

Abstract

Ethics is concerned with an epistemological issue. Just as a phenomenal object is capable of being known, moral values are also same. Without knowing the moral value how can we say that it 'valuable' like some other objects. Hence in philosophy we have come across a question whether moral value or goodness can be cognized or not. It has been discussed in a threadbare manner. Among the Western thinkers there is a diversity of opinion regarding the question. Such difference of opinion is found due to the different attitudes towards the exact nature or ontological status of moral value. Before considering the question of the cognizability of moral value, the exact nature of moral value should be highlighted. Our Western thinkers have made an attempt to find out the relation of moral value on the one hand and fact on the other. Hume believes that morality is a matter of feeling and hence the moral values are completely different from the fact. Moral value is a kind of feeling of sentiment, but a fact is something that can be derived from the factual statements and hence, it is neither true nor false.

Naturalism holds an altogether different view regarding the problem of meaning and justification of ethical judgements. To them moral value or goodness can be identified as a factual property. Utilitarianism is also a kind of naturalism as it identifies value with utility, i.e., greatest happiness of the greatest number. If someone believes that moral value is objective characterising human conduct, it would be something describable as an object of cognition. Such view is subscribed by realists, objectivists, the naturalists and intuitionists.

Value judgments are empirical and hence they can be empirically verified. If the term 'Good' means that what is pleasurable, we can show empirically that something is good on account of the fact that it is in fact pleasurable. Value can be defined in terms of fact.

For this reason we can define ‘ought’ in terms of ‘is’. There is a relation of entailment between a factual and a value judgment.

It has been shown in earlier pages that naturalism may be supported from the Indian point of view. First, Moore’s argument that a value predictor such as ‘good’ cannot be defined by natural properties may be rejected if the concept *śreya* as mentioned in the Kathopaniṣad is consulted. In this text a clear distinction is made between *śreya* (good) and *preya* (pleasurable) keeping certain criterion in view which may be taken as an epistemic justification. There are philosophers like Cārvāka etc who would say that *preya* is also a moral term or value-loaded term, as it is related to human pleasure which is one of human pursuits (*puruṣārthas*) in Indian Philosophy. The value embedded in hedonism as proposed by Cārvāka has got some epistemic justification of their own.

Secondly, each and every object has got some intrinsic value on account of which it is called ‘valuable’. In case of hedonism the attainment of pleasure is the value. In the aesthetic domain the attainment of disinterested pleasure (*rasa*) is the value. In the same manner, the attainment of sexual desire (*kāma*) and property (*artha*) have been related to mundane values. To be engaged in social welfare is the expression of social value or spiritual value. All the values are moral and hence, they have some determinants and empirically verified and justified.

Thirdly, it has been shown that why an individual being inclines towards a pleasurable thing. The reply and analysis of human inclination (*pravṛtti*), declination (*nivṛtti*) and ignorance (*upekṣā*) has been given following the path of the Naiyāyikas. One moral action is connected with another one. Human inclination towards an object is justifiable if he has got the cognition of conduciveness of what is desired (*iṣṭasādhana-tājñāna*). In the same way the phenomenon of declination or *nivṛtti* presupposes the cognition of that what is harmful or undesired (*aniṣṭasādhana-tājñāna*).

Fourthly, the concepts of happiness (*sukha*) and suffering (*duhkha*) are defined in terms of its favourable awareness (*anukūlavedanīya*) and non-favourable awareness (*pratikūlavedanīya*), which is nothing but an epistemic justification.

Fifthly, it is admitted by the Mīmāṃsakas that an use of particular language becomes the cause of pursuasion and inspiration for doing moral action. The *vidhilin* form of verb as found in *Yajeta* gives an epistemic justification. To them language has got a power of inspiring people towards moral work.

Sixthly, the Vaiśeṣikas are more liberal in determining the criterion of morality. To them something is taken to be moral if it is related to an individual's prosperity and good (*yato 'bhyudaya-nihśreyasa-siddhiḥ sa dharmah*). Something connected with individual's or social wellbeing is taken to be moral, which again supports the Naturalism.

Moore's argument that a thing which is intended to be defined is complex i.e., conjunction of simpler components deserves a review from Indian standpoint. To him horse is definable due to its complexity composed of many constituents. 'Yellow', for example, cannot be defined due to its impossibility of dividing into parts. In the like manner, 'good' is indefinable, which can never be taken as such which has been shown in the previous chapter. In Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika each and every entity comes under the categorial scheme (*padārtha*) and hence, it must be definable in nature. The colour 'yellow' (*pīta* in Sanskrit) is known to us due having some characteristic features of it which can differentiate yellow from red. In the same way if the term 'good' is defined in various manner like happiness (*sukha*), auspicious (*mangala*), welfare (*kalyāṇa*), *śreya*, *iṣṭa*, *śiva*, *satya*, *sundara* etc, there is no problem at all. For, if something is 'good', it must be *mangala*, *kalyāṇa*, *śreya* etc, which may be taken as descriptive terms. Hence there does not arise Naturalistic Fallacy.

Lastly, that moral value is a kind of feeling which does not remain in the domain of fact can be justified to some extent if the concept of disinterested action or *niṣkāma karma* and action of an embodied liberated person (*jīvanmukta*) are taken into account. These are 'free' actions having no determinants, which is not possible in the phenomenal level. In the empirical domain, I think, the naturalistic theory is more appropriate.

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