

UNIT 74 – UPSC - Probity in Governance: Philosophical Basis of Governance and Probity

Morality and government are vital element for healthy nation. The relationships between the people who establish a nation rest on a moral basis. This foundation is a crucial part of their association and its substance determines the character of the nation and of the government under which the people choose to live. Like our inherent and inalienable rights, true morality derives from the nature of man and his life on this planet. It is not possible to consider a political philosophy intelligently and adequately without also considering its moral implications. The ethical concerns of governance have been emphasized broadly in Indian scriptures and other treatises such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagvad Gita, Buddha Charita, Arthashastra, Panchatantra, Manusmriti, Kural, Shukra Niti, Kadambari, Raja Tarangani, and Hitopadesh. Chinese philosophers such as Lao Tse, Confucius and Mencius also contributed the theoretical dogmas on ethical governance.



In the Western philosophy, there are three well-known schools of ethics. Aristotle holds that virtues (such as justice, charity and generosity) are dispositions to act in ways that benefit the possessor of these virtues and the society of which he is a part. Aristotle conceives of ethical theory as a field dissimilar from the theoretical sciences. Its approach must match its subject matter good action and must respect the fact that in this field many generalizations hold only for the most part. Aristotle was supporter of theoretical framework of Socrates and Plato in taking the virtues to be central to a well-lived life. Like Plato, he respects the ethical virtues (justice, courage, temperance) as complex rational, emotional and social skills. But he rebuffed Plato's idea that a training in the sciences and metaphysics is a necessary prerequisite for a full understanding of our good. Plato upholds a virtue-based eudaemonistic conception of ethics. It can be said that human well-being (eudaimonia) is the highest aim of moral thought and conduct, and the virtues (arete: 'excellence') are the requisite skills and dispositions needed to attain it.

Plato's fundamental assertion, in the Republic, is that justice is so great a good that anyone who completely embraces it is thereby better off, even in the face of the distress and pain of severe misfortune. The basic moral equation, clearly declared by Plato, seeks to establish that: 'Justice discounted by pain and dishonour is more advantageous than injustice supplemented by the rewards of justice'. However, Plato failed, throughout the discussion, to clearly validate this unusual and complex formula. But he evidently believed that people do act against their own immediate interests for the sake of justice, and for the sake of the good of the civic community as a whole. He did not think that the only motive for acting justly is to increase one's own happiness. Plato distinguishes that a tension between duty and self-interest is certainly conceivable; that duty and self-interest are two independent concepts neither of which can be reduced to the other. To resolve this tension we must know what is best, without qualifications. The Theory of the Forms occupies a crucial and central place in the justification of what may seem to be an extraordinary claim (Annas, 1981). The Forms are those eternal, changeless, imperceptible and bodiless objects of the understanding, which are central to the education of the philosopher of the Republic, and which engender in him a passionate reverence for such abstract ideas as Beauty, Goodness, Justice, Wisdom. If Plato's idea of happiness is elusive and his support for a morality of happiness seems somewhat subdued, there are several reasons. First, his conception of happiness differs in significant ways from ordinary views. In his early works his approach is largely negative: Socratic questioning seems designed to undermine the traditional values rather than to develop a positive account of his own. Second, the positive accounts contained in his later works, especially that of the Republic, treat happiness as a state of perfection that is hard to comprehend because it is based on metaphysical presuppositions that seem both hazy and out of the realm of ordinary understanding. In other discourses, he confines himself to intimations of different aspects of what is good in and for the soul, intimations that are hard to fit together in a coherent picture. Aristotle talked about happiness as a self-sufficient state of the active individual. Third, in crucial texts Plato's moral ideals appear both austere and self-abnegating: the soul is to remain aloof from the pleasures of the body; communal life demands the subordination of individual wishes and aims.

Secondly, Immanuel Kant, makes the concept of duty central to morality: human beings are bound, from knowledge of their duty as rational beings, to obey the categorical imperative to respect other rational beings with whom they interact. Kant supposed that a rigorous application of the same methods of reasoning would yield an equal success in dealing with the problems of moral philosophy. Kant raised concerns about the fundamental source of morality. He stated that the source of morality is our ability to rationally make decisions and our possession of a "will". Kant believes that an act has no moral worth if it is not performed for the sake of morality alone. Basically, Immanuel Kant argued that moral requirements are based on a standard of rationality he dubbed the "Categorical Imperative". Immorality thus involves a violation of the Categorical Imperative and is thereby irrational. Other philosophers, such as Locke and Hobbes, had also argued that moral requirements are based on standards of rationality. However, these standards were either desire-based instrumental principles of rationality or based on sui generis rational intuitions. Hobbes stated that in the state of nature rational fear drives individuals to work with one another. Locke elaborated in his philosophical dogmas that individuals in the state of nature are indifferent to one another (but decide that it would be easier on them to work together). For Hobbes civil society makes moral distinctions, whereas for Locke moral distinctions characterize social relations independent of civil relations: they are natural, God-given. Acting morally means acting in accord with nature, motivated by the threat of divine punishment/reward. According to

Locke, all human beings deserve to be treated equally and can justly be bound by civil laws (or government) only if they consent to such obligations. Locke proposes that the mind puts ideas together in three different ways. The first is to combine simple ideas to form complex ones. The second is to bring two or more ideas together and form a view of them in relation to each other. The third is to generate general ideas by abstracting from specific examples. Thus people ignore the specific circumstances in which we gain a particular piece of knowledge, which would limit its applicability, and generalise so that we have some rule or idea that applies in circumstances beyond our direct experience.

Kant approved with many of his forerunners that an analysis of practical reason will reveal only the requirement that rational agents must conform to instrumental principles. However he maintained that conformity to the Categorical Imperative and hence to moral requirements themselves, can nevertheless be shown to be essential to rational agency. This argument was based on his striking principle that a rational will must be regarded as autonomous, or free in the sense of being the author of the law that binds it. The fundamental principle of morality, Categorical Imperative is none other than the law of an autonomous will. Thus, Kant's moral philosophy is a conception of reason whose reach in practical affairs goes well beyond that of a Humean 'slave' to the passions. Furthermore, it is the presence of this self-governing reason in each person that Kant thought offered decisive grounds for viewing each as possessed of equal worth and deserving of equal respect.

The third is the utilitarian standpoint that proclaims that the guiding principle of conduct should be the greatest happiness (or benefit) of the greatest number (Hobson, 2002). Utilitarianism is a theory in normative ethics maintained that the moral action is the one that maximizes utility. Utility is defined in various ways, including as pleasure, economic well-being and the lack of suffering. Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialism, which implies that the "end justifies the means". This opinion can be distinguished with seeing intentions, virtues or the compliance with rules as ethically important. Classical utilitarianism's two most influential contributors are Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Bentham, stated that "it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong. The ethical theory of John Stuart Mill is most broadly expressed in his classical text *Utilitarianism* (1861). Its objective is to justify the utilitarian principle as the foundation of morals. This belief represents actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote overall human happiness. Mill focuses on consequences of actions and not on rights nor ethical sentiments. Mill described "utilitarianism" as the faith that considers a particular "theory of life" as the "foundation of morals" (CW 10, 210). His opinion of theory of life was monistic. There is one thing that is essentially desirable such as pleasure. In contrast to a form of hedonism that conceives pleasure as a homogeneous matter, Mill was convinced that some types of pleasure are more valuable than others in virtue of their intrinsic qualities. His position is called "qualitative hedonism". Many philosophers embrace that qualitative hedonism is no consistent position. Hedonism proclaims that pleasure is the only intrinsic value. Under this assumption, the critics debated, there can be no evaluative basis for the distinction between higher and lower pleasures.

Earlier period of Utilitarianism, Mill hypothesised that moral judgments presume rules (CW 10, 206). In contrast to Kant who based his ethical theory on self-imposed rules, so-called maxims, Mill thought that morality builds on social rules. Mill spoke about "morally right" or "morally wrong". He maintains that we name a type of action morally wrong if we think that it should be sanctioned either through formal punishment, public disapproval (external sanctions) or through

a bad conscience (internal sanctions). This is the critical difference between "morality and simple expediency" (CW 10, 246). Wrong or inexpedient actions are those that we cannot recommend to a person, like harming oneself. But in contrast to immoral actions, inexpedient actions are not worthy of being sanctioned. Moral rules are also critical for Mill because he takes human action in essence as to be guided by dispositions. A virtuous person has the disposition to follow moral rules. In Utilitarianism approach, Mill presented two different formulations of the utilitarian standard. The first points in an act utilitarian, the second in a rule utilitarian direction. Since act and rule utilitarianism are incompatible claims about what makes actions morally right, the formulations open up the fundamental question concerning what style of utilitarianism Mill wants to advocate and whether his moral theory forms a consistent whole.

The Western thought is associated with ethical guidelines to rulers, whether in a ruler or a democracy (Santosh Ajmera, 1986). These apprehensions are found in the theories of famous thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Penn, John Stuart Mill, Edmund Burke, and others. According to Alexander Hamilton, moral realism takes human nature as it is found in the accumulated experience of ages. It denies human and social perceptibility while acknowledging the reality of ethical conscience and will (Federici, 2012). It is represented in physophysical studies that Moral traditionalism is a view regarding the moral justification of social rules in political communities. It holds, roughly, that traditions not reason, nor approved conventions legitimize these rules. Its main descriptive is Edmund Burke. Burke argued that that civil peace and freedom from arbitrary coercion are goods which can be preserved only if the social and legal norms inherited from former generations constrain the present generations' public choices. In his writings, Burke claims that the English Revolution of 1688 took place because people's normative expectations were rooted in traditions and that the destitution of the king was an act of enforcing the shared norms regarding the legitimate exercise of political power. Burke emphasized that the French political leaders' ethical and political rationalism must lead to incessant acts of arbitrary coercion and destroy civil peace, because freedom and civil peace cannot coexist with the neglect of tradition.

To Jefferson, there were not two moralities: one governing personal and the other governing national affairs. Personal morality has its counterpart in the national arena, and the principles that govern the former are just as applicable to the latter. According to him, "The moral duties which exist between individual and individual in a state of nature accompany them into a state of society, and the aggregate of the duties exist as did between the individuals composing them while in an unassociated state, their Maker not having released them from those duties on their forming themselves into a nation." (Thomas Jefferson: Opinion, 1793). John Locke based his ethical theories upon belief in the natural goodness of humanity. The inevitable pursuit of happiness and pleasure, when conducted rationally, leads to cooperation, and in the long run private happiness and the general welfare coincide. Immediate pleasures must give way to a prudent regard for ultimate good, including reward in the afterlife. He argued for broad religious freedom in three separate essays on toleration but excepted atheism and Roman Catholicism, which he felt should be legislated against as inimical to religion and the state.

Other philosopher who developed ethical theory of governance was David Hume. Hume upholds that moral distinctions are derived from feelings of pleasure and pain of a special sort, and not as held by many Western philosophers since Socrates from reason. Working from the empiricist principle that the mind is essentially passive, Hume claims that reason by itself can never prevent

or produce any action or affection. But since morals concerns actions and affections, it cannot be based on reason. Additionally, reason can influence our conduct in only two ways. First, reason can inform us of the existence of something which is the proper object of a passion, and thereby excite it. Second, reason can deliberate about means to an end that we already desire. Hume maintains for a distinction between facts and values. According to Hume, one cannot infer conclusions about what ought or ought not to be the case based on premises of what is or is not. To summarise, there are numerous philosophers that grounded their moral approaches. In western philosophical thoughts, utilitarian views are defined by many philosophers and postulated dominant theories of morality that signified good governance. Aristotle developed moral values based on social skills. Other eminent ethical philosophers who contributed in developing moral guidelines are Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Penn, John Stuart Mill, and Edmund Burke.