mind -> Death
- Karma Yoga
  - Nishkama Karma (Performance of one's action without attachment)

# KARMA

- Action; Consequence is part of action
- Linked with Samsara and transmigration of soul
  - Sanchita Karma, which means the accumulated past actions
  - Prarabdha Karma, which means the part of Sanchita Karma, this results in the present birth itself. This is also called predestination
  - Kriyamana Karma, which means present willful actions or free will
  - Agama Karma, which means the immediate results caused by our present actions



# PURUSARTHAS

- Value of human life
  - Dharma (Varnashrama, Samanya, and Svadharma)
  - Artha ( Attainment of riches and worldly prosperities)
  - Kama (Desires)
  - Moksa (Liberation)

# ETHICS IN BUDDHISM

- Ten Meritorious deeds

Charity

Morality

Mental culture

Reverence or respect

Service in helping others

Sharing merits with others

Rejoicing in the merits of others

Preaching and teaching the Dhamma

Listening to the Dhamma

Straightening one's views

## Ten demertorious deeds

Actions of the body:

- (1) Killing of living beings, (2) Stealing, and (3) Unlawful sexual intercourse.

Verbal actions :

- (1) Lying, (2) Slander and tale-bearing, (3) Harsh speech, and (4) Frivolous and meaningless talk

Actions of the mind:

- (1) Covetousness, (2) Ill-will, and (3) Wrong view

# ETHICS IN BUDDHISM

- Good roots of actions : Love, Charity and Wisdom
- Pancasila :
  - To refrain from destroying living creatures.
  - To refrain from taking that which is not given.
  - To refrain from sexual misconduct.
  - To refrain from incorrect speech.
  - To refrain from intoxicants which lead to carelessness

# ETHICS IN BUDDHISM

- Buddha proposes Universal Love or “Metta”.
  - Cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.
- The essence of true charity is to give something without expecting anything in return for the gift.
  - Should not make other people feel indebted to him or use charity as a way of exercising control over them.
  - Should not even expect others to be grateful; the act of true charity leaves both the giver and the recipient free.
  - Must proceed from the whole person as an act of his body, heart and mind.
  - Should not be an act of generosity but it should be a “Dana” when a person performs “Dana”, he gives as a means of cultivating charity as a virtue.
  - Reduces one’s craving and selfishness.



# ETHICS IN JAINISM

- Pancamahavratas
  - Ahimsa (abstinence from all injuries to life – either trasa or sthavara)
  - Sathyam (abstinence from falsehood. It is speaking what is true, good and pleasant)
  - Asteyam (abstinence from stealing)
  - Brahmacharyam (abstinence from sensual pleasures either in speech or action)
  - Aparigraha (abstinence from all kinds of attachments)
- Triratnas
  - Right Knowledge
  - Right Faith
  - Right Conduct

# MAHATMA GANDHI

- Considered life to be an integrated whole, growing from truth to truth every day in moral and spiritual status.
- Believed in a single standard of conduct founded on dharma of truth and non-violence.
  - Among the vital messages of Gandhi's leadership are: even one person can make a difference; strength comes not from physical capacity but from an indomitable will.
- His non-violence was the way to counter injustice and exploitation, and not run away from a righteous battle.
  - He associated the qualities of humility, compassion, forgiveness and tolerance as corollaries of nonviolence.
- To Gandhi, the spirit of service and sacrifice was the key to leadership. For the spirit of service to materialize, we must lay stress on our responsibilities and duties and not on rights

# MAHATMA GANDHI...

- The commitment to service, however demands a strong sense of conscience (moral imperative), courage (fearlessness, bravery, initiative), and character (integrity). To Mahatma Gandhi, 'inner voice' was synonymous with conscience.
- Leaders need to develop and follow their conscience even more than ordinary people as they set the path for others. Courage, endurance and above all, fearlessness and spirit of willing sacrifices are the qualities that are required today in India for leadership.
- His power came from empowering the weak, to lead the masses in the fight against injustice, exploitation, violence and discrimination.
  - Satyagraha elevated the struggle for survival to the highest moral-spiritual levels and ordinary, emaciated people turned heroes.
  - His power arose through the people whom he gave a sense of self-respect, purpose and moral strength.

# NON-VIOLENCE

- Non-violence means to keep oneself completely away from such action which may hurt others physically or mentally.
  - Non-violence is not the outward strength. Non-violence is the internal power. Non-violence is fundamental to the discovery of truth
- In order to practice truth, one must constantly endeavor to free oneself from the evils of desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. One must cultivate moral purity and courage and must not allow these enemies to cloud his vision.
- He expresses that Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within.
- Men of stainless character and self-purification will easily inspire confidence.
  - People will not judge us by the creed we profess or the label we wear or the slogans we shout but by our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character.



# MAHATMA GANDHI...

- Expresses that morality is quite inseparable with the conception of God and religion.
- There are seven deadly sins in human life. They are
  - Wealth without work.
  - Pleasure without conscience.
  - Knowledge without character.
  - Commerce without morality.
  - Science without humanity.
  - Religion without sacrifice.
  - Politics without principle.

# AMARTYA SEN

- Sen thinks Rawls' theory to be limited from the point of view of human capabilities: it does not go deep enough to capture human diversity and some blatant inequalities in society.
  - Freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance
  - Well-being should be understood in terms of people's capabilities and functionings.
- Sen proposes that people's well-being should be evaluated on the basis of their 'capability to achieve valuable functionings'.
- This approach is called 'the capability approach' which consists of two distinct notions: Functionings and Capabilities.



# SEN'S CONCERNS

- Individuals can differ greatly in their abilities to convert the same resources into valuable functionings ('beings' and 'doings'). Therefore, evaluation that focuses only on means, without considering what particular people can do with them, is insufficient.
- People can internalize the harshness of their circumstances so that they do not desire what they can never expect to achieve. Therefore, evaluation that focuses only on subjective mental metrics is insufficient.
- Whether or not people take up the options they have, the fact that they do have valuable options is significant. Therefore, evaluation must be sensitive to both actual achievements ('functionings') and effective freedom ('capability').
- Reality is complicated and evaluation should reflect that complexity rather than take a short-cut by excluding all sorts of information from consideration in advance. Therefore, evaluation of how well people are doing must seek to be as open-minded as possible.

# AMARTYA SEN

- Functionings refer to the number of ‘doings’ and ‘beings’ that a person manages to achieve in life.
  - basic functionings like nutrition, life expectancy, health and education
  - complex functionings like self-respect, social recognition and political participation.
  - Activities and situations that people spontaneously recognize to be important
  - Collection of observable achievements
- Capabilities are the doings, and beings that people can achieve if they so choose
  - their opportunity to do or be such things as
  - being well-nourished, getting married, being educated, and travelling
  - *real freedoms* that people have to achieve their potential doings and beings.
- Whether someone can convert a set of means - resources and public goods - into a functioning (i.e., whether she has a particular capability) depends on certain personal, sociopolitical, and environmental conditions.



# AMARTYA SEN

- Resource → Capability → Functioning → utility
- Capabilities refer to the extent of freedom that a person has in order to achieve different functionings.
  - Capabilities have also been referred to as real or substantive freedoms as they denote the freedoms that have been cleared of any potential obstacles, in contrast to mere formal rights and freedoms.
  - When we look at a fasting monk and a starving poor child, they do fare equally in terms of achieved functioning since both do not eat.
  - But in terms of capabilities, they are unequal in as much as the monk has the freedom to choose that state while the child does not have that freedom.
  - Freedom could be in terms of process (ability to act on behalf of what matters/agency) or opportunities (selection from various possibilities/capability)
- Welfare should not be understood in terms of resources but on functionings
  - Happiness might not reflect circumstances

# AMARTYA SEN...

- Human beings differ from one another in a number of ways - genetic endowments as well as external environment and social conditions they live in.
- These different elements of human diversity crucially affect the ways in which resources such as income and wealth are transformed into relevant capabilities.
- Sen points out that inequalities and disadvantages arising from human diversities cannot be relegated to be issues falling in the domain of charity.
- Increasing the social and political participation of traditionally oppressed groups would demand efforts more than just providing access to resources; it might require tackling some entrenched social, economic and political practices and structures.
- Applications
  - Used in HDI, OECD, WorldBank reports
  - Economic growth should be understood in terms of expanding human capabilities

# CRITICISMS

- Negative and neutral doings and beings?
  - may depend on what does not allow one to do or be
  - realizing morally bad functioning, such as committing murder or polluting
- Liberal critics of Sen often identify the focus of the Capability as problematic because it appears to impose an external valuation of the good life, whatever people may actually value.
- Scholars argue that it is under-theorized
- Emphasizes individualism
- Information gaps prevent effective implementation