



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

POSSIBILITY OF VIRTUE ON THE BASIS OF MORAL LUCK

Name- Rakesh Biswas
 Designation- Ph.D Research Scholar
 Department of Philosophy
 Coochbehar Panchanan Barma University
 Panchanan Nagar, Coochbehar, 736101,
 West Bengal, India

Abstract- Here in this writing I am going to discuss, what is virtue and how Moral luck influencing our virtuous life? Luck is everywhere in our life, from the very beginning to till our death we cannot escape from this. To live a good and happy life we need to be virtuous. Men are by birth possesses some special kind of ability and character which somehow can be a great advantage to live a virtuous life, and some times it may be a disadvantage for some people. So here my main focus is to show that, if there any relationship between Luck and Virtuous life. That means as the title saying I going to investigate deeply to perceive if virtue is possible on the basis of Moral Luck? And if so, then how can be it possible?

Key word- Moral Luck, Virtue, Relationship of virtue and Luck.

Introduction: Virtue is a kind of behavior that makes human beings superior from other living creatures in the world. Virtue means generally to a certain kind of values that helps human beings to lead a good life in the society, virtue makes a man's moral stand point greater in the society. It also taught us how to maintain humanity with our good behavior, that means to aspire to virtue means to try not to be unworthy of what humanity has mad us, individually or collectively. That means a virtuous man is; who knows how to react in a certain situation without hampering the values of humanity. There are so many kinds of virtues uttered by many philosophers of western as well as Indian. Some of the great virtues are truthfulness, courage, mercy, justice, gratitude etc. and it said by every philosopher that one should have to be virtuous for a greater society because as Aristotle said that as we are rational beings we have to act morally, that is what makes a difference of human and other creatures. But here we have a problem in front of us that is basically introduced by Thomas Nagel and Williams as Moral Luck; because for doing a virtuous action one should have to face a situation of certain types where it can be apply, but if one cannot find the situation where it applicable then how he or she may do the virtue? This is the problem because we do not have control about the situations we face, and by birth, all human beings are not equal by their capabilities. Here in this paper, I am trying to so how moral luck affects in our virtuous life; and if there any possibility of virtue within this.

Moral Luck: Luck is everywhere; we surrounded by luck since we take birth in this world. Even we did not choose, where and in which situation we are, it just certainly happened to us and we have to live with this. Even by birth we got some abilities and certain kinds of attitudes which somehow makes our moral life different from others. When something happens unintentionally about which agent do not have any control, but it affects in the moral life of the agent, that is called, "Moral Luck". The term "Moral Luck" basically first introduced by Williams and Thomas Nagel in their book and article, both titled as "Moral Luck". Both of them tries to criticize Kant's view; morality is immune from luck. According to them morality could not be possible without affecting by luck. According to them there are basically four types of ways through which moral luck affecting our moral life, that's are constitutive luck, circumstantial luck, cause and effect luck (it also called causal luck).

Constitutive luck includes, the kind of person one is, this not only means the attitude or behavior of the person towards any situation, it also includes the person's inclinations, capacities and temperament. All of these abilities although it's physical or mental strength, that's all are such things with which humans take birth without any control on it, but these affects their moral or virtuous life.

Circumstantial Luck on the other hand includes that kind of all things or situations one face in his life. Circumstance is very important for everyone. It gives the opportunity to act a certain kind of action; and it also help to reveal one's certain attitude or behavior. But human beings do not have any control over the situation or circumstance; it just some-how given by luck, as John Rawls "**veil of ignorance**".

According to Thomas Nagel and Williams, the last two ways with which moral assessments are affected very much in our day-to-day life is deals with cause and effect of one's action. That means the luck behind the antecedent circumstance of an action; and the way an action is turn out, with a certain consequence. Both of these two conditions are beyond the agent's control, but it affects one's moral life so deeply.

Virtue: As I already mention above that there are different kinds of virtues stated by the different philosophers of western as well as Indian. Now here I will take some of great virtues and will try to understand how it leads human beings to a better life which is not only give him peace but a prestigious life. Whoever, carefully follows the virtue and lives a virtuous life, are always admired by the society. Socrates stated that 'knowledge and virtue are identical' and the person who knows what is virtue, cannot do vicious action so it clear that who lives a virtuous life must do righteous thing and be admired, by the society. Let's discuss some of great virtues accepted by both western as well as Indian philosophers one by one-

1. **Courage-** This virtue is no doubt admired everywhere. Courage is also known as bravery that means whoever conquer the fear is known as courageous. It's known to all that the capacity to overcome fear is everywhere prestigious. That is why this virtue is more prestigious than other kinds of virtues. This virtue is not available in every person, very little amounts of human beings do have this virtue in themselves. Some peoples do have this capacity constitutively that means they already take birth with this kind of power or ability. If we follow Aristotle and Socrates then we may understand that virtue also can be taught.
2. **Temperance-** Temperance is that kind of virtue which allow us to free ourselves from the slavery of our appetite or sensual pleasure. This does not mean that it totally ignoring pleasure from our life, instead of this it tries to lead us to the ultimate pleasure. Even in Indian philosophy Buddha and Jaina also talks about this virtue. Human beings do have reason and with this rational power they can overcome from the brutal force which came through sensual pleasure and live a virtuous life. It is only temperance which can lead us to live that life.
3. **Justice-** Justice is the last one among the four cardinal virtues stated by Plato. This virtue is much more important than the rest of all virtues even among the other virtues which are not the part of four cardinal virtues. Justice, is seems to be the only one that is an absolute good in itself. To be virtue every action or character must be go through just action and just results. For instance, we can take courage, if it serves a good end then only it can be a virtue. On the same way every virtue should have to be just. Justice is good in itself as Kant's "**good will**". Being good both of them does not depend on anything. Even when we follow our duty then also, we have to be just. Because no one can be simultaneously dutiful and unjust, even duty resides in justice. According to Plato, justice keeps human beings in their actual position on the basis of their share and function or capability to maintain the hierarchical harmony of the whole. That means justice gives human beings equal opportunity and maintain the equality among the society. And most of all it helps to maintain the law of the society or state. Every law is just in a certain perspective.
4. **Compassion-** Compassion is none other than a form of sympathy, a person express sympathy to the pain of another person. Every human being must have this feeling, otherwise other virtues like justice, mercy cannot be stablished. That means to maintain equality and peace in the society we must have to possess this feeling. According to Schopenhaur most of the virtues are following humanity only, it is their limitations to include only human beings as an object. He also said that it is only compassion that is applicable universally. This virtue includes not only human beings as well as it spread among the animals. It makes a good relation among the human beings and animals.
5. **Mercy-** Mercy means to forgive the person doing any vicious act. But it does not mean that every vicious act can be forgiven. If we gave mercy to a person that means we gave the person a chance to reform himself, with the believe that the concerned person will not repeat the previous action further. Here one thing to be understood that, without being compassion about the evil doer no one can mercy the doer. It is also said that mercy is more difficult virtue among others. Mercy or forgiveness applied not for avoiding fighting instead of this it applied to stop hating.
6. **Tolerance-** Tolerance will be called virtuous if the person has self-control, that means to overcoming personal suffering, self-interest, or personal-disposition. It is said that tolerance do have value if it exercised against one's own interest or appetite for the sake of others. So, it now clear that we cannot claim tolerance if we have nothing to lose about.

Moral Luck vs Virtue: As I already mention above that virtue is the way of expression of one's moral conscience. A truly virtuous man has the proper knowledge of humanity and also the way to maintain it. And he knows how to control own's passions and desires for the sake of humanity. Socrates claim that all our knowledge and virtue are identical, he also claims that knowledge is virtue and virtue is knowledge both are identical. According to him the person who have the understanding of what is good and how it can be an advantage for the people, is virtuous. Not only that the concerned person can also differentiate what is good and bad for the society or peoples of the society. The person who knows well the advantage and disadvantage of good and bad action according to Socrates cannot do wrong. **Now the problem is how do human beings possesses the knowledge of virtue, is it by birth given? If so, then why some times same thing is good for one person and bad for the others? And why all the people do have different kinds of abilities, such as courage, temperance, fear etc. That means why some people by birth more courageous than others, and some people have had more fear in themselves? And it's well known to all that ability to learning, thinking etc. are varies person to person.**

Socrates and Aristotle both of them agree about that, virtues can be taught. According to Socrates if good teacher is there then the pupils can learn virtue. He also agrees that there is a lack of such teachers who can give proper education of virtue. Aristotle claims that virtues can be learned by habituation or practicing the virtue again and again. There is a Bengali proverb which if I translate in English will be like- '**Men are the slavery of habit**' that means if a person regularly practices something, he can be a master of that things. Even in psychology it is being claimed that if a person keeps practicing regularly 21 days, then the person can change his any habit or gain a new one. So, it is clear now that habituation can lead us to virtuous life, what Aristotle said about.

But here we faced a big problem that is came through luck itself. It is clear to every person that we cannot even choose our family, the circumstances where we took birth. Not only that we also have not choose our mental ability or physical capacity and these all are affecting our virtuous life. Some people already possess with themselves many virtues, other hand some do not have any type of virtues, and who ever possesses some virtues they are all not in the same way possesses these at all. But all these abilities somehow affecting to lead a virtuous life. Thomas Nagel claims that Moral luck influences our virtuous life on the basis of – Constitutive luck, Circumstantial luck, and Cause and Effect which is also known as resultant luck. Now let's see how these all are affecting us to live a virtuous life.

Constitutive Luck- This luck determines to say about the characteristics and the abilities with which men are born. That means it tries to mention about that physical or mental abilities or characteristics with which men are born, all of these have not chosen by men themselves. That means they do not have any control about these. These all are very much affecting us to live virtuous life. Socrates told, that virtue can be taught, but here the problem is every person do not have same ability or capacity to learn something. That is why some people learn fast and others cannot learn. Some people by birth already do have some virtues with them like courage, patience, mercy etc. These all are beyond their control who do not have such qualities with themselves, even who have these they do not choose it they just somehow happen to be the owner of these, this is called constitutive luck. This type of luck making advantages and disadvantages for human beings to lead a virtuous life. Because the person who already have the virtue of courage he will act courageously whenever needed, without any training or any kind of habituation, but who do not have such qualities or virtue by birth, he cannot express the same reaction as expressed by the previous man.

Circumstantial Luck- This kind of luck holds the situations and the circumstances, whatever the situation person faced. From the very beginning to the end of our life whatever circumstances and situations we human beings faced are totally beyond our control, because we cannot choose the alternate, here whatever we certainly got we have to deal with this. Now let's see how circumstantial luck can be advantage or disadvantage for human beings to lead a virtuous life. Suppose a person do have virtue of courage, but how the person can lead a courageous life if in his entire life he has not faced such situation or circumstances where it can be applied? On the same way, how we can understand that a person is not courageous? That means If proper circumstances or situation is not there then no one can live virtuously. For that reason, we cannot even differentiate who is truly virtuous and who is vicious.

Resultant Luck- This is also known as cause and effect. This luck consists the result of an action done by the agent. A person cannot control the result of his action. This is why agents having same action done by themselves gets different kinds of results. That means we just can control our actions although in a limited way but we do not have any control over the consequences. Sometimes it happens that, we intentionally want to do something but somehow the result of that action may be different than our actual intention, for some outer factor that affects the concerned result. Supporters of moral luck tries to show this with an example of a murderer, the murderer with an intention to murder shot a person with gun, but somehow a bird came in to

the way of the bullet, bullet miss the actual target. So here in this example we saw that the action done by the agent presents different result from the actual one what intended to do. Here the bird's activity is not in the control of the concerned agent, but it changes the outcome of the action. Likewise, the resultant luck can also hamper ones virtuous live.

Conclusion- It is clear by the above discussion that, our virtuous live is always affecting by the luck, that which is beyond of our control. Even if we accept the view stated by both Aristotle and Socrates, that virtue can be taught, this also cannot invulnerable to luck. Because **what should the person do when he wants to learn virtue but cannot find an appropriate teacher?** Socrates also states that, there are lack of such teacher who can teach virtue. So that means learning is also dependent on something that is beyond one's control, it can be defined as circumstantial luck because the required circumstance needed for learn is not available for everyone. Further Aristotle states that virtue can be learned through practice, but here also needed certain situation for practicing certain kinds of virtue, and it is also not in the control of men himself. Men are just act like what Strawson said about '**Veil of Ignorance**', the concerned agent suddenly fall in a situation and have to deal with this without any control over the situation. Constitutive Luck also affects the learning process of virtue, because the ability to learn something is varies person to person. So finally, it can be concluded by the above discussion that, virtuous life is always vulnerable to luck. That does not mean that virtuous life is impossible, rather it is possible within a certain boundary made up with moral luck.

Reference-

1. Thomas, J, A, K. Aristotle: Nichomachean Ethics. Penguin University Press, 2004.
2. Ameriks, Karl, and Desmond M. Clarke. Aristotle: The Nicomachean ethics. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
3. Uleman, Jennifer K. An introduction to Kant's moral philosophy. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
4. Paton, H, J. Kant: The Moral Law. Routledge Publication. 2016.
5. Williams, Bernard. Moral Luck: philosophical papers 1973-1980. Cambridge University Press, 1981.
6. Nagel, Thomas. "Moral Luck." Mortal Questions. [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979] (1979): 31-32.
7. Comte-Sponville, André. A small Treatise on the Great Virtues. Picador publication.2002.

