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## Issues Of Moral Values In Indian Philosophical Traditions

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### ABSTRACT

Indian philosophical tradition includes Vedas, Upanishadas, Puranas, Mahakabyas, Smritis etc. The ideals of one of them are followed by all and ultimately there are no differences of these ideals. Darshana is the journey of the Atmajnana to Brahmajnana. Darshana is also an attempt to balance personal well being with welfare of society. Moral philosophy or NITISASTRA discusses the human action or behaviour in general. All the works performed with freedom falls under the jurisdiction of moral philosophy. To live a peaceful and happy life we must follow moral standard. The Vedic principles are based on some 'do'es and don't's. These principles are recognized as Values. Sometimes we may face moral dilemma at certain situations. There are some flexibilities in the use of morality considering demands of the situation. In the age of crisis and confliction, Indian ethical values have specific significance. It teaches us to live a balanced life with nature. There are so many problems of our life and solutions of them are already prescribed in the ethical studies. We are already pre- cautioned by our ancestors. We must follow them to get rid of the life troubles whether it is personal or social in nature. The paper is an attempt to discuss some of the moral values set by the Indian Philosophical Traditions.

KEY WORDS: Vedas, Darshana, Moral Value, Rta, Rna, Karmaphala, Moksha

Indian philosophical tradition covers a vast realm of study. It includes Vedas, Upanishadas, Puranas, Mahakabyas, Smritis etc. The ideals of one of them are followed by all and ultimately there are no difference of these ideals. The term 'Darshana' is derived from the root 'Drsh' which means, in common, 'to see'. In Indian perspective the term Darshana includes both self realization and knowledge of the reality of other beings. In other words, Darshana is the journey of the Atmajnana to Brahmajnana. Darshana is also an attempt to balance personal well being with welfare of society. It should be mentioned here that in the Indian tradition epistemological, ontological, axiological and logical aspects are discussed in parallel. Moreover, before establishing own views, every system critically discusses the view points of other systems with due respect. Therefore, in studying any topic of one system, we are also being able to understand the standpoints of other systems. It means that Indian traditions have been developed with the motive of tolerance and respect.

Moral philosophy or NITISASTRA discusses the human action or behaviour in general. Society or state or authority determines the moral standard of our actions. Considering that standard any action of human is judged to be true or false, moral or non moral, good or bad, right or wrong. All the works performed with freedom falls under the jurisdiction of moral philosophy. Therefore, Kant considers – freedom of will, immortality of soul and the existence of God as three postulates of morality. Moral philosophy discusses the nature of good, bad, obligation etc. It is said that every free human being is

responsible for his/her free action. Freedom and responsibility may be called two necessary characteristics of morality. Because without freedom no action can be judged to be moral or non moral and without responsibility or obligation morality will be vague. If there is no provision for taking burden of responsibility, then there will be no discipline in the society. Everybody will do as he/she wishes to. We cannot live a life in a society where there is no discipline. Now, the question arises –why we should be moral or follow moral rules and regulations? The answer is that to live a peaceful and happy life we must follow moral standard. Moreover, for personal development also we need morality. The next question is –what is personal development and why it is necessary? The answer is that personal development means able to live an ideal life and it is necessary to attain the ultimate goal of human life, i.e. MOKSHA. In the Indian tradition except Carvaka system all the other philosophical systems have considered Moksha as the ultimate goal of human being. To attain that goal a disciplined life is necessary. All the systems have offered different ways to reach that goal. A strict moral life is necessary for that aim.

In the Indian tradition the Vedas are considered as the store house of knowledge. The word 'Veda' is derived from the root verb 'vid' which means 'to know' or 'Knowledge par excellence', 'sacred wisdom'(1). The four Vedas have been guiding us since ancient times to till date. The Vedas are the root of all dharma (2). The Vedas provide absolute knowledge or wisdom which can't be received by means of perception and inference. In the Vedas one can receive the knowledge of the dharma (duties) and rituals, karmaphala (results of action), yajna (sacrifice), swarga (heaven), adrista (eternal law), moksa (liberation), etc. So, what are prescribed in the Vedas are moral and what are prohibited by the Vedas should not be followed. It can be said that the Vedic principles are based on some 'do'es and don't's. The Vedic advices are found in the form of these principles. These principles are recognized as Values.

The Vedas teaches us to live a balanced life with nature. The art of co-existence with nature are prescribed in the Vedas. It says that all beings of the universe have equal rights. There is no difference between living and non living beings. In the world of nature all are equal. Thus, the Vedas teaches us to respect nature. The same ideal has been echoed in the Western Applied Ethics in the form of Land Ethics, Ecocentric view, Deep ecology etc.(3). If we look in the Indian tradition, it is found that since Vedic period man-nature relationship has been maintained in a sacred way. Various natural elements like earth, water, fire, air etc. all are considered as 'gods' or 'devata'. The term 'devata' is derived from Sanskrit 'deva'. It means the being who can give man something. Man receives everything from the natural elements or 'devata'. People dependent on the super power of nature and realized that without the grace of them nobody can live. So, they were worshipped, respected and have fear for them. Gradually some taboos are originated for nature. These beliefs indirectly help us to maintain ecological balance. The Vedas teaches us that all elements in the world are interrelated. They are the manifestation of one supreme lord. In the Upanishads also the same views have been taught repeatedly. In the Mundaka Upanishad it is stated, 'The creation, proceeding from him is subject to him, part of him, and as much a necessary effect arising from him as the web which the spider casts out and draws in –the plants on the earth, or hairs on the body. Then follows the order of creation.. from Brahman is produced food,...and from food life (Hiranyagarbha), mind, existence(the five elements), the worlds, works and immortality' (4). In the Indian philosophical systems monistic approach and co-operation of all are suggested.

In the Vedic period RTA and RNA are considered to be the basic moral values. Rta means cosmic moral order on the basis of which universe is moving/continuing. Varuna is the custodian of this law. Nobody can get rid of this law. Later on this ideal is recognized as KARMAVADA. It leads to KARMAPHALA or that every action good or bad has some effects and the doer must enjoy it. Thus, the concept of ANARABDHA and PRARABDHA KARMA, SANCHITA and SANCHAYMAN KARMA are aroused (5). According to the Gita in broad sense karmas can be divided into – Sakama karma and Niskama karma. Sakama karmas are the causes of our sufferings and Niskama karmas lead us to liberation. The whole Indian tradition is based on the issue of karmaphala and life after death. In the Indian ethics Pravritti and Nivritti are considered as two ways of life. Pravritti refers to the karmas that should be performed and Nivritti refers to the karmas that should not be done or avoided. On the other hand, Rna means some debt that one has to pay during life time. These debts are PITRI

RNA, GURU RNA, DVAIVA RNA etc. It means that we have some obligations or responsibilities in our life. Some day we must pay it otherwise we will have to take more birth in this world and suffer a lot again and again.

The Upanisadas discuss about the Brahman, Atman, creation, ultimate reality, causality, life after death etc. These are the concluding portion of the Aranyanas, The Upanisads are also known as the Rahasyavidya because the secrets of the Vedas are discussed in it. The Upanisadas emphasizes on the jnanakanda. It says that all beings are nothing but the BRAHMAN. Human beings are part of nature not the master of it. Compared to it the Western Anthropocentric or human centric ethics considers that only man has intrinsic value. Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Descartes, Newton, Galileo, Locke, Mill – support this view. They state that natural resources are available only for the human ends. But the Upanisadas tell us to respect all beings of nature. Therefore, the Upanisadas emphasizes on DAMYATA, DATTA and DAYADHVAM. It says that SATYAMEV JAYATE. Whatever may be the situation we should always speak the truth and practice righteousness. The ideals also reflected in the Puranas, Smritis and in the two Mahakabyas- Ramayana and Mahabharata. There are examples of some kings who have sacrificed their life and happiness for the safeguard of truth like Sibi, Harichandra, Ramchandra. In the Smritis like Manusmriti duties of the householders, husband –wife, king, parents etc are described. The purpose of these sayings are to maintain social balance and to enjoy a peaceful life. In the Gita it is known as Lokasamgraha or the welfare of all beings.

In due course of time we followed the ideals of Varnashrama Dharma. In the Gita the idea and importance of varnashrama Dharma is explained in the third Chapter named Karmayoga. It is the rule and regulations that the four varnas have to follow in the entire life. The four varnas are- Brahmana, Kshatriya, Baishya and Shudra. The division of varna is based on the dominance of triguna- Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Accordingly different duties are allotted to each varna. If it is followed then it will be called practising of swadharma. The four asramas are- Brahmacharya, Garhastha, Banaprastha and Sannyas. Specific duties are prescribed in the four asramas.

Along with varnashrama Dharma the other important Indian ideals that dominating the Indian ethics is the Purusartha. It means the 'goal of human life' and after attainment of them nothing becomes necessary for human being. It is four in kinds- Dharma, Artha, kama and Moksha. Among them Dharma, Artha and Kama are called –Preyah (which gives us sensual pleasure but impermanent) and Moksha is called Sreyah (that blows out all sufferings). However, they all have significant role in human life. Dharma is used in different meanings - 'the principles or force that holds or sustains individuals and society in the midst of changes', 'performance according to rule'. Dharma is a very wide and comprehensive and it includes some fundamental principles of religion and the socio-ethico principles. It includes practice of truth, love, charity, compassion, self restraint, non-enmity, wisdom, purity in thought and action, austerity etc. Everyone should follow them and they are called Sadharana Dharma. In Manusmriti ten Sadharana Dharma are mentioned – steadiness, forgiveness, self control, non-stealing, purity, control of sense organs, wisdom, knowledge, truthfulness and absence of anger (6). In the Buddhism and Jainism five Mahabratas are strictly performed. Again, dharma is divided into- Jaivadharmas (dharmas of jivas like feelings of hunger, thirst, hotness etc.) and Manavadharma (the attributes that makes man different from other jivas and beings). Regarding Artha, it is said that though it is necessary we should gather wealth by following dharma. In this context we may state that in contrast to other philosophical traditions Carvaka considers Artha and Kama as ultimate goal of life. It emphasizes on the excessive enjoyment of life. But the Vedas and others suggested rational enjoyment. Moksha, the ultimate goal of human are also known as - Kaivalya, Nirvana, Shreya, Nishreya, Amrita, Apavarga etc. Moksha is the end of sufferings and state of permanent happiness, end of the cycle of birth and death. Various means are prescribed to attain Moksha.

It is seen that sometimes we may face moral dilemma at certain situations. For example, Yudhisthira, in the Mahabharata, compel to speak half truth. What to do in any such situation? The Gita strictly believes in the ideal of 'Duty for the sake of Duty'. Is it possible for us to maintain it? In that case we may give preference to the situation. It is prescribed that for greater interest sometimes we may break the rule. For example, to murder is a sin but if it is done for the sake of country it is called bravery. There are some flexibilities in the use of morality considering demands of the situation.

In the age of crisis and confliction, Indian ethical values have specific significance. It teaches us to live a balanced life with nature. Now-a-days global warming is a burning problem of the world. The solutions of such problems are underlined by the sages long and long years ago. Today, we have been living a life of intolerance. The basic human ideals are dominated by the so called mentality of modernization. The development of science and technology increases the gap between ideals and action. For this we need to go back to our traditional practices which taught us how to live, how to protect, how to maintain, how to rebuild, how to consume and what to do for oneself and for the others. Indian ethics cannot be complete without the practise of responsibility. We are responsible for all- this is the way to solve our daily problems. Now, many established son/daughter have compelled their parents to stay in the Bhridhashrama (old age Home). But in our tradition it is said that one must look after his/her parents at the old age. Divorce becomes a common problem of modern society. It is because husband and wife have failed to respect each-other. Like it, there are so many problems of our life and solutions of them are already prescribed in the ethical studies. We are already pre-cautioned by our ancestors. We must follow them to get rid of the life troubles whether it is personal or social in nature.

In NEP 2020, Govt. of India in terms of UGC has re-introduced Indian Knowledge System to the new generations. There is no field of study where our ancestors were not expert, from space study to health issues, study of animal behaviours to warfare. What we needed today is to practise all the sayings. All the solutions are available in our hands. We have to just forward it.

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