

9

Ethics in Contemporary Indian Philosophy

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Introduction

Besides the cultural matrix and religious patrimony of India, the contemporary Indian thinkers were very much influenced by empiricistic, utilitarian, agnostic, humanistic and analytic ethics in the West, especially of the thoughts of John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Herbert Spencer, Tolstoy and Wittgenstein. These Western-oriented ideas served to generate a secular and rational ethics and stimulated social and religious movements. Among those who deserve our special mention for their original contributions to ethical thinking are Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Amartya Sen (currently at Harvard).

Ethics of Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda was the pioneer of the rationalist movement in modern India, in the spheres of Ethics and religion. He may be regarded as the dynamic counterpart of Ramakrishna Pramahansa. He tried to read Sankara's Advaita into Ramakrishna's teaching. He tried to give an intelligent, concrete and scientific account of practical Vedanta. According to him the central point of Vedanta is that of unity in variety, not that of barren unity. The universal soul is encased in the living Prakrti. Finite is the real form of the absolute. He does not reject the universe outright as something illusory. His philosophy is more or

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less the synthesis of the philosophy of Shankara and the humanism of Buddha and Ramanuja. He liberated the Vedantic ideas and ideals from the caves, forests and made them available to the common man. Therefore his Vedanta is called **Practical Vedanta**. The practical teachings of Vivekananda are full of activism and humanism.

His philosophy may be summarised thus all is Brahman; the *jīva* is none other than Siva; every creature is God himself in particular mode of name and form. According to him the manifestation of Brahman is not the same everywhere. The moon and the star, the lowest worm and the highest man are lower and higher forms of manifestations. From the stand point of the Absolute Brahman, nothing else is. From the stand point of the world of Māya, everything is real. All human beings are potentially divine and perfect. Vivekananda did not accept a totally impersonal and indeterminate Brahman as a reasonable concept of metaphysics.

From a very long time, knowledge of Vedanta was confined to caves and forests. But Vedanta truths have to be practiced in the midst of family and social life. Vivekananda tried his best to restore Advaita to its original purity. In other words he attempted to give a concrete shape to Advaita Vedanta by applying it to life. He never tired of saying that the Vedanta of books must be translated into practice. Vedanta truths should never remain in theory. The following are the characteristics of Practical Vedanta according to Vivekananda.

Universality: Vedanta is a universal religion. Its three schools, namely, Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita are three stages in the spiritual growth of man. They are not contradictory of one another but supplementary. According to Vivekananda Advaita is the complete truth and Visistadvaita and Dvaita are partial truths. The progress is from lower truths to higher truth. One can reach the

highest truth only after passing through the other two stages. The Absolute can be reached only through the medium of the names and forms. Again Vedanta is universal in the sense that its truths apply to the whole of mankind in general. It is the same current that flows through every human being. And that is spirit. Vedanta is universal in the sense that it is rooted in the idea of the oneness of all, in the idea of unbroken continuity of existence.

Impersonality: Vedanta depends upon no persons or incarnations. Its eternal principles depend upon its own foundations. Hence it alone is the universal religion. Vedanta alone is based on principles, whereas all other religions are based on the lives of their founders. Christianity, Islam and even Buddhism would lose their authority in the eyes of their followers, if Christ Mohamed and Buddha are proved to be not historical figures. It is truth that matters in Vedanta, not the personalities.

Rationality: Vedanta is in complete agreement with the methods and results of modern science. Its conclusions are preeminently rational, being deduced from widespread religious experience. For example the grand Vedantic idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe. According to science all things in the universe are waves. Vedanta has discovered that there is but one soul throughout the universe and that all being are only Configurations of that one Reality. From this oneness the solidarity of the universe can be deduced. Vivekananda firmly believes in this oneness of humanity. Vivekananda says that it is the spiritual oneness of Vedanta that serves as a firm ground of all ethical teaching. "Love your neighbors as yourself", one loves another, because one sees one's own self in the other. The application of Vedantic truth to political and social life, results in the spiritualisation of democracy, socialism, liberty, equality and fraternity.

According to him Vedanta is thoroughly rational and scientific. Vedanta does not discard reason in favor of faith. It recognizes intuition or inspiration as a higher faculty than reason. But the truth derived from intuition have to be explained and systematized by reason.

Catholicity: According to Swami Vivekananda action, devotion, meditation, knowledge all have their due place in the scheme of religious life. Its conception of the four yogas give a complete chart religious life. Guidance is here given to all kinds of aspirants in all stages of growth. Hinduism is often compared to a mansion in which rooms are available to all classes of men, from the lowest peasant to the highest mystic.

Optimism: Optimism (Hopefulness) is the life breath of Vedanta. Vedanta is a religion of strength and hope, not a religion of weakness and despair. It teaches unshakable optimism. It alone makes men strong and self-reliant. It insists upon the inherent divinity of the human soul under all circumstances. It gives hope of infinite progress to every man. It accords man a sense of Sacredness and dignity unknown to other religions. It teaches that man is essentially divine. Hence his salvation must come from within. Vivekananda says "Vedanta is a strength-giving-religion and man making education". The people of India are incurably religious. They are not ignorantly religious but intelligently religious.

Humanism: Humanism is the dominant note of Vivekananda's practical Vedanta. The masses should be our Gods. Service to man is service to God. We should perceive Siva in every Jīva. We should serve not Narayana in the temple but Lame-Narayana, blind-Narayana, hungry Narayana and have not Narayana. Vivekananda says, "first food then Brahman. It is sin to teach Vedanta to the poor". The poor and the hungry should be fed first. He again

says, "I am not interested in my own moksha. I shall not have it till each one gets it". Ignorance and illiteracy are the greatest stumbling blocks in the path of progress. Every educated youth should contribute his mite towards the eradication of ignorance and illiteracy. His supreme task was to work for the religious regeneration of the land through renunciation and service. He urged his countrymen to dedicate themselves to the service of starving and oppressed millions. We may say that Vivekananda's whole life was one prolonged cry for the uplift of the toiling millions of his beloved country. He was a great humanist.

Swami Vivekananda was a man of Religion. His concern was with spiritual truth not with physical, dogmatic or scientific discoveries. For him religion is a matter of experience and not a system of dogmas. Thus he clearly illustrates the attitude of the East and the West towards spirit. The western idea is that man is a body and has a soul. According to the East man is a soul and has a body.

Religion is the main stay of India. It has been flowing in India for thousands of years. Religion in India has entered the very blood of the people. It has permeated the whole atmosphere. It has become one with the bodily constituents of Indian people. It is to be further supported and lived and in any case, religion is not to be opposed or to be pushed to the background. Vivekananda stands for the necessity of religion.

He distinguishes true religion and institutional religion. According to him true religion is personal religion. "It is well to be born in a church, but it is terrible to die there", says Vivekananda. A pilgrim for God-realisation is born in a religion, but he goes out of it and transcends the external forms of religion, when he is evolved in spirit. The dogmas, rituals, images and sacraments initiate a man and make

him God-conscious. But God-realisation is possible only when he transcends the limits of his own finite religion, and experience the mystic vision of God.

Again personal religion consists in rendering service to the humanity. The best form of religion is to see Shiva represented in living men and especially in the poor. It consists in serving a lame Narayana, a blind Narayana and so on. "Here take this and go away" is the sense of charity in the European society. This had a bad effect alike on the giver and the receiver. But according to Vivekananda, in the religion of service, 'the receiver is greater than the giver', because for the time being the receiver was God himself.

Religion is the highest expression of love and devotion, beauty and sublimity. Freedom is the key note of spiritual life. Religion consists solely in inner spiritual urges. Wherever religion is estranged or cut off from its vital spring, spiritualism, it is generated in to dry formalism or a routine affairs of life.

Religion does not consist in subscribing to a particular creed or faith but in spiritual realisation. What counts in spiritual life is neither blind faith nor intellectual understanding but in being and becoming. This moulding of life and character, is spiritual transformation and that is the essence of religion.

Religion or spiritualism according to Vivekananda does not signify running away from hazards of life battle and taking recourse in other worldliness. It does not mean running away into mountain caves or monastery cells to practice renunciation. It consists in cultivating strength and visions to face trials of life with heroic calm and determination. Religion should teach strength to the poor and the downtrodden. Religion should be the gospel of strength and activism. Every one should work for the

religious regeneration of mankind through renunciation and service.

Vivekananda emphasizes on religion of love. He firmly believed that it is only through love that mankind could be brought together. Another word for love is God. It is in God that all the hopes, aspirations and happiness of humanity are centered. All that is great and holy is associated with it. But he is never tired of saying that love or emotion must not sink in to sentimentality. His formula is, if your heart comes into conflict with the head, follow the heart. But he is against excessive emotionalism.

Vivekananda makes it a point to distinguish religion from sentimentality. It is to be demarcated from rituals and customs. Emotion is short lived. It is the association of custom with religion that makes it 'shop-keeping religion'. In such a religion God is not looked up on as an end in itself, but a means of transaction of business. He strongly criticized ritual ridden cults like Tantra. Even mysticism is to be assessed with great care. Vivekananda says we want not occultism and mysticism but man-making religion. He prefers to believe in a God who gives bread in this world than to a God who gives undying bliss in heaven.

A religion which teaches only renunciation and nothing else, is a gospel of inaction and isolation. Man is often pictured in some religions as a miserable sinner, weak and helpless. This is wrong. Man himself is the true abode of divinity. The true aim of man should be to draw attention to the divinity already in man. Vivekananda thus goes away from glorifying God outside man. No religion should make man a helpless empty nothing. The religious man must first be a proud human being.

Religion is not what is found books. It is not an intellectual consent. It consists in realisation. It is a perfectly natural and normal element of human life. It is simply the

experience of human nature in the higher ranges of its activities. It is source of highest kind of happiness.

Vivekananda believed in the possibility of Universal Religion. Religions of the world vary in important details. They differ from the point of view of mythology, rituals, social values, and philosophic traditions. Yet Vivekananda says, "The religions of the world are not contradictory and antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion". He continues; "Religion is one because like blood and breath, it belongs to the very life of man". The essence of all religion is the same and that is God-realisation. A religion of love, peace and harmony is a universal religion, according to Swami Vivekananda.

Ethics of Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi lit the imagination of the entire world. The waste of human ability energy and money on armament will continue unabated, and diversion of world resources to development will remain a pipe dream, so long as human does not learn the great lesson which Gandhi preached so convincingly in our own times that non-violence is the law of our species. Today Gandhian values have special significance for national integration. Communal harmony has become essential for national integration and hence Gandhi gave it the highest priority. By communal harmony Gandhiji did not mean merely paying lip service to it. He meant it to be an unbreakable bond of unity. In the religious context Gandhi emphasized that communal harmony has to be based on equal respect for all religions. Everyone, Gandhi said, must have the same regard for other faiths as one had for one's own. Such respect would not only remove religious rifts but lead to a realization of the fact that religion was a stabilizing force, not a disturbing element. Gandhi's basic axiom was that religion since the scriptures of all religions point only

in one direction of goodwill, openness and understanding among humans.

He regarded education as the light of life and the very source from which was created an awareness of oneness. Gandhi believed that the universality of ethics can best be realized through the universalisation of education, and that such universalisation was the spring board for national integration. Harmony is not brought about overnight. Gandhi advocated the process of patience, persuasion and perseverance for attainment of peace and love for harmony and was firmly convinced of the worth of gentleness as panacea for all evils. Communal harmony had the pride of place in Gandhi's constructive programme. He taught us the dignity of labour as a levelling social factor that contributed to a national outlook in keeping with the vision of new India. He always believed that a nation built on the ethical foundation of non-violence would be able to withstand attacks on its-integrity from within and without.

Gandhi pleaded for the humanization of knowledge for immunization against the ideas of distrust among the communities of the nations and the nationalities of the world. He wanted to take the country from areas of hostility into areas of harmony of faiths through tolerance, so that we could work towards understanding each other. His mass contact programme was specifically aimed at generating a climate of confidence and competition and eliminating misgiving and misconceptions, conflicts and confrontation.

Gandhi also held that bridging the gulf between the well off and the rest was as essential for national integration as inter-religious record. He said that we must work for economic equality and social justice, which would remove the ills caused by distress and bitterness. He stressed that the foundation of equality, the core of harmony will have

to be laid here now and built up brick by brick through ethical and economic satisfaction of the masses. There is no denying the fact that Gandhi was deep rooted in his cultural and religious traditions. The phenomenal success Gandhi registered in far away South Africa fighting for human rights and civil liberties and later the adoption of the Gandhian techniques by Nelson Mandela and the subsequent revelations made by the former South African president De Klerk that he was greatly influenced by Gandhi's principles.

In the American continent Martin Luther King's heroic fight for civil liberties on the Gandhian lines and his own admission that it was from Gandhi that he learnt his operational tactics also is not an isolated instance of the relevance of the Gandhian tactics. Martin Luther King (Jr.) said, "If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the version of a humanity evolving towards a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk."

Gandhi successfully demonstrated to a world, weary with wars and continuing destruction that adherence to Truth and Non-violence is not meant for individual behaviour alone but can be applied in global affairs too. Gandhiji described seven social sins: Politics without principles.

Wealth without work; commerce without morality; education without character; pleasure without conscience; science without humanity; and worship without sacrifice.

Though he was open to various religious traditions, Gandhi was mainly influenced by Hindu and Christian traditions. Gandhi agreed that we can say that God is love, but he felt that the word love is used in many ways and can be ambiguous. Therefore, Gandhi preferred to say that truth is God rather than God is truth, because the former proposition expresses a belief that even the atheists share.

The belief in the presence of an all-pervading spirit in the universe led Gandhi to a strict formulation of the ethics of nonviolence (ahimsa). But he gave this age-old ethical principle a wealth of meaning so that ahimsa for him became at once a potent means of collective struggle against social and economic injustice, the basis of a decentralized economy and decentralized power structure, and the guiding principle of one's individual life in relation both to nature and to other persons. The unity of existence, which he called the truth, can be realized through the practice of ahimsa, which requires reducing oneself to zero and reaching the furthest limit of humility.

Equality of religions is one of Gandhi's cardinal beliefs. It is based first on the unfathomable and unknowable character of the one God who is over us all; secondly, on the never-ending forms of divine revelation and human religious responses to them; thirdly on the centrality of the law of non-violence enjoined by all the religions; fourthly, on the existence of errors and imperfections in all religious and fifthly, on the conviction that all religions are in evolution towards fuller realization of truth. According to Gandhi, not Christology but ethics as the means to truth constitutes fundamental Christianity, and it is the same in all religions. It is possible to say that where there is boundless love and no idea of retaliation whatsoever it is Christianity that lives. Gandhi tends to say that it is impossible to comprehend religion without ethics. In fact there exists a distinction between religion and ethics, though they are related.

Ethics of Sarvappalli Radhakrishnan

Radhakrishnan tried to present Hinduism as significant to modern and, thereby, to offer a vision to human who today is threatened by one's own inventions, a vision that would enable one to work towards greater human solidarity and authentic development.

Human beings by nature are value seekers. They strive for truth, beauty and goodness. Ethical principles are unconditional commands. They are guidance to man to attain his real self. Human life is transitory. Man is not satisfied with the fragments of happiness (which are full of dualities, discords and contradictions). Radhakrishnan maintains that man is in need of a deep ontological unity behind all these fragments, which alone can give him the proper meaning of life, the everlasting peace of mind and spirit. This deep awareness and understanding of the mystery of life can be gained only through ethics, religion, and philosophy. Moral values are necessary for the development of his personality. Non-violence, renunciation and suffering are positive necessities of human life. Renunciation means the rejection of the worldly desires; it is not the rejection of life in the world.

In India, philosophy has been interpreted as an enquiry into the nature of human, human's origin and destiny. To the Indian mind, philosophy is essentially practical, dealing as it does with the fundamental anxieties of human beings, which are more insistent than abstract speculations. We are not contemplating the world from outside but are in it. Events happen in the mind of humans before they are made manifest in the course of history. The present chaos in the world can be traced directly to the chaos in our minds. There is division in human's soul. Scientific and secular humanism alone will not create a harmonious society. Peace of mind is a remote hope until and unless we have a vision of perfection, a glimpse of eternity to prevail against the perspective of time. Security without which no happiness is possible cannot come from the mastery of things. Mastery of self is the essential prerequisite.

Radhakrishnan gives a spiritual interpretation to the modern theory of evolution. He maintains that human is

the higher product of evolutionary process. Spiritual evolution takes place after the emergence of human, the spirit in human being a promise of the highest future development.

According to Radhakrishnan, the self is an organized whole different from the self as subject. The self is conscious of its limitations and purpose. The ordinary human does not try to know the mysterious existence of the soul in us. The existence of soul in us can be proved by the analysis of our spiritual consciousness. The voice of the spirit is completely silent in none. The seers have listened to it better. They are the beginnings of new human species. Misuse or lack of use can also destroy the powers of the spirit. All the great religious systems signify the importance of worship and cultivation of love and sympathy through which alone human spirit can be developed.

Human exists in the world for a higher cause. Hindu systems of thought believe in the power of the human mind to lead us to all truth. Our ordinary mind is not the highest possible order of the human mind. It can rise to a level almost inconceivable to us. The idealist tradition both in the East and the West has asserted the supremacy of spirit in human. Mere physical desire and passion, impulse and instinct, even intellect and will do not exhaust one's nature. The spiritual status is the essential dignity of human and the origin of one's freedom.

The purpose of ethics is also to effect right relationship between the individual and the society. Social order is ordained to develop ethical, material and intellectual spheres of human's life – realize the best possibilities of one's life.

While the truths intuition grasps are self-evident, training is necessary to direct our mental vision to the right objects so that our mind can 'behold' the objects. In so far as our

minds are not creative of reality but only receptive of it, we must get into contact with reality, outward by perception, inward by intuition, and by means of intellect interpret and understand it. It is unfortunate that insistence on intuition is often confused with anti-intellectualism. Intuition which ignores intellect is useless. The two are not only not incompatible but vitally united. We can realize the potentialities of spirit only by a process of moral assess which gradually shapes the soul into harmony with the invisible realities. To know better, we must become different, our thoughts and feelings must be deeply harmonized. Intuition is not only perfect knowledge but also perfect living.

Human's nature changes in two ways. First, there are the natural or mechanical changes due to the environmental and inherent causes. Secondly there is the ethical and spiritual change which is conscious. The evolving personality of human is yet to grow to greater possibilities. Morality enables human to rise to a higher plane. He emphasized the religious nature of human. His concept of religion transcends all kinds of creeds and dogmas. It is a universal religion, which fulfils the aspirations of humanity. He respected all religions. Radhakrishnan's philosophy is the philosophy of growth and progress of human's spiritual personality. He conceives that human can attain one's higher destiny by becoming one with *Isvara* through *jnana* and intuition. He believes in cosmic liberation. The total perfection is possible for human only when the human race as a whole is liberated, only when all released souls become one with the Infinite.

Human can develop one's moral nature by cultivating love for one's fellow beings. One has to control one's egocentricity to know truth. We must cease to identify ourselves with the separate ego shut up in the walls of

body, life and mind. This is an ethical process. A morally developed person is led by the inner spirit, and not by the conventional or external standards.

Human's highest destiny is to grow more humane, more spiritual and to be more sympathetic in understanding others. Conflicts in their souls have grouped humankind into numerous conflicting groups. Freedom of human is not a whim since our present life is the continuation of the past. The character of human is constituted by the past history of one's life. Human is not a puppet at the hands of fate. Life is a growing stage and the growth is free to a certain extent. The emergence of self and not the self-conscious mind is the basic desire of nature. Matter, life and mind evolve only when their respectively necessary conditions are fulfilled, similarly spirit or the supermind will evolve when the necessary efforts are made and the conditions are ready.

Ethics of Amartya Sen

Sen proposes that people's well-being should be evaluated on the basis of their 'capability to achieve valuable functionings'. This approach is called 'the capability approach' which consists of two distinct notions: functionings and capabilities. Functionings refer to the number of 'doings' and 'beings' that a person manages to achieve in life. Sen mentions both basic functionings like nutrition, life expectancy, health and education as well as complex functionings like self-respect, social recognition and political participation. Capabilities refer to the extent of freedom that a person has in order to achieve different functionings. When we look at a fasting monk and a starving poor child, they do fare equally in terms of achieved functioning since both do not eat. But in terms of capabilities, they are unequal in as much as the monk has the freedom to choose that state while the child does

not have that freedom. The capability approach therefore is a freedom-centred approach.

The capability approach differs from two other prominent approaches: utilitarianism and liberalism inspired by the American Philosopher John Rawls. Having defined utility in terms of pleasure, happiness or desire-fulfilment, one of the chief aims of utilitarianism is to maximise its overall value in society. Although such thinking today does not form a distinct political ideology, it exerts considerable influence on public policy decisions: 'greatest happiness of the greatest (and perhaps, the socially and politically powerful!) number.' Many countries in the world seem to follow this crude utilitarian calculus when pursuing developmental projects such as building huge dams, establishing industries and sometimes even initiating large-scale deforestation. In contrast to utilitarianism, Rawls bases his philosophy on a set of individual rights: 'each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override'. His first of the two principles of justice requires that civil and political rights, including freedom of speech and freedom from torture and arbitrary arrest, be given absolute priority. Rawls, in his second principle tries to balance the demands of efficiency and justice: while society's offices and positions should be available to everyone in an open competition, in order to keep social inequality within manageable proportions special attention has to be paid to the needs of the worst off in society.

Sen acknowledges Rawls to be a great moral and political philosopher particularly for advocating a non-utilitarian political philosophy. Yet, Sen thinks Rawls' theory to be limited from the point of view of human capabilities: it does not go deep enough to capture human diversity and some blatant inequalities in society. Human beings differ from one another in a number of ways. There are, first

and foremost, differences in personal characteristics such as health, age, sex and genetic endowments. Human beings also vary from one another in the types of external environment and social conditions they live in. These different elements of human diversity crucially affect the ways in which resources such as income and wealth are transformed into relevant capabilities. A physically handicapped person, for example, might be in need of more resources to be mobile than an able-bodied person. Or, increasing the social and political participation of traditionally oppressed groups would demand efforts more than just providing access to resources; it might require tackling some entrenched social, economic and political practices and structures. Since Rawls' theory works with the assumption of a liberal society with citizens having more or less equal capacities, Sen points out, inequalities and disadvantages arising from human diversities are either postponed to be settled by legislative or judicial procedures or at the most relegated as issues falling in the domain of charity.

Conclusion

Besides the ethical matrix and religious patrimony of India, the ethical teachings of the contemporary Indian thinkers – Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Amartya Sen – were influenced by the Western ideas of secularism, humanism and rationalism. **Swami Vivekananda** emphasizes on religion of love. He firmly believed that it is only through love that humankind could be brought together. Another word for love is God. It is in God that all the hopes, aspirations and happiness of humanity are centred. Human is the true abode of divinity. The true aim of human should be to draw attention to the divinity already present in oneself. Vivekananda thus goes away from glorifying God outside human. No religion should make human a helpless empty nothing. The

religious human must first be a proud human being. Vivekananda believed in the possibility of Universal Religion. The essence of all religion is the same and that is God-realisation. A religion of love, peace and harmony is a universal religion, according to Swami Vivekananda. **Mahatma Gandhi** believed that the universality of ethics can best be realized through the universalisation of education, and that such universalisation was the spring board for national integration. Harmony is not brought about overnight. Gandhi advocated the process of patience, persuasion and perseverance for attainment of peace and love for harmony and was firmly convinced of the worth of gentleness as panacea for all evils. Communal harmony had the pride of place in Gandhi's constructive programme. He taught us the dignity of labour as a levelling social factor that contributed to a national outlook in keeping with the vision of new India. He always believed that a nation built on the ethical foundation of non-violence would be able to withstand attacks on its-integrity from within and without. For **Radhakrishnan** humans by nature are value seekers. They strive for truth, beauty and goodness. Ethical principles are unconditional commands. They are guidance to human to attain one's real self. Human life is transitory. Human is not satisfied with the fragments of happiness (which are full of dualities, discords and contradictions). Radhakrishnan maintains that human is in need of a deep ontological unity behind all these fragments, which alone can give him the proper meaning of life, the everlasting peace of mind and spirit. This deep awareness and understanding of the mystery of life can be gained only through ethics, religion, and philosophy. Moral values are necessary for the development of one's personality. Non-violence, renunciation and suffering are positive necessities of human life. **Amartya Sen** proposes an economic ethics of 'capabilities'. Capabilities refer to the extent of freedom that a person

has in order to achieve different needs. Human beings differ from one another in a number of ways, in health, age, sex and genetic endowments. These differences crucially affect the ways in which resources such as income and wealth are transformed into relevant ethical capabilities.

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