



**FYBA**  
**PHILOSOPHY PAPER - I**  
**SEMESTER - I**  
**MORAL PHILOSOPHY**  
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# I

## F.Y.B.A. PAPER - I MORAL PHILOSOPHY SEMESTER - I

### **Unit 1: Introduction to Moral Philosophy [ 15 lectures]**

- (a) Definition, nature and scope (branches) of philosophy
- (b) Nature of moral philosophy (facts and values; intrinsic and extrinsic values) and areas of ethics (descriptive ethics, normative ethics, meta-ethics and applied ethics)
- (c) Ethical Relativism: arguments defending this position; critical evaluation

### **Unit 2: Moral concepts in Indian Philosophy [ 15 lectures]**

- (a) Philosophy of non-attachment (Nishkama karma yoga)
- (b) Sthitaprajna: the moral ideal
- (c) Concepts of Rta, Rna, and Purusartha

### **Unit 3: The Good Life: Greek Ethics [ 15 lectures]**

- (a) Socratic Ethics: virtue is knowledge; can ethics be taught?
- (b) The Four Virtues: Plato (in the context of Republic)
- (c) Ethics of Character: Aristotle

### **Unit 4: Are we Free?: Freedom and Determinism [ 15 lectures]**

- (a) Determinism: types of determinism: scientific determinism, religious determinism (i.e. predestination) and fatalism; critical appraisal of determinism
- (b) Indeterminism (i.e. libertarianism): arguments in support of free will; agency theory of freedom; critical appraisal of indeterminism
- (c) Compatibilism: reconciling determinism and freedom



# Unit -1

## INTRODUCTION TO MORAL PHILOSOPHY

### UNIT STRUCTURE

1.0 Objectives

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1.2 Definitions of Philosophy

1.2.1. Definition of Philosophy

1.2.2. Branches of Philosophy

1.3 Ethics – Definition and Nature

1.3.1 Definition of Ethics

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1.6 Conclusion

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### 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand the meaning and the subject matter of philosophy
- To know the branches of philosophy

- To understand the meaning and the subject matter of moral philosophy.
- To know the areas of moral philosophy.
- To understand the theory of moral relativism

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Man is a rational animal. He is curious about various happenings and events about the world. He wanted to explore these events and want to know the order in the world. He tries to seek explanation for the mysteries of the world like the origin of world, what is the nature of world etc. Man has instinctively intense desire to reflect upon ultimate truth. The search into the nature of reality has two aspects –understanding and practicing.

Philosophy arises from the speculative and critical search of ultimate reality. It gives rational account of the facts, events in this world. Philosophy seeks the explanation of the forces operative in this universe. So theoretically philosophy is a methodical work of thought.

The search into the nature of reality has practical aspect. Human intelligence has practical application. The very existence of man depends upon his ability to apprehend and to respond the world around him. Here arises the need of practical utility of his reasoning. Wisdom, the maturity to judge the external factors is essential in the maintenance of man's existence. This gives rise to Ethics.

Ethics is concerned with the practical problems of man, initially in the survival and then those in the moral, organized, harmonious life. Man is a rational animal-the animal that lives on a

higher plane. He apprehends Truth, realizes Good and creates Beauty. The practical aspect of reason shows the progress in morality. In the longing for higher levels, man has developed from instinctive morality to reflective morality. Man was governed by nature and then by laws. Now he is governed by his own autonomous moral will. The self-conscious rational being, feels the urge of the unity of Truth, Beauty and Good. Human being is preparing himself to realize the Supreme End.

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## **1.2 DEFINITIONS OF PHILOSOPHY: BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Philosophy is the methodical work of thoughts. It is an art of life. It tries to understand the meaning and the value of life. It is an attempt to understand the ultimate Reality. Philosophy is the study of the principles which underlie all knowledge. Philosophy tries to discover ultimate truth. It is an attempt of rational interpretation and unification of all our experiences. It tries to give a rational picture of the whole universe. Philosophy is an attempt to understand oneself, to understand the world around him and to know one's relation with others and to the world.

The word 'philosophy' is derived from the Greek word 'philosophia' which means love of wisdom. Philosophy is love of knowledge and philosopher is a person who seeks knowledge. Philosopher is an impartial spectator of the eternal universe. Initially philosophy was the intellectual movement. It was simply the search of knowledge without any specialization.

In India, Philosophy is called 'Darshan' which means 'Vision' and also the means or instruments of Vision. Indian philosophy arises out of the urge for the direct realization of ultimate Reality.

We find the seeds of Indian philosophy in the Upanishads, the sacred books of Hindus.

Philosophy arises out of curiosity and wonder. Man is a rational animal. He has the capacity of reasoning. The natural phenomena such as the sun, moon, raining, thunder, were miracles for a primitive man. Man tried to understand these miracles by his rational thinking. Gradually speculation took the place of wonder.

So called miracles were explained by one or more basic principles. Philosophy then became speculative and intellectual inquiry. Its object of inquiry shifted from material objects to the principles beyond these objects. Philosophy tried to satisfy the mystical side of human nature too.

### **1.2.1. Definition of Philosophy**

It is very difficult to give precise definition of philosophy. Let us try to know some of the definitions:-

#### **1. Philosophy is the study of Reality underlying phenomenal world.**

Philosophy is the study of ultimate Reality. We know this world with the help of our sense organs. We also know that many a times our sense organs cannot provide the correct information.

Philosophy aims at understanding the fundamental nature of reality behind our experiences. It inquires in the nature of such concepts as Matter, Self, God, Space, Time which are not known directly. Philosophy tries to know the essence of the worldly objects. All worldly objects seem to be appearances. They are glimpses of the reality. Philosophy seeks the transcendental, Absolute reality behind these worldly objects. As the light changes the color of the objects too changes. The question arises 'What is



the true color of the objects?’ There must be something which exists, irrespective of all these variations. Philosophy aims at knowing the Reality which is expressed through different experiences.

## **2. Philosophy is a synoptic view.**

Philosophy is the study of ultimate Reality. It is the most generalized knowledge. Different sciences deal with a specific portion of the universe. For example, Astronomy studies heavenly bodies, physics, and chemistry give knowledge about the compositions of material objects. Psychology deals with human and animal behavior. Philosophy gives a general description of the whole universe. So it inquires into the nature of material objects (matter) as well as mental processes (mind). It studies the nature of matter, the self, the world, God, Space, Time, their interrelations, their meaning and purposes.

Will Durant defines philosophy as the study of experience as a whole or a portion of experience in relation to the whole. Philosophy aims at systematization of different elements of this universe. It sketches the rational picture of the universe.

**3.** Philosophy is an unusually persistent attempt to think consistently. This definition is given by Plato. Philosophy is speculative. It does not assume anything. It questions all our experiences. Philosophy is an endless intellectual enquiry in the search of truth. If we go on asking the questions logically, we can arrive at the clear rational concept of the universe. Philosophy is the critical examination of our beliefs. This process eliminates many wrong vague, prejudiced notions. It also gives rise to many questions such as ‘what is knowledge?’.

#### **4. Philosophy harmonizes the conclusions of different sciences.**

Herbert Spencer believed that philosophy is completely unified knowledge. Philosophy is an organic system. The principles of different sciences can be deduced from this organic, unified system. All the principles of different sciences must be harmonious with one another.

Herbert Spencer's philosophy is called as synthetic philosophy. Philosophy is the universal science which combines the general truths obtained in the special sciences into a self-consistent system.

#### **5. Philosophy is the mother of all sciences.**

The search of knowledge resulted in specialization of knowledge. As knowledge of particular field became possible, it developed into a different science. Once, physics (natural philosophy), zoology, astronomy, psychology, all special sciences were included in philosophy. All modern sciences arose out of philosophy. So philosophy is called as the mother of all sciences. Philosophy is also called as the science of sciences. Philosophy is the Queen of Sciences. The whole world is her subject matter.

#### **6. Philosophy is Conceptual Analysis.**

The thinkers of Analytical school of philosophy like A.J. Ayer believe that philosophy has nothing to do with transcendental ideas. It should concentrate on empirical experiences. All philosophical questions are the questions about language. They arise due to ambiguity and vagueness of concepts like Mind, Matter, Truth, Good, Beauty, Nationality, Religion, Friendship, Love etc. However, we do not know the precise meaning of these of words. We fail to express these concepts in proper language. When these concepts are interpreted in different ways, even the contrary theories may

arise. Aristotle strongly holds the principle of causation whereas Hume completely denies the casual relation. Even today the concepts of friendship and love are misinterpreted in the society. That is why we read the news of offences against women. Socrates believed that a philosopher should help to reveal the clear, precise and accurate meaning of the concepts. Socrates also believed that all of us are rational beings.

A philosopher has to simply uncover the correct knowledge which is already present in our mind. A philosopher does not create anything of his own. It is like a job of midwife who does not create a child but helps the child to enter this world.

### **1.2.2. Branches of Philosophy**

Literally speaking philosophy is love of wisdom. It includes search of knowledge without any limitation. The vast subject matter of philosophy can be subdivided as follows:-

**1. Metaphysics:** - It studies the problems regarding reality It is divided into Ontology i.e. study of Being and Cosmology i.e. the study of physical universe. In metaphysics philosophers attempts to answer the questions like is there a god? What is the ultimate reality? What is the origin of this world? Is there life after death? etc.

**2. Epistemology:** - It studies the basis, the nature and the scope of human knowledge. It attempts to find out what are the sources of knowledge? How we can know the world? What are valid sources of knowledge?

**3. Logic:** - It studies the principles and methods of reasoning. It helps to distinguish between good reasoning and bad reasoning.

**4. Ethics:** - It is related with human conduct, character and values. Ethics also explores into the problem of practical life i.e. morality. It deals with the questions of what is right and wrong or good and bad.

**5. Aesthetics:** - It is concerned with the problems of Beauty. Our feelings, creation of art and principles of art, literature fall within the scope of Aesthetics.

**6. Analytical Philosophy:** - It studies the linguistic problems which give rise to philosophical problems.

**7. Social Philosophy:** - It studies the interrelation of social organizations and the relation of individual to these organizations.

**8. Political Philosophy:** - It seeks insight into the ideals of State, the functions of the State etc.

**9. Philosophy of Religion:** - It studies the central notions in religion and tries to seek rational explanation of and justification for concepts like God, evil etc.

As every branch of knowledge arises from philosophy, there can be philosophy of education, philosophy of management, philosophy of history etc.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. What is the literal meaning of philosophy?
2. Why is philosophy a synoptic view?
3. Why is philosophy a conceptual analysis?
4. What are the branches of philosophy?

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## 1.3 ETHICS - DEFINITION AND NATURE

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Plato said that philosophy begins in wonder. Ethics as a branch of philosophy arises from the curiosity about the values involved in the human behavior. Human conduct is a chain of voluntary actions. It implies the inherent and intense desire for higher ideals. All activities, determined by ends, are related with Ethics. Ethics investigates into the nature of human conduct accordingly.

The ultimate goal of the quest of human life is usually mentioned by the words like, The Good, the Highest Good, the Supreme Good or End, Summum Bonum etc.

### 1.3.1 Definition of Ethics

The word 'Ethics' is derived from the Greek word 'ethos' which means customs, usages or habits. Ethics is also called as Moral Philosophy. The word 'moral' is derived from the Latin word 'mores' which also means customs, usages or habits. Thus literally, Ethics is the science of customs or collective habits of men. Any custom has a reference to the community. Customs are the ways of acting, approved by the group.

The root word 'ETHOS' indicates that this branch of philosophy was originated in Greece and the credit goes to Aristotle. Various definitions are given to explain the subject matter and scope of moral philosophy. Let us have a look at these definitions-

- Paulsen defines Ethics as a science of customs or morals.
- According to Mackenzie, Ethics is the study of what is good or right in conduct.

- For Seth, as the science of the Good, Ethics is the science of the excellence of the ideal and the 'ought'.
- For Jadunath Sinha, Ethics is the science of the Highest Good.
- Lillie's definition is a comprehensive definition.
- According to William Lillie, "Ethics is a normative science of the conduct of
- human beings living in societies – science which judges this conduct to be right or wrong, good and bad."

### **1.3.2 Nature of Ethics**

The definitions of Ethics mentioned above have some common features. The nature of Ethics can be stated as follows:-

#### **Ethics is a science:**

Science is a systematic and more or less complete body of knowledge about a particular set of related events or objects. A scientific method has the steps of accurate observations, classification and explanation. Ethics aims at systematic explanation of its subject matter. It systematically aims at explanation of rightness and wrongness in human conduct with reference to ideals. It systematically classifies our actions into voluntary, involuntary, moral, non-moral and evaluates them.

#### **Ethics is a normative science**

Every individual has three faculties viz. Cognitive, Affective and Conative (knowing, feeling and willing or acting). Human beings seek knowledge and they try to apprehend Truth. They have emotions and they try to create Beauty or harmony. Human beings have will to transcend facts and they try to realize Good. Thus, there are 3 ideals in human life corresponding to the three aspects of human nature. Truth, Beauty, and Good are the Supreme Ideals. Logic, Aesthetics and Ethics study the ideals of Truth, Beauty and

Good respectively. Logic, Aesthetics and Ethics study the ideals of human life. Hence they are called as normative sciences. A normative science is different from positive science. Physics, chemistry, botany, zoology etc. are positive or naturalistic or descriptive sciences.

A positive science is concerned with facts. It systematically describes the facts, objects or events as they are found to exist. A normative science is concerned with ideals, the values of the facts. A positive science tells us how a particular object 'is'. A normative science pronounces how something "ought to be".

A positive science provides explanation of fact by discovering the causes and the stages of development. A normative science does not provide any explanation of ideals. A natural science gives descriptive judgments while a normative science gives appreciative judgments. The function of a descriptive science is that of measurement while the function of a normative science is that of evaluation.

The conclusions in positive sciences can be established by their relation to facts. The ideals in normative science cannot be proved. In the other words "values" cannot be proved; they are to be approved. Human "Reason" plays the dominant role in positive sciences. Human intellect observes, describes and classifies facts. It is our reason that discovers the uniformities among facts and propounds the laws. In normative sciences human 'Will' plays the dominant role. We can never explain or prove how' the symphony of Beethoven is divine.

Ethics is the science of ideals involved in human conduct  
Ethics is literally speaking, the science of customs or habits.Habits

are the settled dispositions of character. Character is inner bent of mind while conduct is the outer expression.

According to Spencer, conduct is the adjustment of acts to ends. It is the purposive activity. Conduct is the assimilation of choice of Ends and choice of means with some purpose. Thus Ethics is the science of ideals (Ends) involved in human conduct.

Ethics evaluates human action. Ethics is a discipline which considers human actions from the viewpoint of ethical norm or standard. It studies what is good or right in human conduct. Ethics evaluates conduct with reference to the Summum Bonum of human being. Two words 'Right' and 'Good' are used for the evaluation of human action. The word 'Right' is derived from the Latin word 'rectus' which means straight or according to rule. So Ethics is concerned with these principles or rules which make human conduct right or straight. In other words, the human action is said to be right, when it is in accordance with the rule e. g the rules of traffic. The rules are made for some purpose for the rules are not end in themselves. They are means for seeking higher goals.

The word 'Good' is derived from the German word 'Gut' which means serviceable or valuable for some end. So Ethics is concerned with goals or ideals, which make human conduct good. There are various ideals and values and human being is expected them to follow. The human actions are said to be good if they are in accordance with values. For example, speaking truth. In this way, by the goals and by the means to goals, Ethics evaluates human conduct.



**Check your progress**

- 1) How can Ethics be defined?
- 2) What is the subject matter of Ethics?
- 3) What are faculties of human mind?
- 4) Why is Ethics a normative science?

**Ethics: A Theoretical science or a Practical science?**

Many Western thinkers believe that Ethics is not a practical science. A practical science teaches us to know how to do. It is concerned with means for the realization of a definite end. In this sense, medical science is a practical science as it points out the means by which the ideal of good health can be achieved. Ethics is not a practical science as it gives us knowledge of guiding principles but does not tell us how to apply them. However, in Indian context, Ethics is a practical science. Different schools of Indian Philosophy prescribe the supreme end of life (mostly liberation) and prescribe the path to attain it. The ethics of Bhagawad Gita prescribes the duties of individual.

Ethics is not an Art. Ethics is concerned with conduct or behaviour i.e. with the practical life of an individual. The question arises; can there be a skill, better skill, in being moral? Is Ethics an art? Human conduct and art, both are related with activities. Both are evaluated and declared as good or bad. Mackenzie compared Ethics with art and declared that ethics is different from art. According to Mackenzie, the difference between ethics and art is as follows:-

Art is connected to a particular field of skill such as painting, dancing, etc. Ethics is connected with the whole life of an individual. A good painter is one who can paint beautifully. Even if he is not painting yet he is called as a painter. An art is a capacity or potentiality of a specific skill. A good man is one who does act

rightly. A moral person is one who actually practices it. Thus in moral sense goodness is related with an activity.

While evaluating a piece of art, the skill is evaluated. The intention of artist is not at all considered. While evaluating human conduct, the intention and the volition of the individual also taken into consideration.

An artist can give up his art after some time. A retired singer is always a singer. However a good man cannot give up virtues. There is no holiday from moral virtues. We must always keep in mind Mackenzie's views about an art and ethics. Today many courses are conducted for personality development. Whatever training is given in these courses is the presentation of oneself. Can we say that the training shapes the inner bent or the character of the individual? Is it an artificial make over or true development of values from within?

### **Ethics is related with Values**

Ethics is the study of what is good or right in human conduct. Ethical questions are value-oriented questions. Value judgments are complex products of intuition, sense experience and reason. From the moral point of view, values are the beliefs about what is right, good, desirable and important in human life. Values are necessarily associated with choice of activities. We have to select the action that is consistent with promotion of life, live organized rational life. Values emerge through the interaction between nature and spirit, reality and mind. There is a process of growth into increasing complexity, into higher and higher levels of existence. Values are new characters of reality arising from the interaction of human mind with its object. According to Hoffding and Kemp Smith, Kant taught us to distinguish between the problems of Existence and the problems of Value.

**Facts and Values:**

Positive sciences are related with facts. Fact is related with 'what is'. Fact stands for things or events as they exist in a particular space and time. Facts and phenomena have no concealed significance beyond what they present to us in external experience. They are descriptive in nature. Fact is something known to be true. It is a piece of information or reality. Facts satisfy our intellect.

Normative science deals with values. It is concerned with 'what ought to be'. Values are something to be pursued in life. Values belong to the background of facts and they are recognized by consciousness. Values are prescriptive in nature. They are evaluative. Values are over and above the framework of facts that is constituted by matter, space, time and causality. Values are neither true nor false. Values satisfy our desires & aspirations. We become aware of the world of nature by sense and reason. Values do not exist in space and time like the objects of nature do. Values subsist in themselves above space and time.

Values are not existents, they are subsistent. Consciousness of values is immediate and intuitive. Values transcend the spatiotemporal world.

The awareness about values is inevitable development of the estimation of things and events. Facts and values are closely connected. So long as the fact is there; there is value by implication. Facts and values are inseparable from one another. There can be no existence without values and no value without existence.

**Intrinsic Values and Extrinsic Values:**

Values can be viewed from the standpoint of their importance. All values are experiences of different degrees of importance in the development of individuality. So we classify values on the basis of importance these values have.

An intrinsic value is one which has worth in its own right. It is an End-in-itself. Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Temperance, Courage etc. are considered as intrinsic values. They are good not because of their consequences but because they are good in themselves. These values retain even if they were to exist completely alone. Intrinsic values are said to be Absolute values.

An Extrinsic value is one which is a means to some other value. It is of instrumental worth only. A pair of spectacles is good only if there are eyes behind spectacles to see through them. The spectacles have instrumental value. Extrinsic or Instrumental values are the part of larger whole. They are means to an End. Wealth, fame, physical fitness, etc. borrow their worth from something extraneous to them.

The terms Extrinsic and Intrinsic are used relatively. They are not always mutually exclusive or fixed. What is valued by one person for its own sake may be valued by another person as a means to an End. e.g., a design of washing machine.

Values can be graded as Positive Values and Negative Values, Productive Values and Unproductive values; Permanent values and Transient values.

In general, Intrinsic values are rated higher than Extrinsic values. Positive values are preferred to Negative values. The locus of values is human mind. It is a special sort of reaction to the

environment. Human mind has three psychical functions (aspects)—thinking, feeling and willing. The values corresponding to these functions are Intellectual values (Truth), Aesthetic values (Beauty) and Moral values (Goodness). Truth, Beauty and Good are Universal values.

### **Check your progress**

- 1) Is Ethics a practical science?
- 2) How is Ethics different from Art?
- 3) What is a value?
- 4) What is the difference between a fact and a value?
- 5) What is meant by Intrinsic value and Extrinsic value?

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## **1.4 THE AREA OF ETHICS**

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There are four branches of Ethics namely Descriptive Ethics, Normative Ethics, Meta-Ethics and Applied Ethics.

### **Descriptive Ethics**

Descriptive Ethics is the study of people's beliefs about morality. It involves empirical investigation. It gives us a general pattern or a way of life of people in different types of communities. Descriptive Ethics studies the history and evolution of Ethics. It gives a record of certain taboos, customs or conventions. For example, it states the history of various institutions like family or marriage. Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral consciousness is an example of Descriptive Ethics. Descriptive Ethics investigates people's ethical ideals or what actions are condemned in a society. It aims to find out people's beliefs about values, which actions are right and wrong and which characteristics of a moral agent are virtuous. Descriptive Ethics seeks the explanation of actual choices made by moral agents in practice. It tries to examine the ethical

codes applied by various groups. Descriptive Ethics is a value-free approach to ethics. It is empirical investigation of people's moral beliefs.

### **Normative Ethics**

Normative Ethics is also called as prescriptive ethics. It is the study of ethical theories that prescribe how people ought to act. It examines standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions. Normative Ethics suggests punishment when a person deviates from the path of ideals. It provides justification for punishing a person who disturbs social and moral order. It tries to establish certain theories on the guidelines of some norms. Normative Ethics offer the moral principles to use to resolve difficult moral decisions. Aristotle's virtue ethics, Kant's deontological ethics, Mill's Consequentialism (Utilitarianism) and the Bhagwad Gita's Nishkam Karmayoga are the theories in Normative Ethics.

### **Meta- Ethics**

Meta Ethics is the study of what ethical terms and theories actually refer to. It determines the validity of theories advanced in Normative Ethics. We use certain moral concepts such as right, wrong, good or bad to evaluate human actions. These moral concepts are used as tools in passing moral judgments. Meta -Ethics analyses ethical concepts. It studies the meaning of moral language and the metaphysics of moral facts. Meta-Ethics seeks to understand the nature of ethical properties and evaluations.

Meta Ethics deals with the questions such as 'What is the meaning of moral terms or judgments?', 'What is the nature of moral judgments?', 'How may moral judgments be supported or defended?'

## **Applied Ethics**

In recent years the branch of Applied Ethics is developed. It deals with the problems confronted in our life. It attempts to apply ethical theory to real life situations. It helps to use knowledge of moral principles to present dilemmas. There are certain issues which arise due to newly adopted life style. Applied Ethics deals with the questions such as, "Is getting an abortion immoral?" "Is euthanasia immoral?" "Is affirmative action right or wrong?" "What are human rights, and how do we determine them?" "Do animals have rights as well?"

Applied Ethics guides the individuals facing conflicting situation. Some critical moral issues arise due to the insensible and irresponsible attitude of human beings without any concern to other children of Mother Nature. Applied Ethics provides guidance in determining public policy and laws. Applied Ethics develops into Environmental Ethics, Media Ethics, Business Ethics, Ethics of Legal Profession and Ethics of Care. The ethical questions never have answer in 'yes'/ 'no' or 'right'/'wrong' format. Ethical issues are multifaceted. Their satisfactory solutions are possible through consideration of different areas of life.

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## **1.5 ETHICAL RELATIVISM**

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Let us first understand what relativism is? Relativism is the belief that all knowledge is subjective, including moral knowledge. Once we understand what it signifies, we will try to understand what ethical relativism is.

What is Ethical Relativism?

Ethical relativism is the moral theory that holds that morality is relative to the norms of one's culture. That is, whether an action

is right or wrong depends on the moral norms of the society in which it is practiced. The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another.

For the ethical relativist, there are no universal moral principles -- principles that can be universally applied to all peoples at all times.

### **1.5.1 TYPES OF ETHICAL RELATIVISM**

Ethical relativism appeals to many people. But as we shall see, it leads to a number of inconsistent and unsatisfactory conclusions. First, let us make an important distinction, for there are two main types of ethical relativism:

#### **A. Descriptive Relativism**

The descriptive theories are the ones that we read about in anthropology textbooks. These sorts of studies are nothing new, but have been going on since ancient times. E.g. Xenophon, in ancient Greece, noted how Darius, king of Persia, took delight in watching naive peoples undergo culture shock, Herodotus' story about the Greeks and Callatians. On the contemporary scene, anthropologists have gone out to remote regions and come home with bizarre stories. E.g., the Eskimos and polygamy, infanticide, and genocide. Even as our people visit other parts of the world, they are often stunned by the different practices. e.g., female soldiers in Saudi Arabia, bribery practices in Japan and elsewhere or within our country, child marriage.

Descriptive relativism notes that there are differences among cultures' ethical practices and standards without saying anything about their justification.



## **B. Prescriptive or Normative relativism**

Normative relativism goes further and claims that people ought not to apply the standards of one culture to evaluate the behaviour of the people of another culture. This is usually called “cultural relativism” and so we will focus on the latter, that is, prescriptive relativism.

### **1.5.2 RELATION OF ETHICAL RELATIVISM TO NORMATIVE ETHICS**

Ethical Relativism goes one step further and makes a judgment that says the morals of the culture are right for that culture. This latter approach is a normative ethic. To further explain, given such variety in practices around the world, one is inclined to wonder who's got the right set of rules. The relativist answer is: no one does-- right and wrong are relative. A normative ethic is one that asks, "What should or should not be done?"

The original advocate for this approach is Ruth Benedict, cultural anthropologist who started out trying to describe normal cultural behaviours. Her work boils down to the notion that "what is normal is moral." Ethical relativism is a moral theory that promotes tolerance as its value.

### **1.5.3 WHAT MOTIVATES RELATIVISM?**

Ethical relativism is the position that there are no objective or universally valid moral principles, for all moral judgments are simply a matter of human opinion.

Here are several well-intentioned reasons why relativists think people from one culture ought to refrain from judging the ethical practices and standards of another culture:

- Descriptive relativism seems right because globalization has increased awareness of the diversity of cultures with different moral practices and standards;
- There is the perception that moral disagreements are irresolvable because there appears to be no intercultural standards of evaluation;
- There is a desire to “live and let live”;
- There is a fear of absolutism (“our way is the right way”);
- There is widespread belief that people should respect, or at least tolerate, other people’s cultural values and practices;
- There is scepticism or uncertainty about the justification of one’s own moral values;
- There is deep unease about imperialism towards other cultures; this is one of the legacies of colonialism.

We don’t think these factors justify or require us to adopt relativism. On the other hand, they are understandable reasons for being tempted by relativism. But what are the arguments offered in support of this view?

1. Who is the advocate of ethical relativism?
2. What is Ruth Benedict’s observation about cultures?
3. Define Relativism.
4. What is Ethical Relativism?
5. Which value does Ethical Relativism promote?
6. Give any two reasons why relativists think that one should refrain from judging other cultures.

#### **1.5.4 ARGUMENTS FOR RELATIVISM**

The actual diversity of moral practices and standards” Ethical relativism” is the view that what is right and wrong can only be determined or justified relative to the standards of the individual,

group or culture in question. More specifically, “cultural ethical relativism” can be stated as follows:

Ethical standards vary from culture to culture; therefore, there are no universal moral standards which apply across cultures.

There is no denying that human behaviour and ideas of right and wrong vary from culture to culture and across historical periods. On this view, female genital mutilation (FGM) is not wrong in Somalia because the practice accords with local tradition, but it is deeply wrong in another country because it may be contrary to that country’s gender equality (amongst other reasons).

The view that moral standards differ from culture to culture can be called the “diversity thesis.” But right away we should notice that just because there happens to be such diversity of moral standards, it doesn’t follow that each set of standards is equally right or justified. The diversity thesis is a claim about what is the case in the world, not about whether one set of standards is better than another. The dependency of those practices and standards on the specific culture.

The relativist takes the diversity thesis further, though, by combining it with what can be called the “dependency thesis.” This is the idea that the wrongness or rightness of actions depends on or is relative to the culture from which they emanate. The diversity thesis points out that Somalians and Canadians, for example, have different standards. Then the dependency thesis says that only the standards of Somalians should be used to judge the actions of a Somalian. If this is true then it is also true that the standards of Somalians should not be used to judge the actions of Canadians. This is cultural ethical relativism in a nutshell.

## **1. Tolerance as a value**

The ethical relativists are strong in their advocacy for tolerance and appreciation of other cultures, but contain a philosophical and rational contradiction -- what if the culture in question is not a tolerant culture but insists on imposing its values on others? It does not answer the question of whether and when to interfere with other cultures.

### **1.5.5 CRITICISM OF RELATIVISM**

1. Most ethicists reject the theory of ethical relativism. Some claim that while the moral practices of societies may differ, the fundamental moral principles underlying these practices do not. For example, in some societies, killing one's parents after they reached a certain age was common practice, stemming from the belief that people were better off in the afterlife if they entered it while still physically active and vigorous. While such a practice would be condemned in our society, we would agree with these societies on the underlying moral principle -- the duty to care for parents. Societies, then, may differ in their application of fundamental moral principles but agree on the principles.

2. Also, it is argued, it may be the case that some moral beliefs are culturally relative whereas others are not. Certain practices, such as customs regarding dress and decency, may depend on local custom whereas other practices, such as slavery, torture, or political repression, may be governed by universal moral standards and judged wrong despite the many other differences that exist among cultures. Simply because some practices are relative does not mean that all practices are relative.

3. Other philosophers criticize ethical relativism because of its implications for individual moral beliefs. These philosophers assert that if the rightness or wrongness of an action depends on a

society's norms, then it follows that one must obey the norms of one's society and to diverge from those norms is to act immorally. This means that if I am a member of a society that believes that racial or sexist practices are morally permissible, then I must accept those practices as morally right. But such a view promotes social conformity and leaves no room for moral reform or improvement in a society. Furthermore, members of the same society may hold different views on practices. In the United States, for example, a variety of moral opinions exists on matters ranging from animal experimentation to abortion. What constitutes right action when social consensus is lacking?

4. Perhaps the strongest argument against ethical relativism comes from those who assert that universal moral standards can exist even if some moral practices and beliefs vary among cultures. In other words, we can acknowledge cultural differences in moral practices and beliefs and still hold that some of these practices and beliefs are morally wrong. The practice of slavery in pre-Civil war U.S. society or the practice of apartheid in South Africa is wrong despite the beliefs of those societies. The treatment of the Jews in Nazi society is morally reprehensible regardless of the moral beliefs of Nazi society. For these philosophers, ethics is an inquiry into right and wrong through a critical examination of the reasons underlying practices and beliefs. As a theory for justifying moral practices and beliefs, ethical relativism fails to recognize that some societies have better reasons for holding their views than others.

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## **1.6 CONCLUSION**

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Moral relativism is the strong claim that all morals are relative to the believer; and if this claim were true, then we would inevitably need to accept that genital mutilation, sex selection

abortion, murder, abuse, mercy killing, rape, and even genocide are, well, morally acceptable since we lack a ground to condemn such actions. If a culture or person practices an act that we believe is inhumane, then we need a basis to ground our moral criticism and judgment upon. Lacking that ground—or objective notion of moral right or wrong—pushes us into the corner of silence or apathy. Most philosophers argue that moral universalism—an objective moral good—is the preferred position. On the contrary, and strictly speaking, if relativism is true and all morals are up to the culture or individual, then literally all things are morally permissible. Clearly this is an untenable position, but why?

But even if the theory of ethical relativism is rejected, it must be acknowledged that the concept raises important issues. Ethical relativism reminds us that different societies have different moral beliefs and that our beliefs are deeply influenced by culture. It also encourages us to explore the reasons underlying beliefs that differ from our own, while challenging us to examine our reasons for the beliefs and values we hold.

### **Check your Progress**

7. What is understood by diversity thesis?
8. What is meant by dependency thesis?

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## **1.7 SUMMARY**

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Philosophy arises from the individual wonder about this universe. Philosophy is the speculation about the empirical as well as transcendental world. Ethics is practical application of human reasoning. It is related with the existence of the individual in this world and his quest of supreme ideals. Ethics as a normative science evaluates human conduct with Summum Bonum of life and

declares the actions as good or bad, as right or wrong. The question arises whether Ethics is a theoretical science or a practical science?

Ethics is not an Art. Ethics is related with Values. Values are different from facts. Values are graded as per their importance in one's life. Values are graded as Intrinsic values – Extrinsic (Instrumental) values, Positive values – Negative values, Productive values –Unproductive values, Permanent values - Transient values. Today the scope of Ethics is extended to Descriptive Ethics, Normative Ethics, Meta Ethics and Applied Ethics. Descriptive Ethics studies the history and evolution of Ethics. Normative Ethics tries to establish certain theories on the guidelines of some norms.

Meta Ethics analyses ethical concepts. Applied Ethics deals with the problems confronted in our newly adopted life style.

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## 1.8 BROAD QUESTIONS

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1. Discuss various definitions of philosophy or State the nature of philosophy.
2. Explain fully the nature of Ethics.
3. State the ethical relativism. Explain the arguments put forward to support this theory.
4. Write notes on:-
  - a. Branches of philosophy
  - b. The areas of Ethics
  - c. Difference between Ethics and Art.
  - d. Ethics as a normative science
  - f. Relation between facts and values
  - g. Intrinsic Values and Extrinsic Values
  - h. Types of ethical relativism



# Unit -2

## MORALITY IN THE INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT – I

### UNIT STRUCTURE

2.0 Objective

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Features of Indian Ethics

2.3 The idea of Nishkama Karma in Bhagavad Gita

2.3.1 The Path of Knowledge

2.3.2 The Path of Devotion

2.3.3.1 Prescribed Duties

2.3.3.2 Disinterested performance of duties

2.4 Sthitaprajna - The Moral Ideal

2.5 Concept of Dharma with reference to Rta, Rna & Purushartha

2.5.1 The Concept of RTA

2.5.2 Concept of RNA

2.5.3 Purushartha

2.6 Summary

2.7 Broad Question

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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- philosophy was a general term denoting a concern for wisdom.
- Yet, the idea of discipline (yoga) as the foundation of higher learning and knowledge (jñāna) is basic to the Indian philosophical tradition. While it is true that not every Indian philosophical theory embraces the importance of discipline for



knowledge, the idea of the distinction between ordinary, social knowledge (gained by socialisation), and higher learning and knowledge (facilitated by a disciplined approach to knowing) shows up in the earliest of Indian philosophical sources (such as in the Upaniṣhad, and in the early Jain and Buddhist texts).

- As philosophy involves the twin criteria of the universalised generality (philosophical claims) and the generalised universal (philosophical concepts), with the two making a case for each other, writing in philosophy involves analysis and argument.
- The Gi ta and the Maha bha rata are hence a dialectical experimentation in moral philosophy, where the characters not only assume the role of prominent ethical theories but must also work through the ethical challenge as a matter of practice.
- ch. 3-138 and 150 pg S Radhakrishna.
- To know the features of Orthodox and Heterodox systems of Indian Moral Philosophy.
- To understand the concept of 'DHARMA' as the supreme principle of morality.
- To understand the need to make moral decisions.
- To understand the need to have clarity in the special characters of moral decisions.
- To understand the principles in accordance with which duties can be performed.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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Ethics is a branch of philosophy in western philosophy. In Indian perspective Ethics is coeval with philosophy. This idea that ethics is concerned with protection is a unique contribution of Indian philosophy to ethics. Philosophy is not just an intellectual inquiry but a way of life. Indian thinkers aim at realisation of the Ultimate Reality. Indian thinkers take a synthetic view of life. For them there

are no watertight compartments among the philosophical problems. The Indians have a strong faith in moral order that prevails in this universe. Everyone has to contribute to universal moral order. Every individual has a role to play in this universe. Every role brings with it specified duties and responsibilities.

In Indian view, the obligation of an individual is not confined to human society only. It is extended to the whole of sentient creation. Indian philosophy holds, "Love thy neighbor as thyself and every living being is thy neighbor". Moral philosophy in India is truly speaking the art of living a good and disciplined life.

## **2.2. THE FEATURES OF INDIAN ETHICS**

Indian Schools of Philosophy are broadly classified into Orthodox (Astika) and Heterodox (Nastika). Six chief philosophical systems viz. Mimansa, Vedanta, Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheshika are Orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy. These schools accept the authority of the Vedas. So they are called as Orthodox or Astika schools. Three Chief Philosophical Systems viz. The Charvakas, the Bauddha and the Jaina's are Heterodox Schools of Indian Philosophy. These schools do not accept the authority of the Vedas. So, they are called Heterodox or Nastika schools.

All Indian systems of thought whether Orthodox or Heterodox share some common features. The features of Indian Ethics can be stated as below: -

1. Indian ethics is the oldest moral philosophy in the history of civilization. It is difficult to ascertain the chronology of the Orthodox and the Heterodox schools (except Lord Buddha i.e.487 BC) The remoteness of Indian ethics is responsible for making it well established in the practical life of the followers.

Every school of Indian Philosophy confirms the endurance of ethical ideals which are unshaken even today.

2. Indian thinkers suggest some practical means of attaining a life of perfection here in this world. The rules of conduct have been practically followed by the Yoga, the Jain and the Buddhist disciples for thousand years. The aim of Indian moral philosophy is not only to discuss moral ideals but also to follow the path leading to the moral Ideals.
3. Indian ethics has its strong and deep metaphysical foundation. Each school of philosophy points to metaphysical ideals which are to be actually experienced. There is a synthesis of theory and practice, of intellectual understanding and direct experience of ultimate reality (Kaivalya, Nirvana etc.) In Indian Ethics, intellectualism and moralism are two wings that help the soul in spiritual flight.
4. Indian ethics is absolutistic and spiritualistic. It aims at realization of supreme reality by transcending pleasure and pain; even right and wrong and good and evil. The ideals are attainable by spiritual discipline.
5. Indian Ethics is humanistic. It seeks a balance between an individual's inner and outer life; individual and social life. Moral laws or code of conduct is prescribed in such a way that individual progress and social welfare will lead to harmonious living. The goal of morality is the wellbeing of humanity.
6. Indian ethical thinkers preach non-violence, love, compassion and good will for all living beings. It is not limited to human beings. It includes every living being, plants, birds, and animals, every visible and invisible form of life.

7. Indian thinkers believe in the Law of Karma. Law of Karma means that all our actions, good or bad, produce their proper consequences into the life of an individual, who acts with a desire for fruits thereof. It is the general moral law which governs the life of all individuals. Law of Karma is the force generated by an action that has the potency of bearing fruit. It is the law of the conservation of moral values. Except Charvakas, all Indian schools accept the Law of Karma.

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### **2.3 THE IDEA OF NISHKAMA KARMA IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA**

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The Bhagavad Gita is the most popular and the most influential religious book of the Hindus. It summarizes the important elements in Hindu philosophy. Great Indian thinkers like Shankaracharya, Ramanuja, Madhva, Dnyaneshwar, sarvapalliradhakrishna etc. have written illuminating commentaries on the Gita. Great national leaders like Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi have drawn inspiration from the Gita.

The Gita derives its philosophical content chiefly from the Upnishads. It also synthesizes the philosophical elements from Sankhya, Yoga etc. schools of philosophy.

On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Arjun becomes unnerved when he sees his own relatives in the ranks of the enemy. He did not know what to do? Whether to fight and kill them all or to leave the battlefield? Lord Krishna persuaded Arjuna to perform his duty i.e. to fight.

Even today, Lord Krishna's advice is a source of inspiration. Many times human beings face the question "What to do?" Like Arjuna, we can get inspiration from the Bhagavad Gita.

The Gita holds that liberation is the end of life. Liberation is the liberation of the soul from the cycle of births and deaths. It is the merging of the individual soul into the Universal spirit. Realization of God is possible only through self-realization. The self is revealed through disinterested performance of duties and selfless service to mankind.

The Gita prescribes three paths for the liberation. 1. Path of Knowledge (Jnyanmarg) 2. Path of Devotion (Bhakti marg) 3. Path of Action (Karma marg).

### **2.3.1 The Path of Knowledge**

The Gita preaches the path of Knowledge. There is nothing as pure and purifying as knowledge. Jnyan-yajna is the supreme sacrifice. In the fire of self-control, bondage of our actions should be sacrificed.

Our senses, our mind and our intellect are influenced by attachment and emotions. Such attachment causes the bondage. We have to enjoy the consequences of our actions. So there remains the vicious circle of karmas. A wise man knows to control the senses to attain liberation. Duties performed without attachment for the consequences, lead to liberation.

A wise man experiences the unity of the individual soul and the Universal soul. The Gita preaches that even wise man; the liberated soul must perform his duties. Common people follow the wise man. To set an example, the liberated man must continue to perform the duties. He must render selfless service to mankind.

The Gita holds that the path of Knowledge is very difficult for common people. Only a few intelligent people can follow the path of Knowledge. It is very difficult to experience the unity of all individual

souls. Very few can realize the Universal soul through intellectual enquiry.

### **2.3.2 The Path of Devotion**

The Gita preaches the path of Devotion too. Through love and worship of Divine, man can achieve union with the Divine. It is very difficult for common people to know the abstract eternal Divine. The worship of God in a concrete form is possible for the common man.

The Gita declares that “He who worships God, never perishes”. In the twelfth chapter, the Gita describes the qualities of a good worshipper. A good devotee is a kind, self-controlled impartial person. The pleasures or pain does not affect the balance of his mind. A true devotee does not have ego or any attachment towards worldly objects.

Devotion must not be blind. A true Bhakti must be accompanied by Knowledge and selfless action. A true devotee performs all his duties disinterestedly. Total surrender to God is a necessary characteristic of the worshipper.

However, the path of Devotion is not very easy. It is very difficult to surrender oneself to God. It is not easy to give up one's ego and desires. A true worshipper offers the fruits of one's actions to God. God is worshipped through social service.

### **2.3.3 The Path of Action.**

The Bhagavad Gita preaches the path of Action for all, without exception. According to the Gita, action keeps up the cycle of the universe and it is the duty of every individual to be part of it. Life itself depends upon action. No one can remain inactive for a single moment. Inertia i.e., inaction is death.

The Gita preaches Nishkama Karma Yoga is performing one's duties without any expectation for the rewards. The path of Action is twofold—1) Performance of prescribed duties and 2) Performance of duties without any desire for reward.

### **2.3.3.1 Prescribed Duties**

The Gita prescribes Swadharma. Swadharma includes the duties according to one's own nature (u.e. Varna Dharma) and the duties according to one's life stages (i.e., Ashrama dharma). The Gita declares that it is always better to follow one's own duties. To follow the duties of others is bad and clearly dangerous. The Gita seeks self-realization as well as social unity (Lok Sangrah). The performance of duties as per one's disposition, leads to social welfare.

Every individual is endowed with specific physical tendencies viz purity (sattva), energy (rajas) and ignorance (tamas). The predominance and combination of these tendencies result in four classes (Varnas) of people. These four classes are- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra.

Every individual has to follow Ashrama dharma. Everyone passes through various stages of life, namely a student (Brahmcharim), a house holder (Grihastha), a retired person (Vanaprastha) and a wandering monk (Sanyasin). Each class (Varna) and each stage of life (Ashrama) has its own prescribed duties. The performance of one's duties leads to individual as well as social welfare. A good man acts for the good of others, for the benefit of humanity in perfect detachment, disinterest and selflessness with no desire to reap fruit.

### **2.3.3.2 Disinterested performance of duties**

A common man always hopes for the reward of his actions. Desires bind a man. The performance of duties has dual attachment. 1. Feelings of an agent 2. Interest in the fruits of the action.

Every action result in reaction and thus the chain of actions continues. This chain i.e., the bondage can be stopped by detachment. The detachment is twofold. Firstly, one has to realize that the true agent of all activities is prakriti and not the individual. Secondly the interest and desire regarding the fruits of action should be given up.

The Gita preaches the path of Nishkam Karma. Our duties must be performed without selfish motive. We have to offer the fruits of our actions to the Divine. We have a right to the performance of our duties, but we do not have any right to the rewards of our actions. Actions are our sphere, fruits are not our concern.

The ideal of the Gita is performance of duties in a detached spirit. The Gita teaching stands, not for renunciation of action but for renunciation in action. The Gita does not preach to renounce everything but to renounce the selfish desires and the fruits of one's actions. The individual should give up any expectation for the rewards. His actions should be the performance of his prescribed duties. The Gita ethics is neither hedonistic nor ascetic. It condemns the wild pursuit of pleasures, as well as suppression of desires. The Gita prescribes controlled satisfaction of human desires.



**Check your progress**

Which paths did the Gita prescribe to achieve the ideal of life?

Which duties did the Gita prescribe?

What is meant by disinterested performance of duties?

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**2.4 STHITAPRAJNA: THE MORAL IDEAL**


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In chapter 2 of Bhagwad Gita, there is mention of the characteristics of Sthitaprajna. The ideal of Sthitaprajna stands as the combination of both Samkhya buddhi and Yoga buddhi. Yoga is defined as the equanimity of mind. Yoga is the only way to peace and is described as the Brahmic state. The precondition for Yoga is the oppression of passions and performing duties without an eye for their fruits. Yoga is attained through the withdrawing senses from the attachment of their objects, casting off desires, and transcending the pairs of extremes. Yoga thus consists of performing one's duty and ceasing all desires, passions and emotions, etc. Thus, Yoga is the art of performing actions.

Though Samkhya and Yoga appear to be two different paths, on a closer look they both have similar attitudes towards the world. Hence, Samkhya and Yoga both form the theoretical and practical aspects of the same teaching. They both aim at internal peace through equanimity of mind. The Gita suggests, through Samkhya and Yoga, internal peace as the remedy for external turbulences.

The Bhagavad Gita is not written as a kind of religious scripture, but it is seen as the desire of Sri Krishna to show the path to people living in the empirical world through Arjuna as a symbol of common people. Living in this world full of problems makes a man most of the time sad and it leads to grief. There are two ways

through which one can face these problems and sadness, one is to find out the reason for it and second is to make oneself mentally stronger to face such situations. One may feel helpless and alone at the time of difficult situations. One's self-esteem starts lowering. So, to get out of this depression Sri Krishna has given this ideal of Sthitaprajna, which is useful for everybody.

In Bhagwad Gita the ideal man is portrayed with the word 'Sthitaprajna'. Human beings have two parts. One is 'Sthitaprajna' whose wisdom is steady, becoming one with Brahman, and they belong to higher status, whereas another is 'Chanchal Prajna', whose wisdom is not steady and that belongs to lower status. This is also seen in their day-to-day behaviour. Many Chanchal Prajna people are living everywhere in this world, but Sthitaprajna is very few and can be seen very rarely. Every man who desires for advancement should keep their unsteady mind aside and should keep their mind stable. A man who is Sthitaprajna can go in samadhi state any time or he/she can behave well when in a conscious state.

In ch. 2 of Gita, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna, 'what is the quality of a Sthitaprajna who is steady in samadhi state? How does Sthitaprajna talk? How does he/she walk? How can one identify Sthitaprajna?' and so on. The Sthitaprajna is like the great Sage. The Sthitaprajna sees the existence of God in both good and wicked. A Sthitaprajna is also known as a jivanmukta. In the Bhagavad Gita, the character of the Sthitaprajna has been described as the following:

1] Sthitaprajna is a person who is always self-content and therefore no desire can make him/her unsettle/ unrest. Therefore his/her wisdom is always steady. Sthitaprajna is free from all attachments and aversions.

2] Sthitaprajna is one who neither becomes sad in sorrows nor gets addicted by happiness, isolates oneself from love, fear, and anger are known as under Sthitaprajna.

3] Sthitaprajna is ever conscious of the reality of oneness, though he behaves like an ordinary person.

4] Sthitaprajna becomes ideal for other people and guides other people. Sthitaprajna and steady minded means the same.

5] The Sthitaprajna is no longer a seeker of the Truth, but he is a seer of truth.

6] The Sthitaprajna is a jnani, a bhakta, and a yogi.

7] Ever established in the state of yoga, the Sthitaprajna Remains in constant union with God and, at the same time, is the ideal exemplar of karma-yoga, demonstrating steady wisdom through every action.

8] The one who is fully devoted to God (Ishwar pranidhan.). That person has all qualities of great sages. But one who is not Sthitaprajna does not have such qualities. Because that person always takes the help of his/ her mental rationale. A person who gives up all desires aroused by this mental rationale and his/her pure mind when only feels bliss in his/her satisfied self then that person becomes Sthitaprajna and meditation is no less an action than everyday activity.

9] Not to feel sad in sorrow, not to get overwhelmed by happiness, to get rid of the addiction, fear, and anger and to keep quiet i.e., less speaking are the qualities of Sthitaprajna.

10] Self-absorbed always does nishkam karma for everyone. He always works for the sake of humanity.

When a person keeps all his higher desires aside and when he is fully satisfied with his or her mind fixed in atman is known as sthitaprajna. 'Desire covers wisdom as smoke covers fire.' Wisdom covered by desire does not see things right, it just sees the illusion and believing it to be true leads to the bondage of the soul. The mind which is controlled leads to the steadiness of wisdom (prajna). Then wisdom, free from delusion, looks at things in the right way in equanimity.

The man whose wisdom or is steady, neither and nor gates objects, neither depressed nor exhausted in failure and success. He is called that prajna or a wise man. This equanimity of mind is called Yoga. Only steady minded can acquire wisdom and only a wise man can meditate and only a meditating man can attain peace and happiness can be attain only by one who is peaceful. As peace is the only tool which ends all miseries. When an action is done without desire and attachment it is equal to inaction, he is liberated from the action. According to Gita the state of Sthitaprajna is the last station in the Gita. He says, "Attain the state of Sthitaprajna,". It is necessary to keep quiet/ talk less about being Sthitaprajna. One who wants to be Sthitaprajna should not get attached, or addicted to, or should not love and hate anything or anybody. Sthitaprajna should keep all his/her senses inside like a turtle. He /she never makes his/her senses flow anywhere. He always controls them. And this is possible for him/her because he is devoid of all desires. He/she knows his/her nature and that's why he/she achieves the status of Brahman. Till the last moment of his/her life, he/she stays in this state, and because of which he/she achieves eternal peace, i.e., creation of brahman and he/she becomes one with ultimate Brahman.

How the ocean despite filling itself stays calm, like that a person never feels unrest when he/she faces the calamities, only that person can achieve peace, unlike other people who always fight to complete their desire never get peace. A person who has given up on all desires does not have a false ego can only achieve peace of mind or can become Sthitaprajna.

Sthitaprajna naturally absorbs things with his/her senses, but he/she is devoid of anger and envy. His/her all senses are within his/her control, because of which his/her mind is in a calm state. Due to his/her endless self-contentment all his/her sorrows go away, his/her mind stays in the state of ultimate bliss. It's a task of all yogis, devotees, or saints to keep his/her senses within control according to his/her plan. But a lot of people are slaves of their senses and therefore they work under the guidance of their senses. The metaphor used for the senses is of poisonous snakes. They want to wander freely without any restrictions. The Yogi or devotee should be very strong like a snake charmer that he/she should control those serpents like senses. That person can never give freedom to his/her senses to flow freely. A person must stick to all the rules given in scripture.

The one who struggles to become Sthitaprajna Should/must follow the path of Nishkam buddhi yoga (wisdom) / desire less act and should take up the idea of perfect feeling (sarvatma bhava) from the starting point, this is the saying of Gita.

### **Check your progress**

1. Explain the Concept of Sthitaprajna.
2. What are Characteristics of Sthitaprajna mention in Bhagwad Gita, Explain in Detail.

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## 2.5 THE CONCEPT OF DHARMA WITH REFERENCE TO RTA, RNA & PURUSHARTHA

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The concept of Dharma is the unique and comprehensive concept in Indian philosophy. The Sanskrit word 'Dharma' cannot be exactly translated in English language. The word 'Dharma' is derived from the Sanskrit root, 'dhr' which means to sustain, to support or to preserve. In Indian philosophy the word 'Dharma' is used in various ways.

In Rigveda, the word 'Dharma' stands for natural or cosmic law. The cosmic law 'Rta' reflects in the society as 'Dharma'. It also stands for moral laws and moral conduct.

In Chandogya Upanishad, 'Dharma' stands for the performance of duties related to the stages of life that is Ashram-Dharma.

In 'Aitareya Brahman' the word 'Dharma' stands for right conduct. The king is the preserver of 'Dharma' that prescribes code of conduct.

In Mahabharat, the word 'Dharma' is defined as 'dharanatdharayateityahu'. 'Dharma' is that which holds together the society.

In Vaisheshika philosophy, 'Dharma' is that which leads to prosperity and the highest good or spiritual well being.

In Mimamsa philosophy, the word 'Dharma' is a Vedic command which ought to be followed.

Manu Smruti and Yadnyavalkya Smruti, hold 'Dharma' as performance of duties prescribed by individual's Varna (the class) as well as Aashrama (the stages of life).

Dr Radhakrishnan wrote, "We may define 'Dharma' as the whole duty of man in relation to the fourfold purposes of life [Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha] by members of four groups [Chaturvarna] and and the four stages [Chaturashrama]."

Indian ethical view correlates three strings of morality in human life – subjective, social and spiritual. Purushartha implies achievement of subjective morality that is individuals own goals. Varnashrama implies social morality. An individual cannot live a solitary life. The concept of Rna implies the sense of gratitude for whatever a person receives from his fellow beings. An individual's spiritual liberation is possible only through disinterested performance of duties.

The concept Dharma is depicted in the concept of Rta as a Cosmic Law. It is depicted as a Duty in the concept of Rna in a social sense. The concept of Dharma plays an imp role in the theory of Purushartha. It guides the individual at a fundamental level in the pursuit of values in his life The concepts of Rta (the eternal cosmic order), Rna (the debts) and Purushartha (the Supreme Ends) provide the metaphysical foundation to the moral life of an individual.

### **2.5.1 The Concept of RTA**

The concept of Rta is the fundamental concept in Vedic philosophy. Rta is the eternal, cosmic and moral order. Rta represents the basic truth, harmony or system of the universe which no one can violate. Rta is Truth or truths (Sathya Sai

satyam), centre of centres (Kendrasya Kendram). It is the Divine order which is designated as “Vrata” in Vedic literature.

In the physical sphere Rta represents the eternal and inviolable law of nature. Rotation of Heavenly stars, alteration of day and nights, flow of rivers, oceans, etc. are regulated by Rta. Rta is the unity-in-difference in the cosmic order. It maintains everything in its correct place.

The principal of Rta is eternal and omnipresent principal. It is immanent in all the creations of Cosmos. Rta is the binding principal of this cosmos, whether physical or moral.

In the moral sphere, Rta is righteousness. It is the measure of morality. Those who follow the path of Rta, follow the path of Good. They are called Vratani. The path of Rta (Vrata) is consistent with natural cosmic order. The path of Rta leads a man to harmonious, prosperous and contented life.

Anrta is opposite of Rta. Anrta represents complete disorder and confusion. The path of Aorta goes against the natural laws. It leads a man towards disease and death.

Vedic Gods are Guardians of Rta. [Rtasya Gopa]. However, Gods are not superior to the cosmic and moral order. Gods themselves are subject to Rta.

Varuna, the God of Sky and Heavenly light is the Guardian of this universe. Varuna was believed to be the most powerful God that was enthroned as the ruler of universes. He is the Custodian of Rta. Varuna has the responsibility to maintain the supremacy of cosmic as well as moral order. Varuna sets the eternal laws to



protect Rta, that no one can violate. Varuna was essentially supposed to be God of Peace.

Varuna is omniscient God with the Sun and the Moon as his eyes. So, he has the strong, all searching vigilant sight. At least sin will not escape detection by him. Varuna and other Gods maintain Rta, the eternal cosmic and moral order. Varuna is omniscient God with the Sun and the Moon as his eyes. So, he has the strong, all searching vigilant sight. At least sin will not escape. Those who follow the path of Rta, Gods are benevolent and helpful to them. Gods are angry when the path of Rta is not followed. Thus, Rta is responsible for the apportionment of reward and punishment. For Gods, Rta has metaphysical relevance and for human beings Rta has ethical relevance. Life of reason leads to righteous behaviour that confirms the solidarity and sovereignty of cosmic and moral order consequently human beings are rewarded by Gods. Life of passions (Anrta) leads to chaotic behaviour that harms the solidarity and sovereignty of cosmic and moral order. Consequently, human beings are punished by Gods. The concept of the eternal, inviolable cosmic and moral order gradually shapes itself into the Law of Karma, the peculiar characteristic of Indian philosophy.

### **2.5.2 Concept of RNA**

Indian ethics has a special characteristic of the Ashram system. Every individual by nature passes through various stages of life. Indian thinkers correlate the stages of individuals to society.

Indian thinkers prescribed duties at every stage of life. The prescribed duties contribute to the social welfare and social stability. The Ashram system has four stages. Every individual pass through the stages of a Brahmacharin (a student), a Grihastha (a house holder), a Vanaprastha (retired) and a Sanyasin (a

wandering monk.) The stage of a householder is very important for the stability of the society. The individual enters into the first unit of society i.e., family, by entering Grihastha ashrama. A householder enjoys the pleasures of life. At the same time, he has many responsibilities. He has to take care of his family, the guests and other society members. The concept of Rna implies obligation and responsibility. Man is a social animal. His development is possible, because many other fellow beings have, in some or other way, contributed to his progress. The individual is under obligation of many members of his society.

The individual is born with 3 Rnas namely Rishi Rna (debt of sages / teachers), Pitru Rna (debt of the ancestors) and Deva Rna (Divine debt)

### **1. Rishi Rna**

Rishi Rna is also called Guru Rna. The first stage in the life of an individual i.e., Brahmacharya ashrama (a student) is spent with a teacher. In ancient times, the sages, wise people were guideposts of society. The wisdom of the sages was passed from one generation to another generation. The sages played an important role in the development of the individual as well as in social progress. By learning Vedas by giving fees, by showing respect by being grateful, Rishi Rna can be discharged. In Brahmacharya ashrama, an individual becomes free from Rishi Rna.

### **2. Pitra Rna**

An individual owes many things including his own existence to his ancestors. It becomes the responsibility of the individual to sustain the family by giving birth to the next generation. By begetting children, the individual becomes free from the debt of his ancestors.

Thus, in Grihastha Ashrama, an individual becomes free from Pitra Rna.

### **3. Deva Rna**

God has created this universe. God is the sustainer of this universe. Whatever we receive from nature, is due to the blessings of God. The forces of nature are beyond the control of human beings. To please these forces, men used to perform sacrifices. Performance of sacrifices was a way to show respect to deities. Forces of nature are like supernatural, mighty, powerful agents. A man in such a world is at the mercy of God. By performing sacrifices, man becomes free from the Divine debt. In Grihastha and in Vanaprastha Ashrama, an individual becomes free from Deva Rna.

By repaying three Rnas the individual reaches the stage of 'Anrunya' which means freedom from all Rnas. Only after reaching the stage of Aarunya, an individual can prepare himself for the highest purushartha- Moksha

The concept of Rna-traya [3 debts] is a commonly known concept. However, "Shataphath Brahman" refers to fourth debt Viz. Manushya Rna. It is an obligation towards humanity. By helping other human beings an individual becomes free from debt towards humanity.

### **2.5.3 Purushartha**

The Indian thinkers were not only interested in knowing the Ultimate Reality but in realizing the Ultimate Reality. Philosophy is an art of living a good life. They prescribed Four Supreme Ends that are Purusharthas. The term 'Purushartha' means the goal or the End that every human being (man or woman) ought to seek. The Purushartha Vada is a comprehensive Indian theory of human

values. Man is a rational, social, moral and spiritual being. His needs are to be satisfied. Good life consists in the pursuit of four Supreme Ends, namely Dharma (Virtue), Artha (Wealth), Kama (Desire) and Moksha (Liberation). Artha satisfies material needs of individuals, Kama satisfies psychological needs and Moksha aims at spiritual satisfaction. Dharma accompanies throughout life.

Initially only three Purusharthas i.e., Dharma, Artha and Kama were recognized as the supreme ends. These three supreme ends were named as 'Trivarga'. Later on, Moksha (Liberation) as the supreme end was introduced. These four Purusharthas are classified into two groups. Artha and Kama are considered as lower and material values. Dharma and Moksha are considered as higher and spiritual values.

### **DHARMA - Purushartha**

The term 'Dharma' is derived from the root 'dhr' meaning to hold together, to sustain, and to nourish. Thus 'Dharma' literally means 'That which holds together.' It is the basis of harmony in individual life and order in society. Dharma is therefore the basis of social and moral order. ["Dharana Sharma Yahuh"] Dharma as the Supreme End stands for the principles that lead to the harmony in social relationships and integrity of an individual's personality.

Among the four Purusharthas, Dharma is always mentioned first. It is given priority over others because all human pursuits have to be compatible with moral values and principles. Dharma is said to be the special characteristic of human beings. All living organism are indulged in eating, sleeping, tear, and sex. Dharma is the distinguishing characteristic of Human beings. Dharma indicates moral and reflective awareness. Man is essentially a rational and spiritual being. He is not satisfied with the mere satisfaction of

biological needs of hunger, sex and safety. He has higher needs – psychological, moral and spiritual.

Dharma is classified into Sadharana Dharma that is General virtues and duties and Vishesha Dharma that is Special virtues and duties.

Sadharana Dharma includes the actions which are indicative of the general virtues like non-violence in thought, word and deed, truthfulness, non-stealing, purity, knowledge, veracity, patience, gentleness, forbearance, honesty, self-control, charity, moderation, compassion, respect for others' property and contentment. Such virtues and duties are obligatory on all human beings irrespective of their class or creed. These virtues and duties are useful for self-development. They are self-regarding as well as other-regarding virtues.

Vishesha Dharma is related to one's class in society and to the particular stage of life. Vishesha Dharma is classified into two Varna Dharma and Ashrama Dharma.

Varna Dharma prescribes the duties related to the aptitude of person. These are professional duties, each performed to develop certain professional skills. Their main aim is social solidarity or social stability. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of three dispositions of human beings. These are three Gunas namely, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattva Guna represents Wisdom, Rajas Guna represents Activity and TamasGuna represents Inertia (Ignorance and Inactivity). Every individual is composed of three gunas. The predominance of any gunas leads to the classification of Four Varnas i.e., a class in the society.

1) Brahmins: It is the class of preachers, teachers, intellectuals, and priests. They were expected to pursue knowledge and wisdom. Brahmins were supposed to be the guides and custodians of moral and spiritual values in society.

2) Kshatriyas: It is the class of rulers, warriors and administrators. They were expected to protect the society from external invasions and internal disorder.

3) Vaishyas: It is the class of farmers and traders. The farmers and traders were expected to cultivate the land, to protect the cows and to trade, so the requirements of the society should be fulfilled.

4) Shudras: It is the class of all other supportive workers, e.g. producers, workers, carpenters, blacksmiths, barbers, goldsmiths, etc. Shudras was the class of skilled laborers and producers, such as artisans and craftsmen as well as toilers and workers.

The qualities of knowledge, power, wealth and service are found respectively in the four Varnas namely Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Today, Varna system has degenerated into Caste system which is not at all concerned with the disposition of an individual.

Devotion to one's own duty and renunciation of the fruits of one's actions to the Highest Spiritual Authority (God) was expected from all the members of the society. The regular dedicated performance of one's own duty leads to the Highest Goal of life namely Moksha (Liberation).

Ashrama Dharma prescribes duties related to the stages of life. Life was considered as a spiritual journey towards the final goal of Moksha. It was divided into four stages. They are---

1. Brahmacharya ashrama: Student life. The student has to acquire knowledge, develop certain skills and get educated in human values. It is the period of self-discipline and preparation
2. Grhastha asrama: Householder's stage. The householder has to enter into the social institution of marriage and family to fulfill social responsibilities.
3. Vanaprastha ashrama: Life of retirement. In this stage, the family bonds and relations are to be loosened. The individual should strive for the good of the whole society and his spiritual self-development.
4. Sanyasi ashrama: Ascetic stage. It is the stage of renunciation. The individual has to live the life of a wandering monk. The ascetic is wholly devoted to seek the spiritual good of him and that of others.

### **ARTHA - Purushartha**

'Artha' as Purushartha stands for attainment of wealth. Wealth includes all the means that are essential to satisfy natural needs and desires: cattle, farming, food, money, property and profit constitute wealth. It includes all the resources that generate wealth. Artha stands for that which satisfies the biological, material and economic needs of an individual.

Artha has a social significance. Every society generates wealth and every member contributes to the creation of wealth. Wealth has to fulfill social functions. It must serve human purposes.

The Supreme End 'Artha', ought to be earned and utilized in accordance with the moral principles that is Dharma. Artha also stands for power and authority. It must be linked with morality and

welfare of the people. Artha in the form of wealth or power should not be acquired by unethical means. It should be achieved by righteousness and should be used with generosity, compassion and good faith.

Artha is a means to fulfill our desires. The satisfaction of desires leads to Kama Purushartha. Fulfillment of Kama leads to Moksha. In this way, Artha as well as Kama are instrumental to attain Moksha.

### **KAMA - Purushartha**

Kama is associated with the satisfaction of natural instincts, desires and emotional aspects of human beings. Kama means a pleasure one gets from the satisfaction of desires. It also means affection and love. Kama as a Supreme End includes sensual enjoyment as well as aesthetic joy. It covers all the aspects of the gratification of biological motives and emotional satisfaction. Kama refers to both self-preservation and race preservation.

Kama also indicates joyful aesthetic experiences. The 'feeling' aspect of human nature seeks the ideal of 'Beauty'. Beauty reveals itself in aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic experience is the experience of disinterested interest. It is impersonal and non-utilitarian. The ideal of Beauty is expressed through harmony, order and Art. Art helps the elevation and sublimation of natural desires. Indian thinkers hold that the person who has satisfied his physical and psychological needs by moral principles can experience the eternal Bliss. An emotionally discontented man cannot rise to the spiritual level. The satisfaction of desires leads to the state of calmness and peace in mind. Ancient thinkers did not advocate blind pursuit of pleasure. To satisfy emotional needs one should not break moral or social laws. The Supreme End Kama should be



strived in accordance with Dharma – the moral principles.  
MOKSHA – Purushartha

Moksha is an end-in-itself. It is the Supreme End that has intrinsic value. It is the Ultimate End of human life. It is the Summum Bonum (the Highest Good). Liberation is associated with the spiritual level of human beings. It is characterized by the feeling of complete satisfaction of desires and bliss.

Moksha or Liberation is interpreted in terms of Eternal Bliss. The intense awareness of one's imperfection in the form of ignorance, weakness, dependence, etc. makes man reflect upon the nature of his true self and happiness. The pleasure we get from objects through sensuous experience or enjoyment is temporary, short-lived, uncertain, and usually mixed up with pain. Therefore, one seeks freedom from the bondage of desires that is 'eternal happiness' or 'Bliss'.

Moksha is also interpreted as freedom from the cycle of birth and death; freedom from the bondage of merit & demerit, vice & virtue.

Moksha is the actual realization of one's true self. This is spiritual self-realization. When the seeker loses his distinct identity and realizes his True Self or the Eternal Reality, he gets liberated.

Moksha or Liberation is the pursuit of ideals. When the gap between 'What is' and 'What ought to be' disappears, the individual achieves Liberation.

Moksha as the highest Purushartha is interpreted in two ways.

**1) Videha Mukti:** Some Indian thinkers hold that human beings are bound by psycho-physical conditions. He is finite and imperfect. So Moksha can be attained only after the death of the physical body. Moksha is not possible within this material body.

**2) Jeevan Mukti:** Some Indian thinkers hold that Moksha is attainable here in this world while one is alive. Moksha can be attained in the finite physical body through proper and purified conduct. The ardent desire for Moksha after the physical, mental and moral purification leads to the highest level of consciousness. It leads to attainment of Moksha in this physical body.

Following prayer indicates the intense desire of man to seek Liberation---

Lead me from the unreal to the real the Ultimate Reality, Lead me from darkness to light (Knowledge), Lead me from death to immortality (Eternal Bliss).

Asato maa sad\gamaya È  
 tmasaao maa jyotIR-gamaya È  
 maR%yaaolmaa- AmaRtMgamaya ÈÈ

### **INTEGRITY OF FOUR SUPREME ENDS**

Prof Shah and Dr. Sunder Rajan believe that the theory of Purushartha Vada is the perfect moral theory. All human problems can be solved by Purushartavada. The four Supreme Ends form one complete whole. One Purushartha is meaningless without another. These Supreme Ends can coordinate individual and social ideals at any time. They define the very human nature in terms of goals.

Four Purushartha are intimately connected with one another. Dharma leads to Artha, Artha leads to Kama, Kama leads to Moksha. There is integrity among Four Purusharthas. Every Supreme End (Purushartha) forms the foundation for the next Supreme End. Dharma accompanies Artha. Artha means Kama and Kama leads to Moksha. Dharma without Moksha leads to mere rituals. Artha without Dharma is greediness. Kama without Artha will be lust. Moksha without other Purusharthas will be hollow and abstract.

### **Check your Progress**

1. What is the concept of Dharma in Indian literature?
2. State the meaning of Rta in Indian philosophy?
3. What is meant by Rna-Traya?
4. Name the Purusharthas.
5. State the nature of Dharma as a Purushartha.

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## **2.6 SUMMARY**

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Indian view of moral philosophy is different from that of Western Philosophy. In Western philosophy ethics is an intellectual inquiry whereas in Indian view, it is the way of life to realize the ultimate reality. The concept of DHARMA is the unique concept of Indian philosophy. It is not just religion- the faith one follows. Dharma is depicted in Rta, Rna and Purushartha. Rta is Dharma as the eternal cosmic order that prevails in this universe. Rna is Dharma as a moral duty in the life of a person. Purushartha is Dharma in the achievement of subjective morality.

The Bhagavad Gita preaches the path of action i.e. Nishkama Karma Yoga, being a Moral Ideal i.e. Sthitaprajna. The Gita advocates disinterest in the performance of duties. However,

the Gita prescribes specific duties of an individual as per his aptitude and as per his stage of life. In other words, the Gita prescribes Varna-Ashrama dharma. The Gita ethics promotes individuals as well as social welfare.

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## 2.7 BROAD QUESTIONS

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1. Explain the salient features of Karmayoga in the Gita.
2. Elaborate the notion of Purushartha
3. Explain in Detail, Sthitaprajna as the Moral Ideal.
4. Write short notes –
  - The concept of Rta
  - The concept of Rna
  - The Gita notion of swadharma.
  - The concept of Dharma
  - 'Moksha' as Purushartha
  - 'Dharma' as Purushartha
  - Features of sthitaprajna.



# Unit -3

## THE GOOD LIFE: GREEK ETHICS

### UNIT STRUCTURE-

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Nature of Virtue
- 3.3 Socratic concept of Virtue
- 3.4 Plato's Concept of Virtues
- 3.5 Aristotelian Concept of Virtue
- 3.6 Summary
- 3.7 Broad Questions

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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- To understand the meaning of good life as conceived by two great ancient Greek philosophers viz. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.
- To know virtues which constitute good human life.
- To understand Socratic Concept of virtue and study how and why he equates virtue with wisdom.
- To understand the contribution of Plato and Aristotle to the concept of good life and the ethics of virtues and character.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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Normative ethics studies voluntary human conduct from the standpoint of good and bad, right and wrong. It also investigates

various norms or standards of human conduct. Moreover, it analyses virtues which constitute human character. We generally pass moral judgements on human conduct and character. This unit discusses Plato's views on good human life and virtues.

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### **3.2 NATURE OF VIRTUE**

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Before we discuss Plato's idea of cardinal virtues, we must know the meaning of the concept of virtue. We pass moral judgements on man's voluntary actions, his intentions or motives, and finally on his character. Thus, one of the objects of our moral judgement is the character of a human being. Character of a man is the organisation of man's sentiments, qualities, attitudes and habits. It is always in the process of formation and transformation. Though it is not fixed, it is more or less permanent integration of psychological traits and moral virtues.

Normative ethics, therefore, analyses the moral qualities or attributes which constitute moral character of a human being. Such qualities are called virtues. Etymologically, the word 'vir' means hero. The Sanskrit word 'vira' also means hero. Prof. P.B. Chatterjee in this connection writes: The English word, 'virtue' corresponds to the Latin 'virtus' and Sanskrit 'virya' meaning valour or manliness, power, energy, or excellence. For the Greeks also, virtue indicates excellence. Virtues, thus, are good traits of character and vices are bad traits of character. Virtues as good traits of character can be and must be deliberately cultivated. They make for the survival and the well-being of the human individual and also that of the society.

Human beings admire the qualities of a person who possesses them and exhibits them in his dealings with others and in difficult situations. So they can also be called as the good habits of human beings. It is, therefore, rightly said that moral life does not

grow in a vacuum. Good life or moral life is developed through the habitual or regular doing of good deeds or actions in changing situations. Character and conduct of a man are intimately related. Conduct of a man is the expression of his character in varied situations. On the contrary, moral character of a person is formed when he does good actions consistently and persistently. For instance, one can become dutiful by doing one's duty honestly and efficiently. So a verse goes:

Sow an act, reap a habit, Sow a habit, reap a character; Sow a character, reap a destiny. In this way, virtues can be cultivated and can be termed as character-values. Since virtues can be cultivated, they can also be described as the acquired dispositions of a virtuous person. Hence, virtues denote the excellence of human character, while vices are the defects of character. These virtues, in other words, refer to the inner traits of man's being. So they constitute the morality of being, while duty and good actions refer to the morality of doing. One simple but profound message of any great man is: Be good and do good, and the way to be good is through the doing of good actions consistently.

Duties are obligatory actions. A man does his duty. Virtue refers to the moral quality of a person. We, therefore, correctly say that a particular person is virtuous if he possesses good qualities. Such a virtuous person is not only good but he also does good deeds. He does not take holidays from virtues. The existence of virtues in a person is inferred from the habitual good conduct of that person. One has to choose to be virtuous and pursue the path of good and right actions. Virtues promote the well-being of their possessors and also of their society, while vices run counter to the welfare of their possessors.

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### 3.3 (KNOWLEDGE AS VIRTUE)- SOCRATES (469-399 BC)

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Socrates is often popularly regarded as the father of Western Philosophy. He never wrote anything in his life on philosophy. Whatever Socratic Philosophy and Ethics has reached us is through Plato's dialogues and other writings of the past. Though Socrates never wrote anything in Philosophy, he achieved such a distinguished position in Philosophy because he actually practiced Philosophy or 'wisdom', throughout his life. It would not be an exaggeration if we say that "he lived for philosophy and died for philosophy".

In spite of being such a wise person, his most famous, often quoted statement is, "I only know one thing that, I know nothing".

There are two different characteristics of Socratic Philosophy viz a) Scientific b) practical

a) **Scientific:** "All knowledge is through concepts" (definitions) is the scientific aspect of his Philosophy.

b) **Practical:** "Virtue is knowledge" is the practical aspect, or ethical aspect of his philosophy. Socrates, with the help of his Philosophy thoroughly refuted Sophistry i.e., Sophists theory of knowledge. Similarly, by equating virtue with knowledge he could break the relativistic and subjectivity ethics of Sophists. He practically demonstrated how the famous quote of Protagoras "I am the measure of all things of What is right that is right ....." would lead to utter confusion in human society.

In this respect, W.T. Stace writes, "Socrates did the restoration of faith and for this reason it is said that he brought



Philosophy from Heaven to Earth and made it dwell in the low roof house of man”.

The important points of Socratic Ethics are found in Plato's dialogue, “Apology” they may be summarized as below: -

**1) ‘Wisdom is Virtue’**

Socrates earnestly believes that ‘wisdom’, alone begets virtuous behaviour. Of course, ‘Wisdom is not to be equated with information. But it is the conviction of the soul about what good and right is and what is wrong. Wisdom is the clear vision about consciously choosing the ‘right’ or ‘good’ option in life. E.g., if you have this knowledge that cheating is wrong you will never cheat.

**2) Tend Thy Soul**

Concern for wisdom and truth is the highest good, on view of Socrates. Seeking virtue therefore means cultivating soul, building character and not running after worldly things like money and comfort.

**3) It is better to suffer evil than to do evil**

According to Socrates suffering evil harms our body but not our soul. In fact, soul is strengthened through suffering. Thus, one should suffer evil rather than doing wrong / evil to others.

**4) No person is truly happy unless he is virtuous**

“Virtue is Happiness”, is the central theme of entire Greek Ethics. However, happiness, in this context means ‘contentment’. Thus, virtue is the only eternal way towards happiness.

### 5) 'Virtue' is its own reward

Doing right or good action, itself is a reward 'Virtue has intrinsic value in human life. In fact, it does not lead to happiness but "**virtue is Happiness**".

This is a deontological approach towards Ethics. Virtue is to be sought for its own sake and not for any external effects of it.

Thus, knowledge is virtue according to Socrates and Vice is ignorance. All wrong-doing arises out of ignorance. No human being intentionally does wrong. If a man knows what is right, he will infallibly do what is right.

The theory of virtue generally includes many virtues like 'courage', temperance, 'kindness' and so on. However, on view of Socrates all these virtues arise from one and the only source or fountainhead namely 'knowledge'. The different virtues are simply, varied forms of the only virtue that is knowledge of wisdom.

To conclude, for Socrates wisdom alone brings virtue which necessarily brings about true happiness and contentment.

### Check your progress

- 1) Explain the Socratic concept of virtue
- 2) Describe the main points of Socratic Ethics.

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## 3.4 PLATO'S CONCEPT OF VIRTUES -(PLATO 427 B.C. – 347 B.C.)

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Plato was a great Greek philosopher. He is known as a true disciple of Socrates. Plato's doctrine of cardinal virtues is based on his concept of virtue. According to Plato, goodness consists of the natural and proper functioning of human nature. Besides, man is social by nature; therefore, society is a normal background of moral life of human beings. Socrates had said that virtue is knowledge. It

means that insight into the nature of moral virtues is essential for becoming virtuous. Of course mere knowledge of virtue is not enough. Man has to cultivate virtues through the habit of doing obligatory and morally good actions. For Plato, good life is the life of virtues. Plato has described four important virtues in his theory of morality. According to him the cultivation of these four virtues - wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice - constitutes a morally good life. Later on, these four virtues came to be called 'Cardinal virtues'. The term 'cardinal' is derived from the word 'Cardo' 'Cardo' means a hinge or a hook which supports the door, and on which the door turns. The four virtues are cardinal because they support moral life of man in society. They are fundamental virtues. Other virtues depend upon them and are therefore subordinate to them. Thus, cardinal virtues, according to Frankena, are a set of virtues which cannot be derived from one another; and all other moral virtues can be derived from them or shown to be forms of them.

These four virtues are said to be the basic and important constituents of moral life or goodness of man. Morality consists in knowing and maintaining the harmony between the rational and non-rational elements of the self. It is called 'Justice' by Plato. Malfunctioning of any part of the self will have adverse effects upon the other parts. Thus, the key to moral life is the proper integration of the three parts of the self. According to Plato, the human self or soul is tripartite. The three elements or parts of human beings are:

1. (1) Passionate or Appetitive Element (Passions)
2. (2) Spirited or Dynamic & Executive Element (Will)
3. (3) Philosophical or Rational Element (Reason or Intellect)

This integration can be achieved when the spirited element helps the reason to keep the passions in check.

Wisdom is the virtue of reason. It consists in knowing and mastering the non-rational elements viz. spirited element and passions. It includes knowledge, insight and foresight based on that knowledge. It is not bookish knowledge/data/information only. It implies the active choice of values as against disvalues, or virtues as against vices. A man is wise in whom reason rules over the other impulses.

Courage is the virtue of the spirited element. It must perform its heroic function within the limits set by reason. It is of two types viz. physical courage of a soldier and moral courage of a thinker or a reformer. Thus, one can be courageous in war as well as in intellectual convictions. Courage, therefore, is the excellence in the activity of the will. A man is brave when the spirited element holds fast to the instructions of intellect.

Temperance or self-control consists in keeping bodily satisfactions within limits. Passions are not to be condemned. Even they are to be satisfied. The passionate element is both non-moral and non-rational. It needs to be regulated and subjected to the rules of reason. Temperance is not complete abstinence. It is the principle of self-restraint and moderation. It is the controlling and ordering of natural instincts, desires and sensuous pleasures. A man is temperate when the spirited element or passionate element yields to intellect and obey its commands.

Justice is the virtue of the whole self or the complete person. It is the proper integration of different parts of the self. Thus, justice also consists of the harmonious functioning of the three parts of personality. Each part must do its function for which it is fit. When these three parts of the personality or the self with their three virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance function harmoniously together and are ordered and ruled by reason, then justice emerges as the resultant virtue. Each man is fit for a particular job in

accordance with his nature. Justice consists in doing one's own job. Being morally perfect, therefore, is tantamount to being wise, valiant, temperate and just. Justice, then, is the supreme virtue. Just man will not indulge in the pursuit of material pleasures only.

According to Plato, the four cardinal virtues have both individual and social significance. They are found both in the individual and in the society. Human beings are rational and social animals. They have the natural tendency to live in communities. Morality of the society is the same as it is for the individual. According to Plato, society is the individual 'writ large'. For society is made up of individuals.

Each individual self consists of three parts. All the three elements are not equally dominant in all individuals. In some persons, the rational element is predominant, while in others the spirited element is powerful. Majority of the people give more importance to the passionate element. Thus, as we have three elements of the self so we have three classes in a society. They are: Guardians, Auxiliaries and Civilians.

Guardians constitute the class of rulers. They are drawn from that type of men in whom the rational or the philosophical elements is dominant. Such persons live only for truth. They are truth-seekers. They can be philosopher-kings. They are men of knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is their chief virtue.

The auxiliary class consists of those in whom the spirited element is dominant. They live for honour and success. They are good for the execution of laws and to protect the society from internal disorder and external attack. Courage is their principal virtue. They support the guardians and execute the laws made by the enlightened rulers or philosopher kings.

The class of civilians consists of producers, such as farmers, blacksmiths, fishermen, traders, carpenters, etc. In them the element of passion is dominant. They live for material gains. Temperance is their main virtue.

The guardians are enlightened or wise rulers. They direct and control the majority of the people with the help of the members of the auxiliary class. When each class does its appropriate function, justice emerges. In a just society, the latter two classes willingly accept the rule of the wise (guardians). Wisdom is an important virtue. It helps a person to control his passions and perform his duties efficiently. The virtue of justice takes note of different aspects of a human person and integrates them. It thus stands for the harmony in the individual as well as harmony between the individual and community.

### **Check Your Progress**

- 1) Explain the importance of the word 'Cardinal.'
- 2) Discuss Plato's Cardinal Virtues.

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## **3.5 ARISTOTELIAN CONCEPT OF VIRTUE (ARISTOTLE 384 B.C. – 322 B.C.)**

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He was also a great Greek philosopher. He was the first to write a book on ethics in the Western world. Knowledge, courage, bravery, and perseverance by themselves do not make a morally good character or man. Their ethical significance depends on the motives and the values to which they are related. Aristotle, therefore, rightly distinguishes the moral virtues from the intellectual virtues. The doctrine of the golden mean is central in Aristotle's concept of virtues.

Aristotle is also right in extending the meaning of the important virtue of justice. He considers justice as the supreme

virtue. It has two forms. Distributive justice consists in the equitable distribution of wealth and honours among the citizens of the state. Remedial justice consists of the fair transactions among the members of the community. The virtues are acquired through the development of the habit of doing virtuous actions consistently. Ability to think and ability to control one's desires and passions is the special virtue of man.

According to Aristotle, virtuous conduct consists in avoiding the extremes of excess or of deficiency. For instance, excessive indulgence is as much a vice as the excessive repression of desires. Self-control, therefore, is a virtue. Likewise, courage is the mean between rashness and cowardice. For instance generosity lies between meanness and prodigality. Thus, virtue is a matter of striking a mean between two vices. Moral virtue thus is a mean-state lying between two vices, viz. a vice of excess on the one side and a vice of deficiency on the other. It is not easy to find the mean. As Sahakian has pointed out, it consists in doing the right thing, to the right person, to the right extent, with the right motive, and at the right time. For instance, the practice of generosity: give generously to the right person, at the right time, to the right extent, with the right purpose.

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### **3.6 SUMMARY**

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Thus, man has to make use of reason to determine the mean. Virtues can be cultivated only through the practice of choosing and doing good deeds, and through the good habits. Aristotle points out the difficulty in selecting the proper mean. This mean is not a mathematical average. It is what is appropriate for man. Practical wisdom helps man to hit this mean. An individual knows 'what ought to be' by using his insight which can be developed by practice. Passions can be tamed by continuous

practice of self-control. According to Aristotle, virtue consists in the choice of mean that is the practical moderation of impulses by reason in actual human experiences. Morality consists in the right determination and identification of the 'mean' related to the individual in society i.e. his profession and position in society. E.g. "Courage" of a soldier. It must be distinguished from the rashness. Moreover the life of virtues leads to eudaemonia (well-being).

There can be no two opinions about the significance and the need of virtues for the promotion of the morally good life. Actual morality consists in doing good deeds, and virtues are good traits or habits of character which are productive of good works and right conduct. These good traits or virtues in turn can be cultivated through the doing of good deeds and acting on moral principles. Therefore Aristotle said that virtue is a matter of habit. Reason and experience play a major role in choosing right actions or in hitting the mean and avoiding extremes. Hence the importance of both intellectual and moral virtues.

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### **3.7 BROAD QUESTIONS**

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- 1) What is the virtue of the class of guardians?
- 2) Name the virtue of the class of auxiliaries.
- 3) State the virtue of the class of civilians.
- 4) Discuss any two of the cardinal virtue as conceived by Plato.
- 5) "Good life is the life of virtues and their integration." Discuss.
- 6) What is Aristotle's concept of good life?
- 7) How can the mean be determined?
- 8) "Virtue is a matter of habit." Discuss this Aristotelian statement.
- 9) "Good life consists in developing both intellectual and ethical virtues. It is both contemplative and active life." Discuss.





# Unit -4

## ARE WE FREE?: FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

### UNIT STRUCTURE-

4.0 Introduction

4.1 The Problem

4.2 A. The determinism, free will or libertarianism.

4.3 Determinism or necessitarianism (Denial or Freedom)

4.4 Determinism must be distinguished from Predestination and Fatalism

4.5 Self Determinism

4.6 Conclusion

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### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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The term Freedom is used in many senses. Freedom may mean-

- a) **Psychological freedom:** Freedom impression of the spontaneous character of man's nature.
- b) **Physical freedom:** Freedom to move from one place to another.
- c) **Civil freedom:** Right to act within the units of the law.

A philosopher is generally not concerned with physical political or economic freedom for him freedom would mean the "capacity to choose between available alternatives, or the power of an individual to act as a causal agent in the process of behavior.

In recent, times the problem of freedom is the most hotly debated in the philosophical circles. The age old conflict has been known as the Freedom v/s Determination Controversy. This problem has a very strong impact in many other ethical issues. Like responsibility, praise, blame etc. e.g. If all my actions are determined by forces beyond my control, then what is the point in my making future plans. Similarly if doing an action is not my choice, then now can I be held responsible for its good or bad consequence?

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## **4.1 THE PROBLEM**

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When compared to other things in the nature, on the one side man being a biological organism, he is surrounded by conditions – Social, Cultural, Physical, etc. which to a certain extent determine his conduct. From the point of view he is a part of an universal causal chain of events. On the other hand, man is not only a mere animal organism. He possesses other qualities like self-consciousness, memory and imagination which make him a creative being.

Armed with these qualities man is able to rise above manipulate nature to some extent to satisfy his needs. His sense of ethical discrimination and esthetic appreciation has opened new avenues for him.

Now the problem is this: Man, being a biological organism like any other being is a part of the chain of events and thus his behavior is determined by the surrounding conditions. On the other hand, being a creative being he possesses powers, with the help of which he can to a certain extent control nature and manipulate it, to suit his own needs. How can this contradiction be resolved?

These theories have been put forward as solutions to the problems, let us analyze these three positions.

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## **4.2 THE DETERMINISM, FREE WILL OR LIBERTARIANISM.**

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Thus view holds that an individual can determine his actions without any motive or cause. A man is capable of arbitrarily choosing between various alternatives. This theory claims that man's will is free in the sense, that it is uncaused. In other words, the future is not completely, the consequences of the past. An indeterminist would insist that some acts of choice are "exempt from the operation of causal laws."

William James an exponent of this theory, in his essay. "The Will to Believe" states that a universe is not a closed "block" it is rather "open" and there is space for novelty. Spontaneity and creativity. The different parts of an universe have considerable "loose plain" and the future has ambiguous possibilities hidden within it.

This theory is open to some criticism

1. Indeterminism makes human conduct too capricious and, it fails to consider the various factors which influence conduct. One of the main features of human conduct is, it is dependable. We can depend upon the behavior of our fellow beings.
2. We find that there are different case studies of abnormal behavior which shows that conduct can be explained as the result of social and cultural factors, Society, family upbringing. Community exposure and cultural aspects have great influence on human conduct and behavior. Unless we accept some factors like desire,

motive, intention etc. the science of Psychology is not possible to understand and predict human behavior. If our actions are absolutely undetermined then no one can be held responsible for his actions. Praise, blame, applaud guilt etc. would be meaningless.

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### **4.3 DETERMINISM OR NECESSITARIANISM (DENIAL OR FREEDOM) :**

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This is another extreme position that rules out human freedom completely. Determinists are impressed by the order in nature and the underlying principle of causation. The principle of causality is in contradiction to freedom. This theory holds that everything in the universe, including man, is entirely governed by causal laws. In other words, the present is always determined by the past.

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### **4.4 DETERMINISM MUST BE DISTINGUISHED FROM PREDESTINATION AND FATALISM:**

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i) **Predestination:** is a doctrine that a person's destiny is fixed by divine decree. If God is an omniscient, omnipotent then things must be determined by him. In other words, human beings will be completely governed by the sovereign Will of God. Thus, there is no scope for human choice.

ii) **Fatalism:** is a belief that events are irrevocably fixed, thus, human efforts cannot change them. Everything is predetermined so human will have no part in the shape or course of events in nature. The future is beyond his control in nature. A fatalist is always seen making statements like "If there is a bullet with my name on it, I'll get it, if there isn't. I'll come through unscratched, so why worry?"

The view has its origin or basis in the fact of human helplessness in the presence of certain inescapable events like death. This theory blurs all distinctions. It puts all events under one category, e.g. A prisoner who cannot go to the movies. Fatalistic attitude is an obstacle to human progress.

The determinist's appeal to the scientific postulate of causation and the fact the psychology has succeeded in finding the causes of human behavior strongly supports this theory. But it should be remembered that there are different types of determinism like Physical, Geographical, Biological (hereditary traits) and Social or Cultural. So scientific determinism does not necessitate the acceptance, or physical determinism. Today there is a tendency to regard the laws of molecules, atoms and electrons as statistical. So one should be very cautious while affirming the type of determinism rigidly.

Secondly, if determinism is complete and final, then values thinking and even truth are meaningless. It will be absurd to appeal to ideas. Unless an individual has freedom to choose between alternatives and to discriminate, reason is meaningless.

People who believe in complete determinism, make the mistake of believing that the methods of physical sciences is the only method. They forget that the realm of personal and non-quantitative, factors must be excluded from the physical sciences. Thus the results of the physical sciences should not be extended to human experience as a whole.

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#### **4.5 SELF DETERMINISM:**

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Many thinkers while solving the controversy of freedom v/s determinism have taken extreme stands and have drawn

unreasonable conclusions. Some who believed in determinism claimed that freedom in the sense of personal choice is an illusion. On the other hand, thinkers who were impressed by indeterminism carried away by the doctrine of free – will declare that determinism is a false, proposition.

There is a third possibility. The thinkers who propose this view say that it is not an “either - or” issue, it is not necessary to accept any one view i.e. freedom or determinism alone. They see it as a “both – and” issue.

This view is called self- determinism where the self is the causal agent, is the center of creativity and has a degree of freedom of choice. It links determinism and freedom and stresses the active participation of man in the process of nature. Man being a rational individual is able to choose among several alternatives, and that these alternatives have antecedent causal connections does not affect the element of freedom of selection. Really, speaking, it is on the basis of these causal connections that man selects the alternative of his choice. But this view does not deny the existence of deterministic process. Freedom is not freedom from causes, it is reflection and choice one makes the fundamental difference in the role man plays in his world. According to this view determinism must include man’s sense of deliberation, as an important link in the causal series. Thus, determinism when applied to man needs to be stated in terms of self- determinism.

Titus has given the following reason in favour of human choice or some of self-determinism:

**1) The Consciousness of Freedom:**

Practically all human beings have a direct and distinct consciousness of freedom. Man possesses the ability to choose.

Many a times after we have acted, we feel that we could have acted otherwise. Philosophers who are in favor of determinism say that we feel free merely because we are ignorant of the causes that have influenced us. But this is not always true. Sometimes, we are aware of why we are acting in a particular way but we still feel free. Knowledge, intelligence and self-consciousness have given man a great sense of freedom.

## **2) The sense of Personal Responsibility:**

Moral obligation or a sense of ought is meaningless unless men have the power to choose between alternatives. Kant said “I ought implies I can”. This is a central fact in the moral life. According to Titus, “The consciousness of freedom expresses itself forcibly in the sense of ought. After making a choice many a time there is a strong feeling of guilt or even blame.

## **3) Moral Judgments upon the conduct and character of others :**

Whenever we judge the behaviour and the character of individual we pre-suppose that they are free moral agents. Our law also holds people responsible depending upon their age and experiences. Children who are not old enough to understand the consequence of their actions are not held responsible our enter system of punishment, rewards, approval, disapproval, praise, blame, pre-suppose freedom.

The more intelligent and mature a person is the more responsible he is expected to be. This is because responsibility has a future bearing as well as a retrospective one. We punish wrong actions or praise good actions because this accountability is supposed to affect his future behaviour. A human being is able to improve upon his actions in future.

This is a very strong argument against hard or rigid determinism. Men belong to different level of existence. They cannot be treated like inanimate things like stone or even like a tree. We should not forget that man is unethical or a rational being apart from being a biological animal.

#### **4) Reflective thinking:**

Many a times when an individual faces a number of alternatives, he stops to reflect or deliberate upon the pros and cons of each possible alternate. An inanimate object like a cricket ball when hit by the batsman, the ball cannot deliberate whether to fall on the side of the boundary, or to go straight into the hands of the bowler. The action is immediate and the direction is determined by the force of the bat. In human thinking the reaction to the stimulus is not immediate. There is a gap because, the person stops to evaluate the different conditions. Thus the reason which was thought to be very strong before the thought was given may not remain the same. Some other motive may take its place.

If a person behaves in a particular way because of certain set of conditions of which he has no knowledge, his actions take one form. But, if he is aware or conscious of the condition which has influenced him, he may react to them differently from there on Prof. Hocking says, "Men can be managed." When people become aware of the fact that they are expected to react in a particular way this itself may be a motive to act negatively.

Freedom partly means the power to deliberate upon before acting and considering all the different course of action than the one suggested by the immediate stimuli that the person experiences. Thus to conclude, man is not a play thing in the hands of nature. Within the limits, he has the power to manipulate the course of nature to suit his needs.



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## 4.6 CONCLUSION:

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To a philosopher 'freedom' refers to the capacity to choose. "To what extent man is free?" is a hotly debated issue in the philosophical circles. This problem is referred to as free will v/s determinism. Three possible solutions offered.

### A. The Denial of Freedom:

1. **Determinism:** Everything in the universe (including man) is completely governed by causal laws.
2. **Predestination:** asserts that our destiny is determined by God (divine will)
3. **Fatalism:** asserts that events in nature and in men's lives are fixed in the beginning of time.

### B. Indeterminism:

This theory stresses that there are genuine possibilities in the future. Everything is not causally connected. According to James this world is 'open'. There is space for novelty, chance and spontaneity.

### C. Self - determinism:

The theory proposes that the self is a causal agent and therefore determinism and freedom may be combined. This view is a "Golden mean" between the two extremes - Determinism and Freedom.

