

Moral thinkers

Sunday, 23 October 2022 10:36 PM

Moral Thinkers Class 01

A brief overview of the class and subject. (5:07 PM)

- There is a higher court than courts of justice and that is the court of conscience. It supersedes all other courts
- Ethics is considered to be a function of the human brain which is based on that is based on the rationality of an individual
- And therefore ethics is not feelings, perception, religion, rather based upon the wisdom or the intellect of the human beings
- Ethics refers to a set of values, principles, standards, which are imposed by the society by itself and which regulates/governs the behaviours/actions/choice of the members of the society
- Ethics deal with normative science regarding the study of the human conduct living in societies
- Normative science makes a judgement regarding the human conduct is right or wrong; good or bad; moral or immoral
- On the basis of the objects, human conduct or action can be broadly classified into three types - Right, Wrong and Indifferent
- Ethics gives importance to voluntary actions which depend upon the freedom of will
- On the basis of purpose/intention/objective/situation/circumstances/consequences, the right human action can be more right, less right or it can be even wrong
- A wrong human action can become more wrong or less wrong but can never become right
- An indifferent human action can either become right or wrong

Classification as per Western Perspectives: (6:01 PM)

- Ethical theories can be broadly classified into three types:
 1. Meta-ethics
 2. Normative Ethics - Virtue theories; Duty Theory; Consequential Theories (Ethical Egoism, Ethical Altruism, Principle of utilitarianism)
 3. Applied Ethics

Indian Thinkers: (6:10 PM)

- The ethical concerns in the process of governance have been highlighted since ancient times eg Ramayana, Mahabharat, Buddhacharita, etc
- **Manusmriti** gives importance to the code of conduct in human society
- **Gautam Buddha** gave importance to 4 noble truths - life is full of sufferings; the cause of every suffering is desire; in order to eliminate suffering there must be an elimination of desire
- In order to eliminate desire, Gautam Buddha gave importance to the adoption of 8 fold paths
- One of the fold paths mentions Right conduct
- **Kautilya** gave importance to the principle and premises of ethical/good governance
- **World Bank** for the first time propounded the concept of Good Governance in the year 1992
- World Bank gave importance to 8 board features of Good Governance - Consensus Oriented, Rule of law, inclusiveness and equity; transparency; accountability; responsiveness; effectiveness and efficiency; participation
- **Asoka the Great** has been acknowledged mainly because of the "Policy of Dhamma" that is based on the principle of morality
- It was one of the characteristics of Asoka that is always practised what he preached - he was a man of integrity
- The integrity of civil servants implies that civil servants should behave as if he is a civil servant
- **Akbar the Great** was acknowledged not because of the extent of his empire rather because of his noble ideals like tolerance and benevolence
- **Garib Nawaz/Hazrat Moinuddin Chisti** was acknowledged for his lifelong devotion to humanity
- His simplicity, tolerance and affection for all
- Guru Nanak preached against exploitation and gave importance to the worth of honest labour
- **7 deadly sins as per Mahatma Gandhi:**
- Knowledge without character
- Business without morality
- Religion with sacrifice
- Politics without principles
- Pleasure without conscience
- Science without humanity
- Wealth without work
- **Raja Ram Mohan Roy** was the seeker of universal value and preached tolerance and self-control in all religious matters
- **Mahatma Gandhi** gave importance to swadeshi, swarajya, satyagraha and Sarvodaya
- **Dadabhai Naoroji** gave importance to the moral foundations of political authority.
- According to him, the political structure should be based upon justice and humanity
- Therefore, he was opposed to political power based on brutal force
- **SC Bose** was inspired by the highest ideals of nationalism which has an implied notion of patriotism
- **Vivekananda** gave importance to the individual to become a better person
- **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Azad** gave importance to the process of socialisation to make the country corruption-free
- According to him, father, mother and teacher have a crucial role to play in the prevention of corruption
- According to him, courage is one of the most important components of knowledge
- **Deendayal Upadhyaya** gave importance to integral humanism focussed upon Antodaya which implies reaching out to the last man

- This principle guides the various programmes of the government of India in the terms of Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikaas, Sabka Viswaas and Sabka Prayas
- **The perspective of Kautilya on ethical governance:** (7:20 PM)
- King is considered to be the servant of the state and therefore King should be guided in accordance with the value system of the people thereby the king should follow the wishes of the people
- The king should merge his individuality with duties and responsibilities
- The public officials should behave like public servants and not like a master
- Ethical governance should avoid extremes (Middle path of Buddha; Golden Mean of Aristotle)
- There must be a disciplined life for the king and the ministers with a code of conduct so that they become the role model for the society
- **Nolan Committee** (Set up in the UK) gave importance to the 7 principles of public life - Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership
- Law and order were considered to be the prime responsibility of the king for the sake of the protection of life and liberty of the individuals
- There must be a fixation on salaries and allowances for the king as well as ministers and the public servants
- Kautilya gave importance to both preventive and punitive measures to deal with the cases of corruption

Topics for the next class: Continuation of Moral Thinkers, etc

Moral Thinkers Class 02

Measures suggested by Kautilya: (5:02 PM)

- Measures are selection process should give importance to both merits as well as integrity
- Ability refers to the capacity and capability of an individual to perform the task
- Whereas, aptitude refers to the capacity and capability of the individual to learn the ability to perform a task
- There must be work professionalism and professional values
- Team spirit is another measure suggested by Kautilya
- The corrupt public officials should be imposed hefty fines
- If a public official has been found guilty of any offense, he should be made to become accountable for all other associated offenses
- There must be a regular and periodic transfer of public officials
- To get hold of the corrupt public officials, sting operations should be organized
- The whistleblower should be promoted and rightsizing of bureaucracy results in faster decision making and transactions of the government business without unnecessary delay
- The cases of corruption should be taken to a logical conclusion
- Kautilya is more concerned with the portion of integrity and impartiality at the higher levels of the government so that its positive consequences can be achieved at the lower levels
- Kautilya gave importance to the qualities of the king in the terms of leadership, intellect, energy as well as good moral conduct
- Kautilya gave importance to all these in the context of the monarchy but this perspective is equally applicable in the context of modern democratic government

Mahatma Gandhi: (5:34 PM)

- Discussion on the 7 sins of Gandhiji
- Integrity without knowledge is considered to be meaningless or useless
- Business without morality - Corporate governance refers to a process/system/principles through which a company is governed to ensure the balanced interest of all the stakeholders
- CSR is considered to be one of the dimensions of the corporate governance
- Pleasure without conscience; Science without humanity, Wealth without work, etc
- Values are indicative of the foundational beliefs and therefore a person has more beliefs as compared with the number of values
- No value by itself can be considered to be positive or negative, it depends upon interpretation and that interpretation itself depends upon values
- Values by themselves do not serve any purpose till such time it gets supplemented with ethical principles which translate values into actions
- Values are meant to reflect or indicate the profile or personality of an individual

Gandhian thought and Right to Information (RTI): (6:18 PM)

- RTI gives importance to transparency and accountability and this requires importance of decentralization in the process of governance which is considered to be the basic foundation of self-government or Swarajya as emphasized by Mahatma Gandhi
- RTI gives importance to the transmission or dissemination of information which also implies the transfer or the devolution of power which is considered to be the basic premise of the self-government
- Mahatma Gandhi gave importance to the participation of the masses and through RTI the people's participation in the process of governance can be promoted thereby the people's empowerment
- RTI is considered to be a master key to good/ethical governance
- Mahatma Gandhi was concerned with strengthening democracy and this requires the importance of good governance
- Gandhian perspective and RTI - both are ultimately in accordance with the concept or the notion of a welfare state
- Gandhian perspective o Sarvodaya given importance to importance for the upliftment of all
- RTI is also considered to be a non-violent means to prevent the power to become corrupt

Western Perspective: (6:50 PM)

- Virtue theories - importance should be given to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle
- Virtue theory gives importance to the development of good habits of character which can be acquired through moral education
- According to Socrates ethics is thinking about one's life and therefore according to him an unexamined life is not worth living
- A person must be aware of his passion, motivation, strengths, and weaknesses to build up oneself

- A person must be able to understand, the meaning and value of one's life
- Socrates is considered to be the basic founder of the modern western philosophy
- His perspectives were further refined by Plato
- According to Plato, there 4 cardinal/foundational virtues which are considered to be essential for the happiness of the individual and for the sake of the goodness of the society
- The ideal state should consist of persons with such virtues
- These virtues are indicative of or reflective of the nature of the soul
- Soul has 3 parts - reason, spirit, and appetite
- 4 cardinal virtues are - prudence, fortitude (courage), temperance (self-control/restrain), and justice
- Justice consists of the proper interplay of 3 parts of the soul - in a just person, reason controls the spirit; and both reason and spirit control the appetite
- According to Plato, society consists of 3 elements - peasants, warriors, and philosopher king
- Peasants were considered to be the foundation of the society
- Warriors represented the spirit of the society
- The Philosopher king is supposed to provide guidance to the society
- According to Plato, pleasure is of 3 types - physical, aesthetic, and ideal
- According to Aristotle, one who is unable to live in a society or who has no need because he has sufficient for himself must be either a beast or God
- This statement signifies that human beings are considered to be a social animal
- Happiness is considered to be a state of mind and therefore the experience of happiness is within which is characterized by positive emotions
- According to Aristotle, anyone can be angry ie easy, but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way - that's not easy
- To make it easy, it requires the importance of emotional intelligence
- Aristotle gives importance to moral virtues to regulate our emotions
- Moral virtues are considered to be the mean between two extremes of character traits which are referred to as vices
- For example, shyness (vice), modesty (virtue), and shamelessness (vice)
- Another example - want of ambition (vice), right ambition (virtue) overambition (vice)
- The golden mean has to be decided rationally on the basis of the relative merits of the situation which can be decided by a prudent man
- According to him, it is difficult to lead a virtuous life mainly because it is often difficult to find the mean between the extremes
- Extreme is the vice of deficiency and excess; golden mean is the virtuous mean
- According to Aristotle, happiness and virtue go together, he is not supportive of the idea that a virtuous person should lead a miserable life
- Happiness is always derived from the satisfaction
- According to Mahatama Gandhi, anger and intolerance are considered to be the enemies of correct understanding, etc

Topics for the next class: Continuation of Moral thinkers, etc

Moral Thinker Class 03

Western Thinkers: (Continuation): (5:04 PM)

- According to Aristotle, Courage is considered to be one of the most important qualities because it guarantees all other qualities
- According to APJ Abdul Kalam, Courage is considered to be one of the components of knowledge which implies:
 1. Courage to think differently
 2. Courage to invent
 3. Courage to travel into an unexplored path
 4. Courage to discover the impossible
 5. Courage to fight against the problems
 6. Courage to succeed

Consequential Theory: (5:09 PM)

- According to this theory, human action can be considered to be morally right if the consequences of that action are more favourable than unfavourable
- On the basis of the reference/context, consequential theories can be broadly classified into 3 types:
 1. Ethical Egoism
 2. Ethical Altruism
 3. Principle of utilitarian
- Under ethical egoism, an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favourable than unfavourable only to the agent who is performing the action
- In the case of ethical altruism, an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favourable than unfavourable to everyone, except the agent who is performing the action
- In the case of the principle of utilitarianism, an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favourable than unfavourable to everyone

Principle of utilitarianism: (5:18 PM)

- The perspective of John Rawls, Jeremy Bentham and JS Mill
- **John Rawls - Theory of Justice:**
 - It is based upon 2 fundamental principles:
 1. Every person should have the right to liberty in correspondence with the other individuals
 2. The socio-economic positions should be for everyone's advantage and open to all
 - These two fundamental principles can guarantee a just and morally acceptable society
 - John Rawls gives importance to the distribution of the public resources
 - The theory of justice propounded by John Rawls gives importance to equal treatment for all in equal circumstances and therefore under unequal circumstances, the treatment should be unequal so that justice can be made to become more justiciable
 - Rawls gives importance to the veil of ignorance

- According to John Rawls, the policymakers should be ignorant about their socio-economic positions, so that the policies are decided in accordance with the larger interest of the society rather than the specific interest of the select groups in the society that will make the policies become more impartial and achieve the objective of the larger public interest
- **According to Jeremy Bentham**, the morality of human action can be examined on the basis of the calculation of the consequences of each action on the case to case basis to examine whether that action is morally right or wrong
- This aspect is referred to as Act Utilitarian
- Bentham also proposed that we also calculate pleasure and pain as the only consequences to decide whether the conduct or action is moral
- **According to JS Mill**, the consequences of human action are examined in accordance with the moral rules which are adopted on the basis of being more favourable than unfavourable for everyone

Duty Theory: (5:57 PM)

- As human beings, we have certain obligations to ourselves, to others and to God
- Such obligations are considered to be binding
- According to Kant, duty should be performed for the sake of duty irrespective of its consequences
- Kant gives importance to the Categorical Imperative (Unconditional Command)
- A categorical imperative is considered to be universal moral law that applies to all persons and mankind
- It has no reference to any external end rather it is derived by the direction of the will itself
- According to Kant, the right action should satisfy two conditions:
 1. The action must be in accordance with the moral law which has been derived or revealed on the basis of wisdom or intellect
 2. The agent should perform with respect to pure regard to the moral law
- Kant is not supportive of hypothetical imperatives which refers to the conditional command
- To realise an end, one must act in a particular manner
- The laws which are considered to be the means to other ends are in the nature of hypothetical imperatives
- According to Kant, Human beings end in themselves and therefore, they should never be treated as means to serve the interest of others
- Every human being is rational with his own value and dignity and therefore every human being should be respected because of his own values
- Duties are considered to be co-relative with the rights
- Rights are considered to be justified and claimed against other person's behaviour
- Rights and duties can be considered to be the two sides of the same coin and therefore rights and duties are inter-dependent
- The mutual interdependency between the rights and duties can be examined on the basis of certain examples, (illustration provided) etc
- Right to life, liberty and to look for happiness are important aspects
- Moral rights are three important features - such rights are natural, universal and applicable to equally
- Such right cannot be transferred as its once own moral right, etc

Max Webber: (6:57 PM)

- Power refers to the process of exercise of the influence
- When this power becomes legitimate then it is referred to as authority
- The legal authority has been considered to be rational and ethics is based on the premise of rationality
- Webber mentions various features of bureaucracy on the basis of legal and rational authority,
- The features are:
 1. Rules and regulations
 2. Merit system of recruitment
 3. Money salary
 4. Sphere of competence
 5. Impersonality
 6. Neutrality
 7. Written documents
- Every law is considered to be the codification of moral values and therefore the compliance of laws also indicates the adherence to the moral values
- Rules and regulations provide the basis for objectivity, impartiality and non-partisan attitude on the part of those working for the bureaucracy
- The merit system of recruitment ensures objectivity and facilitates the achievement or pursuance of the public interest rather than political interest and thereby it helps to promote integrity in the working of the civil servants
- Money salary brings about more consistency and uniformity in the payment and thereby more satisfaction and motivation to the public officials and thereby helps to promote effectiveness and efficiency
- A sphere of competence helps to prevent the misuse of the discretion to be exercised by the public officials
- Impersonality ensures that a public official or Civil servant works in accordance with the wishes or the preferences of the public rather than being guided by his personal value system
- The concept of neutrality helps to ensure, political impartiality and a non-partisan attitude in the working of the civil servants
- Therefore civil servants are not expected to be committed to the ideology of the political party in power
- On the basis of written communication, there can be better accountability of the public officials which itself is one of the important components of ethical governance.
- Webber's Bureaucratic Model gives importance to ethical imperatives in the bureaucratic behaviour
- Also, the separation of public and private resources is one of the important feature
- This model corresponds to the perspective provided by Kautilya
- However, Kautilya's perspective is more pragmatic and practical, etc

Syllabus Completed.