

**GS FOUNDATION  
BATCH FOR CSE (2023-24)  
ETHICS - 6**

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## **MORAL THINKERS AND PHILOSOPHERS**

Questions about morality has always been occupying a central place in philosophical discussions. In western world Kantianism and utilitarianism are considered to be the two major traditions in moral philosophy. To do ethics properly, one must start with what it is for a human being to flourish or live well. That meant returning to some questions that mattered deeply to the moral thinkers across the world. In ancient time, these questions focussed on the nature of “virtue” (or what we might think of as admirable moral character), of how one becomes virtuous (is it taught? does it arise naturally? are we responsible for its development?), and of what relationships and institutions may be necessary to make becoming virtuous possible. Answers to these ancient questions emerge today in various areas of philosophy, including ethics (especially virtue ethics), feminist ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of education, and philosophy of literature.

Moral theory does not invent morality, instead it tries to bring systematic thinking to bear on these activities. Assuming piecemeal opinions and practices, it tries to capture its underlying essence. It is the nature of such an enterprise to evaluate and criticize some of these opinions and practices but that is not its primary goal. Moral thinker tries to provide a reflective account of an essential human activity so one can grasp what is of fundamental importance in pursuing it. Philosophers depended on several important notions in order to explain the ethics theories, these notions include - virtues, happiness and the soul.

**Virtue** is a general term that as excellence. Conceptions of human excellence include terms as courage, moderation, justice and piety. A virtue is a settled disposition to act in a certain way; justice, for instance, is the settled disposition to act, let's say, so that each one receives their due. This settled disposition consists in a practical knowledge about how to bring it about, in each situation, that each receives their due.

In this way, then, ancient philosophers typically justify moral virtue. Being courageous, just, and moderate is valuable for the virtuous person because these virtues are inextricably linked with happiness. Everyone wants to be happy, so anyone who realizes the link between virtue and happiness will also want to be virtuous. This argument depends on two central ideas. First, human excellence is a good of the soul – not a material or bodily good such as wealth or political power. Another way to put this idea is to say happiness is not something external, like wealth or political power, but an internal, psychological good. The second central idea is that the most important good of the soul is moral virtue. By being virtuous one enjoys a psychological state whose value outweighs whatever other kinds of goods one might have by being vicious.

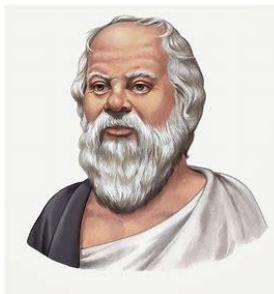
**Happiness**, on the other hands, is significant that synonyms for **happiness** are living well and doing well. Ancient philosophers argued that whatever activities constitute human living – e.g., those associated with pleasure – one can engage in those activities in a mediocre or even a poor way. One can feel and react to pleasures sometimes appropriately and sometimes inappropriately; or one might always act shamefully and dishonorably. However, to carry out the activities that constitute human living well over a whole lifetime, or long stretches of it, is living well or doing well. At this point the relation of happiness to human excellence should be clear. Human excellence is the psychological basis for carrying out the activities of a human life well; to that extent human excellence is also happiness. Happiness means not so much feeling a certain way, or feeling a certain way about how one's life as a whole is going, but rather carrying out certain activities or functioning in a certain way. This sort of happiness is an admirable and praiseworthy accomplishment, whereas achieving satisfaction or contentment may not be.

Many thinkers argue that being moral does not necessarily provide physical beauty, health, or prosperity. Rather, as something good, virtue must be understood as belonging to the **soul**; it is a psychological good. However, in order to explain virtue as a good of the soul, one does not have to hold that the soul is immortal. So, virtue is a psychological good in this life. To live a mortal human life with this good is in itself happiness.

These reflections on virtue can provide an occasion for contrasting ancient moral theory and modern. One way to put the contrast is to say that ancient moral theory is agent-centered while modern moral theory is action-centered. To say that it is action-centered means that, as a theory of morality, it explains morality, to begin with, in terms of actions and their circumstances, and the ways in which actions are moral or immoral. We can roughly divide modern thinkers into two groups. Those who judge the morality of an action on the basis of its known or expected consequences are consequentialist; those who judge the morality of an action on the basis of its conformity to certain kinds of laws, prohibitions, or positive commandments are deontologists. The former include, e.g., those utilitarians who say an action is moral if it provides the greatest good for the greatest number. Deontologists say an action is moral if it conforms to a moral principle, e.g., the obligation to tell the truth. While these thinkers are not uninterested in the moral disposition to produce such actions, or in what disposition is required if they are to show any moral worth in the persons who do them, their focus is on actions, their consequences, and the rules or other principles to which they conform. The result of these ways of approaching morality is that moral assessment falls on actions. This focus explains, for instance, contemporary fascination with such questions of casuistry as, e.g., the conditions under which an action like abortion is morally permitted or immoral.

We can conclude that studying moral thinkers and philosophers, we gather a sound logical foundation of morality and ethics which in turn convinces us to adhere to moral way of living.

## SOCRATES



Socrates was one of the greatest Greek philosophers by a wide margin. He was born in 469 BCE at a place called Deme Alpoece, Athens. For the entirety of his life, this classical Greek philosopher devoted himself to finding the most ideal way of living a moral life. His extensive works in ethics and epistemology are what formed the pillars of Western philosophy. Kind courtesy of the efforts and sheer brilliance of his most famous student, Plato, Socrates ideas and philosophy continue to hold significant sway in our world, even after thousands of years. In 399 BCE, Socrates passed away after he was sentenced to death by the Athenians. He was charged with 'corrupting' the youth and heresy.

*During his life Socrates was predominantly interested in ethics.*

- A. Self-knowledge is a sufficient condition to the good life. Socrates identifies knowledge with virtue. If knowledge can be learned, so can virtue. Thus, Socrates states virtue can be taught.
- B. He believes "the unexamined life is not worth living." One must seek knowledge and wisdom before private interests. In this manner, knowledge is sought as a means to ethical action.
- C. What one truly knows is the dictates of one's conscience or soul: these ideas form the philosophy of the Socratic Paradox.

*Socrates presupposes reason is essential for the good life.*

- A. One's true happiness is promoted by doing what is right.
- B. When your true utility is served (by tending your soul), you are achieving happiness. Happiness is evident only in terms of a long-term effect on the soul.
- C. The Socratic ethics has a teleological character — consequently, a mechanistic explanation of human behaviour is mistaken. Human action aims toward the good in accordance with purpose in nature.

*Socrates states no one chooses evil; no one chooses to act in ignorance.*

- A. We seek the good, but fail to achieve it by ignorance or lack of knowledge as to how to obtain what is good.
- B. He believes no one would intentionally harm themselves. When harm comes to us, although we thought we were seeking the good, the good is not obtained in such a case since we lacked knowledge as to how best to achieve the good.
- C. Aristotle's criticism of Socrates belief that no one intentionally harms oneself is that an individual might know what is best, and yet still fail to act rightly.

## ARISTOTLE

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) numbers among the greatest philosophers of all time. Judged solely in terms of his philosophical influence, only Plato is his peer: Aristotle's works shaped centuries of philosophy from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance, and even today continue to be studied with keen, non-antiquarian interest. His extant writings span a wide range of disciplines, from logic, metaphysics and philosophy of mind, through ethics, political theory, aesthetics and rhetoric, and into such primarily non-philosophical fields as empirical biology, where he excelled at detailed plant and animal observation and description. In all these areas, Aristotle's theories have provided illumination, met with resistance, sparked debate, and generally stimulated the sustained interest of an abiding readership.



Born in 384 B.C.E. in the Macedonian region of north-eastern Greece in the small city of Stagira Aristotle was sent to Athens at about the age of seventeen to study in Plato's Academy, then a pre-eminent place of learning in the Greek world. Once in Athens, Aristotle remained associated with the Academy until Plato's death in 347, at which time he left for Assos, in Asia Minor, on the northwest coast of present-day Turkey. There he continued the philosophical activity he had begun in the Academy, but in all likelihood also began to expand his researches into marine biology. He remained at Assos for approximately three years. Aristotle then moved to the nearby coastal island of Lesbos. There he continued his philosophical and empirical researches for an additional two years. In 343, upon the request of Philip, the king of Macedon, Aristotle left Lesbos for Pella, the Macedonian capital, in order to tutor the king's thirteen-year-old son, Alexander—the boy who was eventually to become Alexander the Great.

### **Aristotelian Ethics**

Aristotle applied patient, careful, descriptive approach to his examination of moral philosophy in the (Nicomachean Ethics). Here he discussed the conditions under which moral responsibility may be ascribed to individual agents, the nature of the virtues and vices involved in moral evaluation, and the methods of achieving happiness in human life. The central issue for Aristotle is the question of character or personality — **what does it take for an individual human being to be a good person?**

Every activity has a final cause, the good at which it aims, and Aristotle argued that since there cannot be an infinite regress of merely extrinsic goods, there must be a highest good at which all human activity ultimately aims. This end of human life could be called **Eudemonia** happiness (or living well), of course, but what is it really? Neither the ordinary notions of pleasure, wealth, and honour nor the philosophical theory of forms

provide an adequate account of this ultimate goal, since even individuals who acquire the material goods or achieve intellectual knowledge may not be happy.

According to Aristotle, things of any variety have a ***characteristic function*** that they are properly used to perform (***function argument***). The good for human beings, then, must essentially involve the entire proper function of human life as a whole, and this must be an activity of the soul that expresses genuine virtue or excellence. Thus, human beings should aim at a life in full conformity with their rational natures; for this, the satisfaction of desires and the acquisition of material goods are less important than the achievement of **virtue**. A happy person will exhibit a personality appropriately balanced between reasons and desires, with **moderation** characterizing all. In this sense, at least, "virtue is its own reward." True happiness can therefore be attained only through the cultivation of the virtues that make a human life complete.

### **On Virtues: GOLDEN MEAN**

Ethics is not merely a theoretical study for **Aristotle**. Unlike any intellectual capacity, virtues of character are **dispositions** to act in certain ways in response to similar situations, the habits of behaving in a certain way. Thus, good conduct arises from habits that in turn can only be acquired by repeated action and correction, making ethics an intensely practical discipline.

**The Golden Rule (Doctrine of the Mean)**

Deficiency (Vice)	Mean (Virtue)	Excess (Vice)
Sloth	Ambition	Greed
Cowardice	Courage	Rashness
Apathy	Composure	Irritability
Insensibility	Temperance	Self-indulgence
Stinginess	Generosity	Extravagance
Negligence	Prudence	Inconstancy
Envy	Righteousness	Malicious

Each of the virtues is a state of being that naturally seeks its **mean** relative to us. According to Aristotle, the virtuous habit of action is always an intermediate state between the opposed vices of excess and deficiency: too much and too little are always wrong; the right kind of action always lies in the mean. For example, with respect to spending money, generosity is a mean between the excess of wastefulness and the deficiency of stinginess; with respect to relations with strangers, being friendly is a mean between the excess of being ingratiating and the deficiency of being surly.

### **The Will and the Deliberate Action**

Although the virtues are habits of acting or dispositions to act in certain ways, **Aristotle** maintained that these habits are acquired by engaging in proper conduct on specific occasions and that doing so requires thinking about what one does in a specific way. Neither demonstrative knowledge of the sort employed in science nor aesthetic judgment of the sort applied in crafts are relevant to morality. The **understanding** can only explore the nature of origins of things, on Aristotle's view, and **wisdom** can only trace the

demonstratable connections among them. But there is a distinctive mode of thinking that does provide adequately for morality, according to Aristotle: practical intelligence or prudence. This faculty alone comprehends the true character of individual and community welfare and applies its results to the guidance of human action. Acting rightly, then, involves coordinating our desires with correct thoughts about the correct goals or ends. This is the function of deliberative reasoning: to consider each of the many actions that are within one's power to perform, considering the extent to which each of them would contribute to the achievement of the appropriate goal or end, making a deliberate choice to act in the way that best fits that end, and then voluntarily engaging in the action itself. Although virtue is different from intelligence, then, the acquisition of virtue relies heavily upon the exercise of that intelligence.

### **Weakness of the Will**

But doing the right thing is not always so simple, even though few people deliberately choose to develop vicious habits. Aristotle sharply disagreed with Socrates's belief that knowing what is right always results in doing it. The great enemy of moral conduct, on Aristotle's view, is precisely the failure to behave well even on those occasions when one's deliberation has resulted in clear knowledge of what is right. Incontinent agents suffer from a sort of weakness of the will {that prevents them from carrying out actions in conformity with what they have reasoned. This may appear to be a simple failure of intelligence, Aristotle acknowledged, since the akratic individual seems not to draw the appropriate connection between the general moral rule and the particular case to which it applies. Somehow, the overwhelming prospect of some great pleasure seems to obscure one's perception of what is truly good. But this difficulty, Aristotle held, need not be fatal to the achievement of virtue. Although incontinence is not heroically moral, neither is it truly vicious. Consider the difference between an incontinent person, who knows what is right and aims for it but is sometimes overcome by pleasure, and an intemperate person, who purposefully seeks excessive pleasure. Aristotle argued that the vice of intemperance is incurable because it destroys the principle of the related virtue, while incontinence is curable because respect for virtue remains. A clumsy archer may get better with practice, while a skilled archer who chooses not to aim for the target will not.

### **Achieving Happiness**

Aristotle rounded off his discussion of ethical living with a more detailed description of the achievement of true happiness. Pleasure is not a good in itself, he argued, since it is by its nature incomplete. But worthwhile activities are often associated with their own distinctive pleasures. Hence, we are rightly guided in life by our natural preference for engaging in pleasant activities rather than in unpleasant ones.

Genuine happiness lies in action that leads to virtue, since this alone provides true value and not just amusement. Thus, Aristotle held that contemplation is the highest form of moral activity because it is continuous, pleasant, self-sufficient, and complete. In intellectual activity, human beings most nearly approach divine blessedness, while realizing all of the genuine human virtues as well.

## IMMANUEL KANT

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) is the central figure in modern philosophy. He synthesized early modern rationalism and empiricism, set the terms for much of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy, and continues to exercise a significant influence today in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, and other fields. The fundamental idea of Kant's "critical philosophy" – especially in his three Critiques: *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) – is human autonomy.

He argues that the human understanding is the source of the general laws of nature that structure all our experience; and that human reason gives itself the moral law, which is our basis for belief in God, freedom, and immortality. Therefore, scientific knowledge, morality, and religious belief are mutually consistent and secure because they all rest on the same foundation of **human autonomy**, which is also the final end of nature according to the teleological worldview of reflecting judgment that Kant introduces to unify the theoretical and practical parts of his philosophical system.



eightieth birthday.

Immanuel Kant was born April 22, 1724 in Königsberg, near the south-eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. Today Königsberg has been renamed Kaliningrad and is part of Russia. Kant was born into an artisan family of modest means. His father was a master harness maker, and his mother was the daughter of a harness maker, though she was better educated than most women of her social class. Kant's family was never destitute, but his father's trade was in decline during Kant's youth and his parents at times had to rely on extended family for financial support. Kant died February 12, 1804, just short of his

### Deontological Theory

Deontological theory of ethics postulates that morality lies in actions that people perform rather than consequences of actions. According to Immanuel Kant, goodness is not in consequences of actions, but an intrinsic attribute of an action. Rationality of human beings enables them to weigh their actions before doing them. Therefore, it means that a good or a bad action originates from the mind and not consequences of actions.

From deontological perspective, consequences do not matter because nature of actions determines morality. Immanuel Kant reasoned that our beliefs, desires, and preferences guide our rational actions and behaviours. Hence, according to deontological theory, morality is a product of rational actions that originates from the mind and compels people to act or behave in a certain manner.

### Ideas on Duty

Morals must come not from authority or tradition, not from religious commands, but from reason. Kant started not with pain and pleasure but rather with the fact that mankind's distinguishing feature is our possession of reason. Therefore, it follows that all humans have universal rational duties to one another, centring on their duty to respect the other's humanity. To Kant, all humans must be seen as inherently worthy of respect and dignity. He argued that all morality must stem from such duties: a duty based on a deontological ethic. Consequences such as pain or pleasure are irrelevant.

To Kant some duties are absolute. These are the obligations to do certain types of actions. Kant calls this general type of obligation a *categorical imperative*, that is, the action is imperative because it falls within a certain category.

- The most famous is '*Act only by that maxim by which you can, at the same time, will that it be a universal law*'. In other words, when working out what you should do you must ask yourself 'would it be OK if everyone took this type of action?' So if one day it would be convenient to tell a lie I should ask myself 'would it be OK if everyone lied?' Clearly the answer is no, as if everyone lied then no one could have any meaningful dealings with anyone else. Therefore, for Kant I must never lie. The act of lying is morally wrong.
- Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative is to '*So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end in itself, never as a means only*'. Other people should never be seen just as a means to an end.

### Ideas on Good Will

Kant gives the following characterization of the good will. It is something that is good irrespective of effects: "A good will is good not because of what it effects or accomplishes — because of its fitness for attaining some proposed end: it is good through its willing alone — that is, good in itself" What does Kant mean? Well, pick anything you like which you think might make an action good — for example, happiness, pleasure, courage, and then ask yourself if there are any situations you can think of where an action having those features makes those actions worse?

It seems there are. Imagine someone who is happy when kicking a cat; or someone taking pleasure in torture. In such cases the happiness, pleasure and courage make the actions worse. Kant thinks we can repeat this line of thinking for anything and everything, except one thing — the good will. The good will unlike anything else ***is good unconditionally*** and what makes ***a good will good is willing alone***; no other attitudes, or consequences, or characteristics of the agent. Even Kant thinks this sounds like a rather strange idea. So how can he (and we) be confident that the good will even exists?

Consider **Mahatma Gandhi's** (1869–1948) non-violent protest for Indian independence. He stood peacefully whilst the British police beat him. Here is a case where there must have

been an overwhelming desire to fight back. But he did not. In this type of action Kant would claim that we “see” the good will — as he says — “shining like a jewel”. Seeing such resilience in the face of such awful violence we are humbled and can recognize, what Kant calls, its moral worth. Obviously not all actions are as significant as Gandhi’s! However, Kant thinks that any acts like this, which are performed despite conflicting desires, are due to the good will. Considering such actions (can you think of any?) means we can recognize that the good will exists.

## UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism was developed to answer the question of what we morally ought to do, and why. Its core idea is that we ought to act to improve the well-being of everyone by as much as possible. Compared to other ethical theories, it is unusually demanding and may tell us to make substantial changes to how we lead our lives. Perhaps more so than any other ethical theory, it has produced a fierce philosophical debate between its proponents and its critics. A more precise definition of utilitarianism is as follows: ***“Utilitarianism is the view that one morally ought to promote just the sum total of well-being.”***

All ethical theories belonging to the utilitarian family share four defining elements: (i) consequentialism, (ii) welfarism, (iii) impartiality, and (iv) aggregationism.

- **Consequentialism** is the view that one morally ought to promote just good outcomes.
- **Welfarism** is the view that only the *welfare* (also called *well-being*) of individuals determines the value of an outcome.
- **Impartiality** is the view that the identity of individuals is irrelevant to the value of an outcome. Utilitarians hold, more specifically, that equal weight must be given to the interests of all individuals.
- **Aggregationism** is the view that the value of the world is the sum of the values of its parts, where these parts are local phenomena such as experiences, lives, or societies

## JEREMY BENTHAM

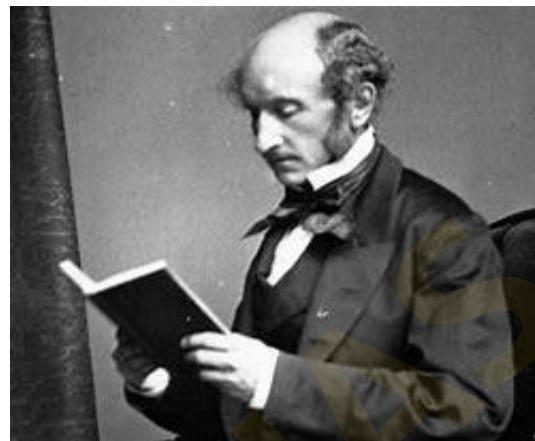
Jeremy Bentham (15 February 1748 – 6 June 1832) was an English philosopher, jurist and social reformer. He is regarded as the founder of modern utilitarianism. Bentham's book *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* was printed in 1780 but not published until 1789. Bentham's work opens with a statement of the principle of utility, “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do... By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever,



and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government" --**MAXIMUM GOOD FOR MAXIMUM NUMBER.**

## JOHN STUART MILL

John Stuart Mill (20 May 1806 – 8 May 1873) was a British philosopher, political economist and civil servant. He was an influential contributor to social theory, political theory, and political economy. He has been called "the most influential Englishspeaking philosopher of the nineteenth century". Mill's conception of liberty justified the freedom of the individual in opposition to unlimited state control. He was a proponent of utilitarianism, an ethical theory developed by Jeremy Bentham. Mill's book Utilitarianism first appeared as a series of three articles published in Fraser's Magazine in 1861 and was reprinted as a single book in 1863. Mill rejects a purely quantitative measurement of utility and says, "It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone."



Mill notes that, contrary to what its critics might say, there is "no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasures of the intellect... a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation." However, he accepts that this is usually because the intellectual pleasures are thought to have circumstantial advantages, i.e., "greater permanency, safety, costliness, &c."

In Chapter Four of Utilitarianism Mill considers what proof can be given for *the Principle of Utility*. He says: "The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible, is that people hear it... In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it... No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness... we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good: that each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons." Instead, Mill will argue that some pleasures are intrinsically better than others.

## SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR



became a classic of feminist literature.

**Simone de Beauvoir**, in full **Simone-Lucie-Ernestine-Marie Bertrand de Beauvoir**, (born January 9, 1908, Paris, France—died April 14, 1986, Paris), French writer and feminist, a member of the intellectual fellowship of philosopher-writers who have given a literary transcription to the themes of existentialism. She is known primarily for her treatise *Le Deuxième Sexe*, 2 vol. (1949; *The Second Sex*), a scholarly and passionate plea for the abolition of what she called the myth of the “eternal feminine.” It

There are some thinkers who are, from the very beginning, unambiguously identified as philosophers (e.g., Plato). There are others whose philosophical place is forever contested (e.g., Nietzsche); and there are those who have gradually won the right to be admitted into the philosophical fold. Simone de Beauvoir is one of these belatedly acknowledged philosophers.

### Ethical Ideas wrapped in Existentialism

Beauvoir's Existentialism is scattered through her many works, both literary and theoretical, including her classic feminist text *The Second Sex*. However, it finds its clearest and most rigorous form in her relatively underrated book *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. The title is intriguing and unattractive at the same time: The fact that an Existentialist talks explicitly about ethics (rather than simply stressing our inescapable freedom) is a rare treat, but surely an ethics that bonds itself to ambiguity is hardly promising to propose any useful answers to moral problems?

This is exactly as Beauvoir intended. She accepts Sartre's Existentialist tenets that there *is no human nature and that human freedom is absolute, i.e. that in any situation whatever we always have a choice*. In other words, human life is not on autopilot, nor is there an instruction manual telling us how to make the right decisions. This means that there is a *good deal of ambiguity*, and, in short, Beauvoir tells us to face up to it and live with it. Given this ambiguity there would seem to be very little opportunity for moral theorising. Not so, objects Beauvoir to this standard Existentialist conclusion. We must not expect absolute solutions and lasting answers: “**Man fulfils himself in the transitory or not at all.**” But this doesn't mean that all ways of living, and all courses of action, are equally good. The way forward is to look at the nature of our relationship to other people.

Sartre's Existentialism leads to a clear individualism, in which the fact that there are other people presents a constant threat of falling into ‘bad faith’. Others judge us and impose limits on us to the unbearable degree that “hell is other people”. By contrast, Beauvoir's own individualism is more nuanced, in a Kantian way: “Is this kind of ethics individualistic, or not? Yes, if one means by that that it accords to the individual an absolute value and recognises in him alone the power of laying the foundations of his own existence. The

individual is defined only by his relationship to the world and to other individual. His freedom can only be achieved through the freedom of others."

**"No existence can be validly fulfilled if it is limited to itself."** Beauvoir's ethics views the existence of others as an opportunity. In fact, it is the *only* opportunity we have to give reality and meaning to what we do and therefore to what we are: We must invite others to join our projects. Beauvoir gives examples of how many of us make poor use, or no use at all, of our freedom. She even explains how freedom for children differs from adult freedom. Children can do what they like to an extent, without being morally judged for it, because they are largely free of responsibilities to others. Not so adults, yet some adults still try and live in the naïve freedom of childhood. Others try to control or manipulate people in an attempt to limit their freedom – a tactic that according to Beauvoir is ironically doomed to end in self-deception and the limiting of one's own freedom. A mature and constructive use of our freedom, our only chance of fulfilling ourselves as individuals, involves making a 'plea' to others, appealing to them for their attention and cooperation.

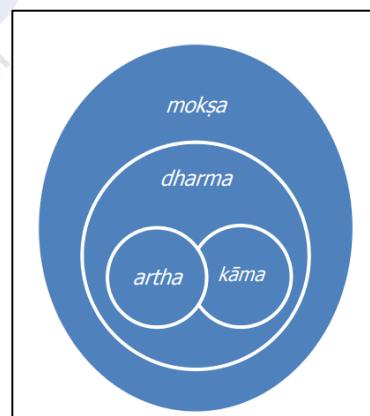
## INDIAN MORAL THINKERS

In India moral values, are inspired from, since ancient times, the Vedas, Puranas, holy books from Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism etc. all depict the moral values or the moral duties of a human being which was considered as mandatory to lead a perfect & happy life. It is not the only ancient belief but has relevance even today. It is believed that following a moral and ethical life would lead a person to attain salvation i.e., moksha. With this belief, people lead their lives.

Ethics (*nītiśāstra*) is a branch of philosophy that deals with moral values. The word 'ethics' comes from the Greek *ethikos*, which means a set of moral principles. The word is sometimes used to refer to the moral principles of a particular social or religious group or an individual. It studies human character and conduct in terms of good and bad, right and wrong.

*What are the qualities of good character? What type of human behaviour is evil or bad? How should one act in life?*

These are some of the fundamental questions of ethics. The moral code of the people is an indicator of their social and spiritual ways of life. The true essence of human life is to live amidst worldly joy and sorrows. Ethics is primarily concerned with the moral issues of the world. True religion lays stress on moral virtues. People are required to discharge their duties according to the moral code of ethics. A true knowledge of ethics would be attained if one practices and imbibes these moral values. Ethics is of two kinds, individual and social.



Individual ethics is indicative of the good qualities that are essential for individual well-being and happiness. Social ethics represents the values that are needed for social order and harmony. In the knowledge tradition of India, ethics has its origin in its religious and philosophical thinking. From time immemorial, various religious faiths have flourished here. Every religious and every philosophical system of India has a prominent ethical component. Ethics is the core of all these systems. In every religious tradition, good moral conduct is considered essential for a happy and contented life. Without following the path of righteousness no one can attain supreme goal (mokṣa) of life. For this one has to perform good deeds and avoid wrong-doing.

## THE COSMIC ORDER

India has a very ancient history of thinking about ethics. Its central concepts are represented in Ṛgveda, one of oldest knowledge texts not only of India but of the entire world. In Ṛgveda, we come across the idea of an all-pervading cosmic order (ṛta) which stands for harmony and balance in nature and in human society. Here ṛta is described as a power or force which is the controller of the forces of nature and of moral values in human society. In human society, when this harmony and balance are disturbed, there is disorder and suffering. This is the power or force that lies behind nature and keeps everything in balance. In Indian tradition, the concept of ṛta gave rise to the idea of dharma. The term dharma here does not mean mere religion; it stands for duty, obligation and righteousness. It is a whole way of life in which ethical values are considered supreme and everyone is expected to perform his or her duty according to his or her social position and station in life. In Buddhism, the word dhamma is used, which is the Pāli equivalent of the Sanskrit word dharma. The guidelines and rules regarding what is considered as appropriate behaviour for human beings are prescribed in the Dharma Śāstras. These are sociological texts that tell us about our duties and obligations as individuals as well as members of society. In the Hindu way of life, every individual is expected to perform his or her duty appropriate to his or her caste (varṇa) and stage of life (āśrama). This division of one's life into the four āśramas and their respective dharmas, was designed, in principle at least, to provide fulfilment to the person in his social, moral and spiritual aspects, and so to lead to harmony and balance in the society. The four āśramas are: (1) brahmacharya, stage of studentship; (2) grhastha, stage of the householder; (3) vanaprastha, life in the forest; and saṁnyāsa, renunciation. Apart from this, the concept of four ends of life (puruṣārthas) is also very important. These four ends of life are the goals which are desirable in them and also needed for fulfilment of human aspirations. These are (1) righteousness (dharma); (2) worldly gain (artha); (3) fulfilment of desire; (kāma) and (4) liberation (mokṣa). The fulfilment of all of these four ends of life is important for man. In this classification, dharma and mokṣa are most important from the ethical point of view. They give right direction and purpose to human life. For instance, acquiring wealth (artha) is a desirable objective, provided however it also serves dharma, that is, the welfare of the society. One possible view of the puruṣārthas: artha and kāma within dharma, and mokṣa beyond. In the Bhagavad-Gītā, selfless action (niśkāma karma) is advocated. It is an action which is required to be performed without

consideration of personal consequences. It is an altruistic action aimed at the well-being of others rather than for oneself. In Hinduism this doctrine is known as karma yoga.

mokṣa, dharma, artha, kāma

A depiction on cloth of Kṛṣṇa's discourse to Arjuna in the Gītā: a lesson in ethics. The concept of right and wrong is the core of the Mahābhārata which emphasizes, among others, the values of non-violence, truthfulness, absence of anger, charity, forgiveness and self realization. It is only by performing one's righteous duties or dharma that one can hope to attain the supreme path to the highest good. It is dharma alone that gives both prosperity (abhyudaya) and the supreme spiritual good (niśryas). Similarly, the importance of ethics and ethical values is highlighted in epics and philosophical texts like, Upaniṣads, Rāmāyaṇa, darśana-śāstras and dharma-śāstras. The darśana śāstras are philosophical texts, which provide rational explanations of the ethical issues; the universal moral problems faced by man in daily life are placed in a philosophical context. In the dharma-śāstras, emphasis is on the social ethics. In these texts the inter-personal and social relations are placed in an ethical framework for guidance. In these texts the ethical problems are discussed in an indirect manner.

### The Bhakti Movement

During the middle ages, the Bhakti movement arose in India. It was an all-India movement of social reform and spiritual awakening. It played a very important part in reawakening moral consciousness in India. Jayadeva, Nāmdev, Tulsīdās, Kabīr, Ravidās and Mīra are some of the prominent saints of this movement. Most of these saints came from the downtrodden sections of society. Rejecting the distinctions of caste, colour and creed, they spread the message of human equality. They were saint poets. In their vānī (poetic compositions) they propagated the ideals of love, compassion, justice and selfless service. These are the ethical values which we need even today.

## BUDDHISM

Buddhism also gives primary importance to ethics. Sometimes it is called an ethical religion as it does not discuss or depend on the existence of God (the Supreme Being with form and attributes) but instead believes in alleviating the suffering of humanity. The ethical values in this faith are based on the life and teachings of the Buddha. These moral instructions are included in Buddhist scriptures or handed down through tradition. According to Buddhism, the foundation of ethics is the pañcaśīla (five rules), which advocates refraining from killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and intoxicants. In becoming a Buddhist, a lay person is encouraged to take a vow to abstain from these negative actions.

In Buddhism, the two most important ethical virtues are compassion (karuṇa) and friendliness (maitrī). One should have deep sympathy and goodwill for the suffering people and should have the qualities of a good friend. The most important ethical value is non-



A fresco depicting the Buddha preaching

violence or non-injury to all living beings. Buddhist ethics is based on Four Noble Truths. These are: (1) life is suffering, (2) there is a cause for suffering, (3) there is a way to remove it, and (4) it can be removed (through the eight-fold path). It advocates the path of righteousness (dhamma). In a way this is the crux of Buddhist morality.

The Basic Teachings of Buddha which are core to Buddhism are:

- The Three Universal Truths;
- The Four Noble Truths; and
- The Noble Eightfold Path.

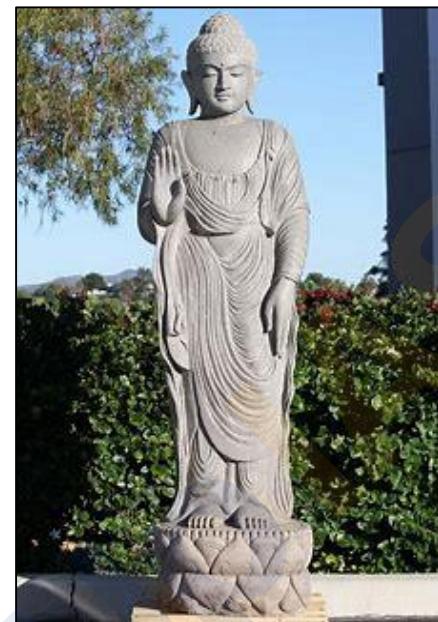
#### THE THREE UNIVERSAL TRUTHS

1. *Nothing is lost in the universe*
2. *Everything Changes*
3. *The Law of Cause and Effect: Effect is dependent on its cause: Dependent Origination*

#### THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The Buddha's Four Noble Truths explore human suffering. They may be described (somewhat simplistically) as:

1. Dukkha: Suffering exists: Life is suffering. Suffering is real and almost universal. Suffering has many causes: loss, sickness, pain, failure, and the impermanence of pleasure.
2. Samudaya: There is a cause of suffering. Suffering is due to attachment. It is the desire to have and control things. It can take many forms: craving of sensual pleasures; the desire for fame; the desire to avoid unpleasant sensations, like fear, anger or jealousy.
3. Nirodha: There is an end to suffering. Attachment can be overcome. Suffering ceases with the final liberation of Nirvana (Nibbana). The mind experiences complete freedom, liberation and non-attachment. It lets go of any desire or craving.
4. Magga: In order to end suffering, you must follow the Eightfold Path. There is a path for accomplishing this.



#### THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The Buddha's Eightfold Path consists of:

##### **Pragya: Discernment, wisdom:**

1. Samma ditthi: Right Understanding of the Four Noble Truths. Right View is the true understanding of the four noble truths.
2. Samma sankappa: Right thinking; following the right path in life. Right Aspiration is the true desire to free oneself from attachment, ignorance, and hatefulness. These two are referred to as Prajna, or Wisdom.

##### **Sheel: Virtue, morality:**

3. Samma vaca: Right speech: No lying, criticism, condemning, gossip, harsh language. Right Speech involves abstaining from lying, gossiping, or hurtful talk.
4. Samma kammanta Right conduct or Right Action involves abstaining from hurtful behaviours, such as killing, stealing, and careless sex. These are called the Five Precepts.
5. Samma ajiva: Right livelihood: Support yourself without harming others. Right Livelihood means making your living in such a way as to avoid dishonesty and hurting others, including animals. These three are referred to as Shila, or Morality.

#### **Samadhi: Concentration, meditation:**

6. Samma vayama: Right Effort: Promote good thoughts; conquer evil thoughts. Right Effort is a matter of exerting oneself in regards to the content of one's mind: Bad qualities should be abandoned and prevented from arising again. Good qualities should be enacted and nurtured.
7. Samma sati: Right Mindfulness: Become aware of your body, mind and feelings. Right Mindfulness is the focusing of one's attention on one's body, feelings, thoughts, and consciousness in such a way as to overcome craving, hatred, and ignorance.
8. Samma samadhi: Right Concentration: Meditate to achieve a higher state of consciousness. Right Concentration is meditating in such a way as to progressively realize a true understanding of imperfection, impermanence, and non-separateness

#### **PRECEPTS IN BUDDHISM**

There are eight precepts in Buddhism. Among them five precepts are not given in the form of commands such as "thou shalt not...", but are training rules in order to live a better life in which one is happy, without worries, and can meditate as well. They are:

- 1) To refrain from taking life. (non-violence towards sentient life forms).
- 2) To refrain from taking that which is not given (not committing theft).
- 3) To refrain from sexual misconduct (abstinence from immoral sexual behaviour)
- 4) To refrain from lying. (Speaking truth always)
- 5) To refrain from intoxicants which lead to loss of mindfulness (refrain from using drugs or alcohol) In the eight precepts, the third precept on sexual misconduct is made stricter and becomes a precept of celibacy.

#### **The three additional rules of the eight precepts are:**

- 6) To refrain from eating at the wrong time (only eat from sunrise to noon)
- 7) To refrain from dancing, using jewellery, going to shows etc.
- 8) To refrain from using a high, luxurious bed.

Buddha has also taught with clarity, how people should live with their family members and other members of the society, bringing happiness not only to themselves but also to the world. Condition for the Welfare of a Community

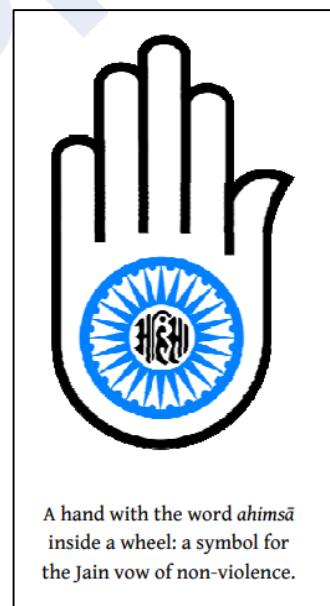
The seven conditions for the welfare, prosperity, and happiness of any community, nation or country have been described in the ***Mahaparinibbana Sutta of the Dighanikaya***. These conditions must be considered before serving the people for their gradual development and welfare. The conditions include:

- 1) To assemble on occasion whenever necessary to discuss the affairs of the community.
- 2) To do everything by consensus.
- 3) To respect old traditions and not transgress them.
- 4) To respect and obey elders and superiors.
- 5) To respect, worship and honour all religions.
- 6) To honour and respect all holy people, irrespective of their caste, creed or gender.
- 7) To respect women in general.

## JAINISM

Jainism is another important religion of this land. It places great emphasis on three most important things in life, called three gems (triratna). These are: right vision (samyaka drsti), right knowledge (samyaka jñana) and right conduct (samyaka caritra). Apart from these, Jain thinkers emphasize the need for reverence (draddha).

There are other moral principles governing the life of Jains. Most important of these are ideas of punya (merit) and papa (demerit). Such deeds are very important from the ethical point of view. Papa is the result of evil deeds generated by vice and punya is the result of good deeds generated by virtuous conduct. One should take up the path of a virtuous life to lead the way to spiritual growth. Ultimately, one transcends both virtue and vice. Right conduct is necessary for the spiritual progress of man. The most important thing in Jainism is the practice of non-violence (ahimsā), or abstaining from inflicting injury on any being. It is required that the principle of ahimsā should be followed in thought, word and deed. In Jainism, the other cardinal virtues are: forgiveness, humility, simplicity, non covetousness, austerity, purity, renunciation and celibacy, restraint.



A hand with the word *ahimsā* inside a wheel: a symbol for the Jain vow of non-violence.

**Jain ethical code** prescribes two ***dharma***s or rules of conduct. One for those who wish to become ***ascetic*** and another for the ***śrāvaka*** (householders). Five fundamental vows are prescribed for both votaries. These vows are observed by ***śrāvakas*** (householders) partially and are termed as ***anuvratas*** (small vows). Ascetics observe these five vows more strictly and therefore observe complete abstinence.

According to Jain text, ***Puruṣārthaśiddhyupāya***: “All these subdivisions (injury, falsehood, stealing, unchastity, and attachment) are *hiṃsā* as indulgence in these sullies the pure

nature of the soul. Falsehood etc. have been mentioned separately only to make the disciple understand through illustrations."

**Ahimsā** -- Ahimsa (non-injury) is formalised into Jain doctrine as the first and foremost vow. According to the Jain text, Tattvarthasutra: "The severance of vitalities out of passion is injury."

**Satya**--Satya is the vow to not lie, and to speak the truth. A monk or nun must not speak the false, and either be silent or speak the truth. According to Pravin Shah, the great vow of satya applies to "speech, mind, and deed", and it also means discouraging and disapproving others who perpetuate a falsehood. The underlying cause of falsehood is passion and therefore, it is said to cause *himsā* (injury).

**Asteya** ---Asteya as a great vow means not take anything which is not freely given and without permission. It applies to anything even if unattended or unclaimed, whether it is of worth or worthless thing. This vow of non-stealing applies to action, speech and thought. Further a mendicant, states Shah, must neither encourage others to do so nor approve of such activities.

**Brahmacharya**--- Brahmacharya as a great vow of Jain mendicants means celibacy and avoiding any form of sexual activity with body, words or mind. A monk or nun should not enjoy sensual pleasures, which includes all the five senses, nor ask others to do the same, nor approve of another monk or nun engaging in sexual or sensual activity.

**Aparigraha**-- According to *Tattvarthasutra*, "Infatuation is attachment to possessions". Jain texts mention that "attachment to possessions (*parigraha*) is of two kinds: attachment to internal possessions (*ābhyantra parigraha*), and attachment to external possessions (*bāhya parigraha*). The fourteen internal possessions are:



External possessions are divided into two subclasses, the non-living, and the living. According to Jain texts, both internal and external possessions are proved to be *himsā* (injury).

### ***Anekantavada***

According to Jainism the nature of truth and reality is complex and it has multiple facets which cannot be perceived or understood by a simple common man. There is no single statement that can describe absolutism of reality in this world. The people perceive the

same aspect from different angles and hence indulge in debates and heated arguments to prove their point to be completely true and absolute. Different people look at from different aspects of the same reality and therefore, their partial findings seem to be contradictory to one another. Jain Philosophy came with an exception of introducing a doctrine called anekantavada which can wipe out anger, hatred, jealousy, greed, arguments, war and pride. It is considered as one of the fundamental doctrines of Jainism. According to this doctrine one should always try to analyse things from different points of view.

All the aspects have many facets which cannot be seen or understood easily because the things may not always be what they seem like. Proper utilisation of this doctrine will help the followers to avoid speech of violence and hatred for others. Respect for the opinions of different people and avoiding negative thoughts would definitely help in solving problems of our present day to day lives. Anekantavada teaches us different lessons by which not only individuals but the whole nation can be benefited.

Some of its characteristics are:

- i) We should never insist anyone to accept our ideas and opinions,
- ii) Choices of words are necessary
- iii) One should not be proud but humble
- iv) Be a trustworthy person

Creating universal brotherhood and friendship Such kinds of virtues will definitely help the individuals to promote peace and harmony in the society. It needs to be cultivated and preserved so that we can develop the quality of sensibility and forgiveness among us.

### **Karma**

The doctrine of Karma is a result of a very old and well-established sayings that, 'you reap whatever you sow'. In other words, the doctrine of karma is a phenomenon of everyone's day to day life which is observed and experienced by the people that every action has a reaction and one should be ready to pay heavily for its wrong deeds. Jainism believes that good karma (punya) will lead to positive effects like happiness, contentment, love, peace and joy and bad karma (pap) will lead to negative effects like hatred, sadness, sufferings and problems. According to the doctrine of karma the course of life of every living being here and hereafter is determined by his karma or his deeds and a pious life leads to comforts, contentment and general well-being in the present life and re -birth in higher and better forms of existence. Evil actions result in birth in lower forms of existence in future life and unhappiness or misery, in the present existence.

## SIKHISM

Sikhism, the most recent faith in Indian tradition, also lays great stress on ethics in human life. In the words of its founder, Guru Nanak, "Truth is higher than everything else, higher still is truthful conduct." The cardinal virtues according to Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture, are: compassion (daya), charity (dana), contentment (santokha), non enmity (nirvur) and selfless service (seva). In addition to these one is also morally obliged to practise the general and eternal virtues,



During the battle of Anandpur Sahib in 1704, Bhai Kanhaiya, a follower of Guru Gobind Singh, was often seen carrying a pouch of water to quench the thirst of the wounded, whether they were Sikhs or soldiers of the Mughal army. This exemplifies the values of non-enmity, service and compassion.

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## THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

It is one of the celebrated sacred works of Hindus. It consists of the spiritual teaching of Lord Krsna to Arjuna and thus acquires the name 'B Parva, the Mahabharata, one of the grand Indian epics. The stocking feature of the Gita is the way it unified different methods of spiritual development into a profound ethical vision. This ethical vision is backed up by a host of philosophical ideas borrowed from the speculations on Self, current in the Upanisadic period, and the theory of gunas which later came down to us as the classical Samkhya system. These philosophical ideas are integrated with the theistic doctrines of Bhagavata tradition which treats Vasudeva or Krsna as the Lord.

### ***Central Teaching***

Gita's ethics is different ethics of activism. It is not supporting the ascetic ethics. Action without any hope of



A depiction on cloth of Kṛṣṇa's discourse to Arjuna in the Gītā: a lesson in ethics.

reward or feedback is called true action. It is not renunciation of action. Gita's concept of the division of works among four classes of men can be compared to plato. Gita advocates to act according to the prescribed works for Brahmin, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sudras. Plato states three classes of men and advises them to act according to prescribed works for different classes for the highest social good. Bhagavad Gita,s ethics of Niskama Karma has similarly with Immanuel Kant"s ethics of "Duty for duties sake" The ethics of both advises us to perform our duties without any desire for fruits or any consideration of ends and consequences. But kant regards good will as the highest good whereas Gita"s goal is the attainment of God. Moreover, Kant"s ethics is legal but Gita"s ethics is teleological. The Bhagavad Gita is one of the important religious treatises of Hinduism which gives impetus on Karma yoga or function of divine service. Inaction is equal to death and therefore one should act according to his own nature. Gita advises us to perform action as a duty without expecting its results. It is philosophically significant to regard action as divine action. Gita prevents illegal action in the name of religion. Action are to be performed as a service to humanity which will lead to liberation or to the ultimate goal of human life. Niskama Karma can be regarded as the ethical also.

### **Karm Yoga**

According to Bhagavad Gita, karma yoga is a way to union of the finite soul with God through action. It unites the human will with the divine will. Man can't remain inactive for a single moment. one has to act for the preservation of his for he is compelled to act by his organic needs and physical impulses. It is clear in the following sloka of Gita- "*Na hi kascit ksanam api jatu tisthatya karmakrti Karyate hyasah karma sarvah prakritijair gunaih.*" This sloka translates as: For none ever remains inactive even for a moment; For all are compelled to action by the Gun (qualities) inherent in prakriti (the fact in nature). Hence, to live in this world one has to act according to his nature because inaction is death.

Here thinking, talking and any kind of physical work is included in karma only proper action can help us to continue our life cycle. Karma as divine service is beginning less and through such action, we can also reach the highest goal of human life. Every individuals born with certain aptitudes and predispositions which constitute his innate nature and determine his station in the society. His special vocation in life is determined by his native endowment. He ought to perform his specific duties for the sake of duty, which fit in with his abilities. In Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna advised Arjuna to do his allotted task for action is superior to inaction. It is because with inaction even life's normal course is not possible. In this regard Gita states: "*Niyatam Kuru Karma tvam Karma jyayo hyakarmanah. Sarirayatrapi Ca te na praiddhyed*".

### **Types of Karmas**

According to Gita, karmas or actions are of two types- (a) Sakama karma or action with expectations of fruits and(b) Niskama karma or action without any selfish desires. An action done with some expectation about the outcome is called sakam karma. On the other hand the action done without being attached to the fruits and done simply as a matter of duty is

called niskama karma. In order to perform niskama karma we have to give up selfish expectations about the outcome, to give up the proprietorship of the action and offer all actions to God.

A true karma yogi offers the fruits of action to God and works for the benefit of the society without any pride. "The yogi conquering attachment to the fruits of works, attains to enduring peace. Those who impelled by desire, are attached to the fruits of their action do get bound as though by chain." Gita gives light to the fact that sakam karma is the cause of bondage and niskama karma paves the way to liberation from birth and death. So, one ought to perform his duties in a disinterested spirit without egoistic desires. One who is attached to fruits of his actions is bound by his attachment.

Renunciation of action to God is essential to get freedom and peace. We should avoid to be actuated by love or hatred, anger or fear, joy or sorrow for these are belong to mental being and are foreign to spiritual being. One should conquer egoistic desires. But we can't eradicate all desires and therefore we have to change our egoistic desire in to altruistic desire. Gita is against the renunciation of one's specific duties without attachment and desire for fruits is true renunciation. The Gita tries to build up a philosophy of Karma based on jnana and supported by Bhakti. The sumnum bomum of the Gita's ethics is union with the supreme Self or God. This is called liberation or ultimate freedom. The liberated Self is in constant communion with God and stays in the God's essence. Samkara attempts to graft the Vedantic conception of liberation on the Gita. According to him, liberation is necessarily the result of philosophical knowledge of the Self and there is no other means to it.

## MAHATMA GANDHI

Some of his moral ideas are discussed as follows:



### TRUTH

Mahatma Gandhi says that truth is the law of our being. Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. Truth is a virtue. Truth is in fact self-revealing, but that we have become blind on account of our ignorance. Ignorance, according to Mahatma Gandhi, is not necessary or natural to the self. Mahatma Gandhi says that moral degradation or perversion of one kind or cause ignorance. He explicitly mentions the six deadly enemies which cause prejudice, malice and ill-will to arise, on account of which the person is unable to see or feel the truth. These deadly enemies are desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. Therefore, in order to practice truth, one must constantly endeavour to oneself

from these evils, one must cultivate moral purity and courage and must not allow these enemies to cloud his vision.

Mahatma Gandhi is also aware that in the present-day world falsehood appears to be more paying and beneficial. By speaking lies people do get success. Mahatma Gandhi is aware of it, but very logically he demonstrates the superiority of truth over falsehood. There is one condition regarding the speaking of the truth which Mahatma Gandhi accepts because of its pragmatic value. Even in accepting this Mahatma Gandhi is trying to be faithful to the ancient Indian teaching. The condition is that the truth should be spoken in a pleasant way. If the truth is expressed in an unpleasant, blunt and rough manner, it may be socially injurious as it might give rise to anger and quarrels. In fact, in the ancient Indian philosophy there is a maxim which says, 'speak the truth, and speak the pleasant; but do not speak the unpleasant truth'.

#### NON-VIOLENCE

Mahatma Gandhi says that Non-violence means to keep oneself completely away from such action which may hurt others physically or mentally. Violence is a behaviour involving physical force intending to hurting, damaging or killing.

Nonviolence has the following features

- Non-violence is to bear distresses by oneself to make others happy.
- Non-violence is the most effective means to fight against discrimination and falsehood.
- Non-violence is not the outward strength.
- Non-violence is the internal power.
- Nonviolence promotes vegetarianism and reverence for all life.
- Non-violence prevents murder, war, capital punishment in the world.
- Non-violence avoids abortion, mercy killing, suicide and infanticide in human society.
- Non-violence creates freedom from physical and psychological violence, exploitation, injustice, inequality and discrimination.
- Non-violence develops love, cooperation, forgiving, help, and kindness in humanity.
- Non-violence is fundamental to the discovery of truth. Truth is God and non-violence is God's love. Truth is the ultimate goal of human life and non-violence is the means to achieve ultimate goal.

Without violence it is possible to seek and find truth. Non-violence and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disintegrate and separate them. They are like the two sides of the same coin. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that the first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving, and kindness.

#### NON-STEALING

Mahatma Gandhi says that non-stealing is not to steal. Non-stealing is not to take by thought, word and action anything to which one is not entitled. There are two senses of the word no stealing; it popularly means the observance of the rule of not taking away the belonging or the property of anybody unless it is given by that person. But there is a more rigorous meaning of the word non-stealing; it forbids the keeping or holding in possession of such things that are not needed.

Mahatma Gandhi uses the non-stealing in both these senses. In fact, in conceiving the nature of this virtue he is influenced by Jainism which believes that stealing is also a kind of violence. Property is, in fact, outer life, because bodily existence depends upon property. Therefore, to rob one of his properties is to take away his outer life. Non-stealing is a virtue also because stealing is not compatible with the highest virtue of love. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi recommends that a truly moral individual has to take a solemn vow to cultivate the virtue of non-stealing.

#### CHARACTER

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within. Character is the key to success. A man of character will make himself worthy of any position he is given. Character, not brains, will count at the crucial moment. Character is any day more eloquent than speech. Character must be above suspicion and truthful and self-controlled. All your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsworth would be vain if at the same time you do not build your character and attain mastery over your thoughts and your actions. A vow imparts stability, ballast and firmness to one's character. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers. A dissolute character is more dissolute in thought than in deed, and the same is true of violence. Literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and character building is independent of literary training. Character building comes from their very lives and really speaking it must come from within you. Mahatma says that if wealth is lost nothing is lost; if health is lost something is lost; if character is lost everything is lost.

#### NON-POSSESSIVENESS

Mahatma Gandhi says that non-possessiveness is renunciation of possessions by thought, word and deed. Non-possessiveness is restricted to contentment. Non-possessiveness is nonacceptance. Possessiveness is unwilling to share one's possessions. Mahatma Gandhi feels that the tendency to possess things is the cause of all evils. Therefore, one must cultivate the discipline of living with what one has.

Mahatma Gandhi is aware that it is not possible to practice this virtue in the absolute way, because absolute non-possession is impossible in life; even the body is a possession- the things needed for the preservation of the body are also possessions, and therefore, so long as we are alive we cannot completely do away with possessions. Even so, non-possessiveness has to be practiced to the best of one's capacity because this does away with the cause of rift in social life and provides a solid foundation for a universal love to flourish.

## SWAMI VIKEKANANDA

Moral philosophy of Vivekananda is neither pure and simple consequentialism nor deontology. Vivekananda made Advaita Vedanta his point of departure. The elixir of Advaita Vedanta is that Brahman alone is real and the individual selves are not different from Brahman or the supreme Self. The essential oneness of all human beings is the quintessence of Advaita metaphysics. This identity or non-duality constitutes the foundation of Vivekananda's conception of universal religion. It is non-duality, again, which makes for human fellowship or universal brotherhood. Vivekananda asks us to practise self-effacement in all our actions, it is an exhortation to work for the sake of duty.



Put in this way Vivekananda's ethics contrasts with Immanuel Kant's concept of moral action. An action has moral worth if it is done from the motive of doing one's duty. Vivekananda compares duty with the 'midday summer sun which scorches the innermost soul of mankind'. In Vivekananda we find a definition of duty that is different in spirit from that given by Kant. For Kant duty is a compulsion, a person's ethical obligation. For Vivekananda duty 'is the impulsion of the flesh, of our attachment; and when an attachment has become established, we call it duty'. For him such duty is slavery. He says: 'How easy it is to interpret slavery as duty—the morbid attachment of flesh for flesh as duty! Men go out into the world and struggle and fight for money or for any other thing to which they get attached. Ask them why they do it. They say, "It is a duty." It is the absurd greed for gold and gain, and they try to cover it with a few flowers. Vivekananda's moral philosophy is not a philosophy of attachment and not an ethics of duty.'

The moral philosophy of Vivekananda is a corollary of his concept of religion. It should be noted that for Vivekananda religion is not a doctrine, nor a theory, but one's realization of the essential Divinity that pervades all individual selves. The ethics of Vivekananda is based on the oneness of all human beings.

- Vivekananda tells us: '**Oneness is the secret of everything. All is one, which manifests itself, either in thought, or life, or soul, or body, and the difference is only in degree**'. From this non-dualistic thought follows certain moral codes that seem to parallel Western thought. Since all are one, there is hardly any difference between myself and others. In fact, there is no other who stands in contrast with myself. The distinction between 'I' and 'thou' vanishes. So I cannot do anything harmful towards anybody, for that will be doing harm to myself. This is the very idea contained in a version of Kant's categorical imperative. Codes of conduct or moral codes must be universally applied. What is good for me is good for another. If an

action is not good for me, it cannot be good for you. Universality is the outcome of the oneness taught in Advaita Vedanta.

- Another corollary of the above thesis is that **human dignity must be respected**. If all is one, we have no right to look down upon those who may not come up to our level of development. Therefore, the saying ‘condemn none’ is the most universal moral principle. Elsewhere Vivekananda writes that hatred is opposed to truth. What is the test of truth? Truth is that which makes for oneness. This is the quintessence of religion. This conception of truth entails a criterion of goodness of human conduct. Whatever action makes for oneness is good and whatever action makes for diversity is bad. Goodness does not only qualify our action; it also characterizes our thought. Vivekananda says: ‘We have to decide whether they make for disintegration, multiplicity or for oneness, binding soul to soul’
- Vivekananda proposed a religion for all human beings, reared on the foundation of Advaita Vedanta. In a letter he said a person can look at all communities and religions with love and affection only from the point of view of Advaita. Vivekananda believed this must be the religion of the future human society. This is the essence of practical Vedanta, which looks at the whole world of human beings as one’s own Self.
- The philosophy of equality that Vivekananda preached for the world has its roots in Vedantic non-dualism. The concept of equality will be empty without an understanding of the identity of the individual and the supreme Self.
- If you harm another person, you will harm yourself, because what you call the other is really your own self. You pervade everything under and above the sun. You exist in every soul—the rich and the poor, the ignorant and the wise, the weak and the strong. The realization of yourself as ubiquitous makes you sympathetic toward everybody. The lesson of this monistic approach is if you do evil to others, you degrade yourself. Thus, it is clear that Advaita, oneness, is the basis of morality. Other theories of morality can impart moral education but cannot explain why one should be moral.
- The ethics of Vivekananda may be described as the ethics of renunciation. He said: ‘Renunciation is the very basis upon which ethics stands. There never was an ethical code preached which had not renunciation for its basis’ (2.62). He also stated that various ethical laws ‘have that one central idea, eternal self-abnegation. Perfect self-annihilation is the ideal of ethics’

The above statements do not only bring out the essence of ethics, it also unfolds Vivekananda’s concept of religion. The most significant characteristic of religion is that it exhorts us to give up selfishness and to transcend the ego. The motto of ethics is effacement of individualism.

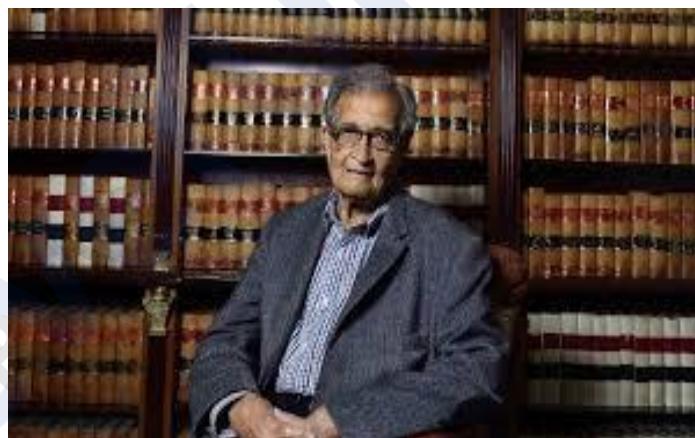
- ‘The highest ideal of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest metaphysical conception’ and therefore the more unselfish a person, the more moral he or she is. Understanding the relation between morality and self-abnegation requires a deep look at Vivekananda’s philosophy of action and its apparent

similarity with the philosophy propounded in the Bhagavadgita. An action binds one to bondage so long as it is done with a desire to reap its fruit. An action is moral to the extent it is performed with complete detachment towards its result.

## AMARTYA SEN

The Capability Approach is defined by its choice of focus upon the moral significance of individuals' capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value. This distinguishes it from more established approaches to ethical evaluation, such as utilitarianism or resourcism, which focus exclusively on subjective well-being or the availability of means to the good life, respectively. A person's capability to live a good life is defined in terms of the set of valuable 'beings and doings' like being in good health or having loving relationships with others to which they have real access.

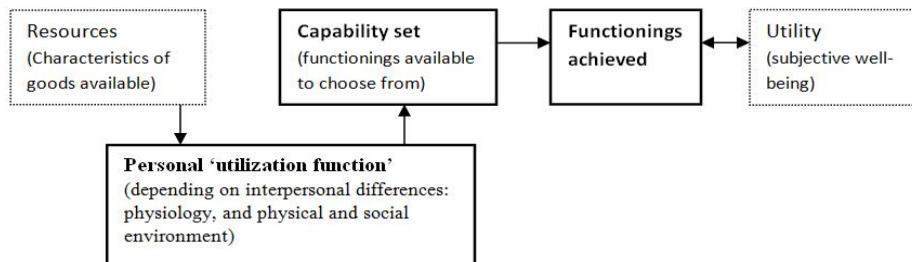
When evaluating well-being, Sen argues, the most important thing is to consider what people are actually able to be and do. The commodities or wealth people have or their mental reactions (utility) are an inappropriate focus because they provide only limited or indirect information about how well a life is going. Sen illustrates his point with the example of a standard bicycle. This has the characteristics of 'transportation' but whether it will actually provide transportation will depend on the characteristics of those who try to use it. It might be considered a generally useful tool for most people to extend their mobility, but it obviously will not do that for a person without legs. Even if that person, by some quirk, finds the bicycle delightful, we should nevertheless be able to note within our evaluative system that she still lacks transportation. Nor does this mental reaction show that the same person would not appreciate transportation if it were really available to her.



The Capability Approach focuses directly on the quality of life that individuals are actually able to achieve. This quality of life is analysed in terms of the core concepts of 'functionings' and 'capability'.

- *Functionings* are states of 'being and doing' such as being well-nourished, having shelter. They should be distinguished from the commodities employed to achieve them (as 'bicycling' is distinguishable from 'possessing a bike').
- *Capability* refers to the set of valuable functionings that a person has effective access to. Thus, a person's capability represents the effective freedom of an individual to choose between different functioning combinations – between different kinds of life

– that she has reason to value. (In later work, Sen refers to ‘capabilities’ in the plural (or even ‘freedoms’) instead of a single capability set, and this is also common in the wider capability literature. This allows analysis to focus on sets of functionings related to particular aspects of life, for example, the capabilities of literacy, health, or political freedom.



### Valuation: Which Functionings Matter for the Good Life?

Sen argues that the correct focus for evaluating how well-off people are is their capability to live a life we have reason to value, not their resource wealth or subjective well-being. But in order to begin to evaluate how people are performing in terms of capability, we first need to determine which functionings matter for the good life and how much, or at least we need to specify a valuation procedure for determining this.

One way of addressing the problem is to specify a list of the constituents of the flourishing life, and do this on philosophical grounds (Martha Nussbaum does this for her Capability Theory of Justice). Sen rejects this approach because he argues that it denies the relevance of the values people may come to have and the role of democracy (Sen 2004b). Philosophers and social scientists may provide helpful ideas and arguments, but the legitimate source of decisions about the nature of the life we have reason to value must be the people concerned. Sen therefore proposes a social choice exercise requiring both public reasoning and democratic procedures of decision-making.

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