UNIT 14 UNDERSTANDING MORALITY AND MORAL EDUCATION

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

Humanity today stands at a critical juncture. Hope and despair, pride and pessimism, comfort and confusion fill human hearts in unequal and unstable measure. Whereas the peaks of material progress scaled by some countries enthral humanity as a whole, the depth of social degeneration in most parts of the world sometimes make thinking people wonder if mankind can receive the light of recovery at all (Kireet Joshi, 1994).

It is for this reason that dedicated educationists all over the world are concerned about the dimension of education that is related to the vertical upliftment of human personality. They feel rightly that exploration of human motivation to control impulses by higher pursuits of cognitive, conative and affective drives has become imperative and urgent. The theme of value education, especially moral education, has thus begun to occupy a dominant position in contemporary educational thought and practice. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 reiterated the need for value education or moral education, conceiving it as ground on which the tree of education can grow and develop. Moral education in fact constitutes the core of the concept of education qua education. Without inclusion of this core, no process of education can rightly be called educational in the true sense of the term. It would be a contradiction in terms if a person is highly educated but does not recognize the value structure in his/her thoughts and actions. The misfortune is that education being imparted in schools, colleges, and universities today, in most cases is, an example of such contradiction and inconsistencies. It is apt to quote the message of an unknown author who somehow survived Hitler’s concentration camp:
“Dear teacher, I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness: gas chambers built by learned engineers, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and burnt by high school and college graduates.

So, I am suspicious of education. My request is: help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.”

The present unit has been written with a view to make clear the meaning of the concept of moral education and its relationship to the content and process of education. If we can understand moral and moral education in the right perspective, only then can we direct the process of education to achieve its desired end as conceived in the above observation.

### 14.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the socio-political scenario existing in India, showing the inconsistencies and contradictions in values enshrined and values practised,
- discuss the need for value orientation in the process of education,
- illustrate the misconceptions involved in linking morality with religion,
- identify the difficulties in accepting objective theory of morality,
- distinguish with examples between “form” and “content” of moral education or morality,
- illustrate with examples the role and criteria of rationality and intentionality, which provide form to morality,
- distinguish between moral education on the one hand and moral training, instruction, conditioning and indoctrination on the other hand,
- describe a morally educated person,
- explain the Kohlberg-Gilligan controversy as ethic of justice and ethic of care, and
- indicate the sex differences in orientation to morality.

### 14.3 NEED FOR MORAL EDUCATION

Erosion of human values is a phenomenon which is easy to observe in our lives today. We all are aware of the mindless pursuit of wealth, power and status. Though we are very proud of our rich ancient culture, in practice it remains shrouded in the pages of scriptures. The *Upanisads* taught us the ideal of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam* (i.e. the entire world is my family), yet today we fight in the name of religion, region or caste. Mosques, temples and other religious structures are sought to be made far too significant and focus of attention by vested interests, instead of the grinding poverty of the Indian people, abysmal standards of nutrition, social injustice and natural calamities. We remain unmoved by the acute sufferings resulting from exploitation, corruption,
hunger, disease, etc. Jainism and yoga taught us the ideal of Aparigraha (non-hoarding) but we find even the so-called sadhus and swamis accumulating wealth, and even political power. Our religions teach us the doctrine of Ahimsa (non-violence), yet most of the violence is perpetrated in the name of religion itself. We have no compassion for millions of destitute people who sleep on pavements in metropolitan cities, and even die there. We advocate rational theories of human behaviour in our public life but are guided by blind rituals, superstitions and orthodoxy in the name of religion. We theorize and proclaim social equality and yet, shamefully, a large section of our people continue to be treated as untouchables. We profess democratic values but exploit caste for our personal as well as political gains. While we preach lofty ideals of social justice, our actions betray a basic form of duplicity and hypocrisy. In a way, we serve our expediency rather than our policy. Thus, we face a value crisis resulting in a deep social and spiritual vacuum.

If at all we have to realize the truth which has remained the hallmark of our identity as a nation, such contradictions will have to be removed or eradicated. Education rightly conceived and properly practised is the only answer to it. It is through education alone that we can initiate our children with something that is worthwhile. And no process or activity can truly be called worthwhile, and hence educational, if it is not rooted in human values. Only when people are able to think on their own, can they be called truly educated. It is with this basic faith that the author has made this humble effort.

14.4 NATURE OF MORALITY

Moral development of an individual is a sine-quo-non of being educated, without which education is relegated to mere literacy and proves to be not only harmful but dangerous to the individual as also to society. Richard Livingstone wrote: “Uneducated people are a danger to the world, but they are not as dangerous as the half-educated who have learnt enough to express an opinion on subjects which they do not really know, but have never learnt to be aware of their ignorance”. “Education”, as Ruskin puts it, “does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know, it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave”. Today’s social scenario, which is marked by violence, greed, thefts, rapes, bank robberies, bank scams, drug addition, terrorism etc., is the product of our ill-conceived educational theory and practice of child rearing. The moral context in education, therefore, needs to be brought back. It has been devalued as a result of a mad race wherein people derive satisfaction in leaving others behind, where growth is defined not in terms of growth of the self but in competing with others and defeating them. This negative conception of growth is probably the major source of man’s anguish, frustration and anxiety. In pursuit of the superficial, peripheral and the physical, man has lost the essential, the subtle and spiritual. What is needed is to raise the moral consciousness in man. We must, therefore, as teachers, obtain a right perspective of morality, moral consciousness and moral education. These terms, however, are often misconceived.

14.4.1 Moral Education as Distinct from Religious Education

Moral education is often mistaken for religious education.
The first misconception arises from relating morality with religion. Is there really any linkage between morality and religion? Let us discuss it.

To attempt a distinction between moral education and religion or religious education, we can say to ourselves that it is possible to live without a religion but it is unthinkable to live without a set of values to guide our behaviour and human choice. This proposition casts doubts on the validity and linkage between the two. In fact there is no logical connection between them; and if there is any, it is only contingent, not necessary.

Secondly, a moral education derived from or linked with religion must, of necessity, be authoritarian, whereas education rightly conceived must enable one to think on one's own and to make independent choice. We can say that education by virtue of its very nature is anti-authoritarian. For example, if I believe on grounds other than religious ones, that I should keep my promises or should perform my duty, then this is not a religious morality.

Thirdly, linking of morality with religion is unacceptable on other grounds also. It denies the individual the right to choose the principle of morality according to one's own thinking. It also puts an end to any evolution or growth of moral knowledge. The fact remains that moral understanding and knowledge grows to enable us to adjust our behaviour to the changing social circumstances, to meet new moral problems, and to modify our principles to deal with them. For example, there is in India today a common social problem of birth control about which religion is ambivalent. This is a moral problem, solution of which is dependent on man's thinking. Otherwise the resulting problem of over population will devour us all. If population is allowed to increase as it does, we shall be deprived of even the basic needs required for existence. In such a situation, no morality, no religion worth the name will stand. So, we have to leave solution of such problems to the independent decision of man. All this implies that religion can provide no firm basis for moral decisions and, therefore, proper morality has to be seen independent of religion. If there is any connection, it is not that morality is dependent on religious beliefs or doctrines, rather it is much more likely that man's religious belief in God is grounded in his moral consciousness; rather than moral law on belief in God. So we can examine every question of morality independent of religion on grounds that make it universally acceptable.

14.4.2 Unacceptability of Objective Theory of Morality

If morality cannot be linked with religion, a question arises: what is the ground of our understanding or knowing that some particular action is morally good? In ethics different theories are put forth and discussed in this regard. One of these theories is objective theory of morality. According to such a theory moral precepts are seen as objectively valid, which means, that moral truth is not the subjective opinion of an individual or relative to the context or circumstances.

There are good reasons why we should not bring up children in accordance with the objective theory of morality. One such reason is grounded in or associated with man's freedom. We all accept that man's freedom of thought, his right to his own beliefs cannot be denied. The concept of moral freedom entails the notion of man as an active agent responsible for his own actions and
deeds. Such a notion of man’s freedom is central thesis of existentialism which believes in the individual’s autonomy and freedom to choose. But it obviously means that if I have the right to choose freely and to act or to protect my ontological freedom, for the same reason I have no right to encroach upon such interests of others too. This provides the essence of equity and justice, in a way the central thesis of morality. It also implies that man’s values must be his own, for one loses one’s freedom when one acts in accordance with values that are imposed from without. Obviously, moral education or, for that matter, value education cannot be taken in terms of telling children what to do or believe, and what not to. It is clear, therefore, that the question ‘what is morality’, is to be a response to constantly changing demand of society suited to man as a free and autonomous being. In turn, we must recognize this as a demand for freedom and autonomy of the self and a respect for the freedom and autonomy of others. If we believe that we should live in a society comprising free and autonomous individuals, we should feel an increased need for moral education – a kind of education that must enable students to do their own moral thinking rather than make them conform to externally imposed moral codes.

14.5 LANGUAGE OF MORALS

For philosophers and other thinkers in the field of ethics there has ever remained a fundamental question. This is the question of reaching a summum bonum, something which may be termed as good in itself or essentially good. In fact, different theories of ethics have come up in the manner this question has been answered. According to objectivists, what we call good is some quality of the objects being called good. It is essentially present in the objects. It is for this reason that the ‘idealistic’ thinkers assign intrinsic or ultimate value to truth. Subjectivists, on the other hand, would hold that what we call good, is not the essential quality of the object/situation/action, but rather a subjective experience of the perception. Esse est percipi as Berkley would call it. The hedonists or the utilitarians, taking a slightly different view, hold that a good act is the act which will actually or potentially produce the greatest amount of happiness or pleasure in maximum number of people or the world at large. But for thinkers like the existentialists, freedom and autonomy of the individual are at the heart of the concept of morality and hence, inherently good or good in itself.

Reflection would show that all the views expressed above seem to be true in their own right, but none of these presents a view which is wholly true. That is they all have partial truths and, therefore, none of the views can be said to be true always, under all circumstances.

14.5.1 Form and Content of Morality

According to Downey and Kelly (1982) and Peters (1987), the difficulties we encounter to set up some particular universal principles or criteria in searching for some value substance or substances which would have some intrinsic worth arise because of our basic confusion in understanding the distinction between the “form and content”; “language and literature” or the “manner and matter” of moral behaviour. Moral behaviour, as a matter of fact, has both form and content. Our mistake in defining moral worth of some action, etc., is that we take cognizance of the content (i.e. the action done) and lose sight of
its form, that is, the reason that leads to the particular action. R.S. Peters also seems to lose sight of this distinction. He, in an attempt to set up higher order principles of moral behaviour, went back to the area of content, telling us that there are a limited number of principles which are fundamental and non-arbitrary in the sense that they are pre-suppositions of the form of (moral) discourse. These principles may be: impartiality, consideration for others' interests, freedom, respect for persons and probably truthfulness. But a question may be put: are these principles unconditionally good, that is, always good, and under all circumstances? Reflection would reveal that they need not necessarily always hold good. Though we can generalize such principles of behaviour and conduct, they are virtues like many others such as non-violence, truthfulness, not stealing or hoarding, and respecting and obeying parents. We can go on adding to the list of virtues. NCERT, for example, has tried to identify a list containing virtues. Similarly open school organization and other institutions or individual investigators are concerned with value education. But Kohlberg (1966) calls such an approach as a "bag of virtues" approach and criticizes it as untenable and an improper approach to moral education on grounds as have been argued earlier in this unit while dealing with objective theory of morality. All virtues in the ultimate analysis constitute "matter" of morality and not its "manner" or "form". But in order to determine the moral worth of an action or behaviour consideration of both matter and manner, or form and content, is essential. The form of the moral behaviour is named by Peters as its language. Among other forms, "rationality" constitutes one of its most basic forms. It will be quite safe to maintain that no human behaviour can be said to be good if it cannot be proved rational in the full sense of the term, despite the fact that it involves highest virtue conceived. For example, even telling the truth may not always be good, though in almost all cultures truth is regarded as a high virtue and a truthful person is always respected.

Similarly, another such form of morality is intentionality or the purpose with which some moral act is done. Any action done with a good intention or goodwill is to be considered good without any regard to the consequences or results. The third condition for an action to be designed as normally good is what Immanuel Kant and the Gita describe as action done 'for the sake of duty' and not action done 'in accordance with duty'.

A brief explanations of each of these conditions of judging a moral worth of an action is attempted as follows:

14.5.2 Rationality

According to this condition any behaviour to be worthwhile and hence good, should be rational and as a corollary to it any behaviour which is not rational cannot be termed as morally good behaviour. But the question is: what is the criterion to judge an action to be rational?

In Hegelian dialectics there are four criteria for rationality. These are: i) logical coherence or consistency, ii) universality of generalizations, iii) empirical evidence in support of such generalizations or good reasons to support the same, and iv) public intelligibility or acceptability.

The first criterion entails that the set of moral beliefs, in order to be called rational, must be internally consistent and coherent, and that consistency must
be reflected while accepting them or acting on them. It is, for example, not rational for me to believe that others should co-operate with me or should take care of my interests, if I do not, at the same time, co-operate with them, or give any regard to their interests. Conversely, it will be equally rational or coherent if I believe that others need not give regard to my interests just as I do not respect theirs. Many people in this world live life according to the latter principle; we may not like their value but we shall not call them irrational. Such behaviour is internally consistent or coherent. For a behaviour to be called rational it must be coherent and consistent.

The second criterion of rationality is concerned with generation of universals or general principles. That is, I must not own a principle today and another tomorrow unless there are valid reasons for that change. To be rational, our behaviour should be in accordance with certain principles, whatever our moral codes.

Third criterion of rationality requires that we should be able to provide good reasons for what we do or for the principle we follow. The fourth criterion states that for a behaviour or action to be called rational, the evidence given or reasons put forth should be publicly intelligible or acceptable. If, on the other hand, we tend to produce same evidence or give some reasons, which are idiosyncratic, the whole point of rationality is lost. In Freudian terminology it is termed as rationalization, which is not truly rational but appears to be so. The reasons given appear to be valid, but they are not the true reasons. The “sour grapes” and “sweet lemon” paradigms explain the concept of rationalism which is distinct and separate from rationality. Rationalizations are unconscious mental processes aiming at protecting the ego from being defeated. In such processes, a person tries (unconsciously) to justify one’s behaviour by selective use of evidence. (For further details of rationalisation, you can refer to the psychology of defence mechanisms.)

In essence we can hold that though rationality does not provide us with any set of moral principles to guide our moral conduct, it can tell us a good deal about the form, the manner or language of moral code, showing that whatever, be our moral code, it should be coherent and consistent, based on principles or generalisations, and subject to evidence of a public kind. It does not tell anything about what to believe.

14.5.3 Intentionality

Kant in one of his Categorical Imperatives stated that nothing in this world, or out of it, is good without conditions except the “good will”. Actions done with good intention or good will are always considered worthwhile. To explain the full meaning of intentionality, we take into consideration two aspects related to it. One, action cannot be moral or immoral unless we establish that the individual has so acted of his own free will. It should be an act that the individual, in full sense, is responsible for. If the individual performs an act as being directed by others – (forces beyond his control and had it been left to his own free choice, he might not have done it), the individual in such a situation cannot be held responsible for the act. Such acts done under coercion do not possess any moral/immoral significance. A servant, for example, cannot be held responsible for anything he (she) does under the direction or orders of the master.
Then comes the question of motive or the intention of the doer. Two further points can be considered to explain the motive or intention of the doer. These can be put as: “did the moral agent perform the act because he thought it was right?” Or, “did he perform it because he thought that the action is overtly in the interest of the people but covertly advantageous to him personally”. It is, in fact, not the results or the consequences of the action done which should be counted towards judging the moral worth of the action. It is the “will” with which the action is done. If the intention for doing an act is good, but somehow the consequences are otherwise, the doer of the act will not be criminally culpable.

Kant clarifies this point still further using phrases: action done for the sake of duty and actions done in accordance with duty. Actions done merely in accordance with duty and not for the sake of duty have no moral worth; it is deceiving to the self as well as others.

Most of our politicians today, particularly just before elections announce many populist schemes for their own ulterior motives. Similarly, some businessmen or traders, and even doctors, announce free check-up of vehicles and the like, free health check-up or even free operations camps. Obviously such actions, though manifestly beneficial to the public; are in fact a mode of advertisement. They serve only as a bait. Such kinds of free service are always actions done in accordance with duty, and not for the sake of duty.

14.6 MORAL EDUCATION VS. MORAL INSTRUCTION AND MORAL TRAINING

We have seen that moral education is not a matter of instruction in certain moral principles or tenants, nor is it a matter to know/learn certain moral values (virtues) which are objective, fixed, and unquestionable. It is rather a process of learning to “think for ourselves” on moral issues, of becoming morally autonomous.

To describe the act of teaching we use terms like instruction, training, conditioning or even indoctrination and sometimes education. Each of these terms has a specific meaning and context in which each one is used; and we cannot use them interchangeably.

According to R.S. Peters (1966), the concept of education is concerned with developing autonomy of the individual being educated, whereas other processes do not have any such aim. For example, when we wish to train somebody or impart instruction, we do not have any consideration of autonomy in view. On the contrary, consideration of autonomy may just be irrelevant and inappropriate in certain cases (as in training body to learn to drive a car). The processes of conditioning and indoctrination are still more irrelevant to individual’s autonomy, rather there may be a definite attempt to stifle an individual’s autonomy while indoctrinating or conditioning an individual. An individual who is indoctrinated or conditioned stops thinking for himself/herself. Attempts made to indoctrinate people into some particular socio-political systems in certain religions are deliberate in nature and aim at preventing people to question the validity of these systems/religions, etc.
In the process of education, on the other hand, what is important is development of knowledge and understanding – a kind of cognitive perspective – and also development of critical evaluative awareness. To be educated, therefore, not only means the acquisition of autonomy but also the capacity to use that autonomy effectively. Mere acquisition of freedom of thought does not necessarily qualify a person to be called educated unless one is adequately informed on the subject. In other words, it not only means an attempt to form their own opinions but also to improve the quality of those opinions.

Another feature of education is that the activities, in which the students are engaged, are worthy of being pursued for their own sake, whereas in the case of other activities like training, this is not the case. For example, we can train somebody in the development of certain skills without any regard to whether he values them or not. It is illogical to think of a person as educated and at the same time asserting that he places no value at all to the knowledge, understanding or skill that he has acquired while being educated.

In the process of education, there is still another element which is very vital to it. This is the element of developing desirable human emotions, especially a consideration for others’ feelings or caring for them. If we do not consider other people’s relations we miss something significant in education. Could we dispense with the element of emotions or human relations, probably computers would have been the best instrument to decode what ought to be done in a situation. As autonomous moral beings we must develop the capacity to look into other people’s hearts and empathetically feel for them. This is the perspective which in the Western thinking has been specially highlighted by Carol Gilligan. According to Gilligan morality comprises two kinds of orientation: one, that Kohlberg and others called the justice orientation, and the second, what Gilligan called ‘care’ orientation. We shall discuss these two orientations to morality later.

### 14.7 PORTRAIT OF A MORALLY EDUCATED PERSON

On the basis of what we have understood of the concept of morality and moral education we can safely attempt a personality profile of a person who can really be said to be morally educated.

Thus far we have analysed the meaning of morality and moral education, first by showing that moral consciousness is an essential condition of being educated; second, by delineating the connotation of moral education, distinguishing it from moral training or moral instruction, conditioning or indoctrination.

**Who is not a Morally Educated Person?**

On the basis of this distinction we can safely hold that we would not like to call a person morally educated who has a traditional moral upbringing, that is, a man who has been taught what to believe and why to believe or why not to believe. This is, as indicated earlier, a bag of virtues approach based more or less on objective theory of morality. Nature of values according to such a theory is fixed and unchangeable, and values are instilled in children by methods of rewards and punishment using conditioning or indoctrination.
Such children or individuals are exposed to character training but certainly not to moral education. A person who is not capable of reaching his autonomous moral decision or reaches such decisions without giving due consideration or thought to the factors that determine the particular situation, will not be described as a morally educated person.

14.7.1 Personality Characteristics of a Morally Educated Person

Most succinctly put, we can hold that a really educated person is a morally educated person. He/she is a person who has a proper, balanced and coordinated development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of personality. A morally educated person is the one who can make right moral choices by sizing up the situation impartially and accurately and has the courage to act accordingly.

The positive characterization of a morally educated person can be more explicitly grasped or understood by making reference to a beautiful story quoted in Hersh et al. (1980) and is being paraphrased here.

Slotin, a nuclear physicist, was experimenting upon the development of atomic bomb which required assembling pieces of plutonium. In this experiment he was pushing one piece towards another in order to ensure that their total mass would be large enough to start a chain reaction. The screw driver with which he was pushing the pieces together, slipped and consequently the pieces of plutonium came too close together. Uncontrollably, the chain reaction started and radio-activity started filling the room. There were seven co-workers who were watching the change on their instruments.

Seeing this, Slotin immediately moved and pulled the pieces of plutonium apart using his bare hands. This act, he knew well, was virtually an act of suicide, for this could expose him to the largest dose of radio-activity. But still he did it. Immediately after the incident, Slotin calmly asked his co-workers to mark their precise positions at the time of accident in order that the degree of exposure of each of them to radio-activity could be determined. Having done this and calling for the doctors, Slotin apologized to his colleagues and said what later exactly came out to be true: he would die and they would survive.

An analysis of Slotin’s tale displays heroic proportion of morality. He performed the most courageous and moral act in separating the plutonium pieces with his bare hands. Slightest delay in his action could have been simply devastating to life and property all around. It was his uncompromising sense that people matter; he showed an unconditional concern for preserving or saving life and for the welfare of people, sacrificing his own life. In addition to this concern for life, he had the sharp ability to judge the consequences, to size up the situation and also indenting courage to act accordingly.

This analysis further reveals that morality consists of human caring or a concern for life and welfare of people and efforts made to actualize such concern. But mere concern for people may not be sufficient until we are well aware of what A.J. Ayer (1964) called non-moral facts of the case. The relevance of such awareness is not that one logically deduces the ultimate choices or decisions from the factual premises, rather it enables one to understand the likely consequences of certain alternative courses of actions.
helps in sizing up the situation. In the absence of proper and scientific knowledge of such facts, one may base one's choices on misinformation. And action taken on wrong knowledge may result in devastating consequences. In such a situation, no good motive, a concern for human welfare or justice, will be of any avail. With the best of intentions and sincerity of purpose the moral agent will not be able to achieve the goal. So a morally educated person needs to be fully and accurately informed of the non-formal facts of each situation; only then can one make right moral choices.

For achieving one's goals as a moral agent, knowledge of the non-moral facts of the case, as we have seen, are important for making right moral choices. It is so because actual morality consists in bringing the desired changes in society. For effecting such changes the moral agent should also possess skills, especially the social skills. He/she must, for example, need to understand how to relate to people, get on with them, or even communicate with them.

Some people generally feel incompetent to effect the environment and, to that extent, cannot act as moral agent. Building this environmental competence, therefore, is essential for us to act as moral agents or as morally educated persons. For developing such competence, Newmann (1975) presents a model of moral education (called Social Action model). For more details on this aspect you may refer to Newmann's "Education for Social Action, Feeling for Others". A synoptic view of Newmann's model is presented in another unit of this Block also. A morally educated person feels a concern for the needs and desires of other persons as one has for one's own. One has in other words an emotional commitment to others, that is realizes that others' feelings are as important as one's own. It is to be emotionally rather than merely intellectually oriented towards the rights, interests and feeling of others. Aristotle, taking a more realistic view of man, realized that a moral decision at intellectual level is not sufficient. When we come to implement the decision we are pulled by many forces which Aristotle called "Pleasures". It is a fact that we do not always do what we ought to do. St. Paul also once confessed: "The evil that I would not, that I do, and the good that I would, I do not" (quoted by Downey and Kelly, 1982). For Aristotle moral education involved not merely teaching the right rule, it also involved a kind of character training to enable them to act on it, once recognized.

Feelings and emotions play a significant role in the moral development of man. They are not merely to be considered as an unpleasant remainder of human infirmity. They are certainly not an undesirable and unfortunate excrescence. It is in fact the emotional response that constitutes humanity and enables one to really act as moral being.

Annette Baier (1987) challenged Kantian notion that in order to act morally we must control our passions; she suggests instead, that we must learn to develop desirable forms of emotional response such as loving. She rejects the liberal view that we need not worry what passions persons have, as long as their rational wills can control them. She states: "We live in society characterized by inequality and in which we must act responsibly and care for those who are dependent on us".
According to Gilligan (1988) morality consists of two independent components: justice and care. These components represent specific ways of seeing moral problems, each showing different patterns of development. In the course of an interview students were asked to respond to a question “What does morality mean to you?” One of the students replied as under:

“Morality is basically having a reason for or a way of knowing what is right, what one ought to do; and when you are put into a situation where you have to choose from among alternatives, being able to recognize when there is an issue of ought at stake and when there is not; and then ..... having some (valid) reasons for choosing among alternatives.”

Another student responded,

“Morality is a type of consciousness, I guess, a sensitivity to humanity that you can affect someone’s life. You can affect your own life and you have the responsibility not to endanger other people’s lives or to hurt other people. So morality is complex. Morality is realizing that there is a play between self and others and that you are going to have to take responsibility for both of them”. (Quoted from Nona Plessner Lyons, 1982).

From these two responses given by students one can understand clearly that in contrast to the notion of morality as “having a reason”, a way of knowing what is right, there is the sense of morality as a type of consciousness, a sensitivity incorporating an injunction not to endanger or hurt other people.

In the western moral thinking “Justice Orientation” was highlighted by Kohlberg in his theory of moral development which was patterned after Piaget’s theory of Cognitive and Moral Development. This theory is discussed in more details in the next units of this block. Kohlberg constructed some hypothetical moral dilemmas and on the basis of data obtained on these, he developed a full-fledged theory of moral development in which the ethic of justice is the central thesis.

Gilligan, however, reproaches Kohlberg for paying attention to justice only in his theory of moral development, and neglecting care aspect of morality. In her work Gilligan often characterizes justice and care as different forms of moral judgement. Gilligan has explained justice and care as grounded in two aspects of human conditions which give rise to moral concerns. She names these as inequality and attachment, and argues that these aspects of human relationships have a different structure and are, therefore, basis of different moralities. She connects care with self-conception of connectedness, while a “Justice Orientation” is anchored in self-conception of separateness. From the point of view of justice, moral problems are regarded as conflicts between claims, especially between rights and duties of individuals. From the point of view of care, on the other hand, moral problems are considered to be tensions or ruptures in relationships.

Another clarification can be obtained between the ethic of care and ethic of justice. The justice judgements as opposed to care judgements, do not have particular content. Judging in terms of rules, standards or principles is
compatible with broad variety of subject matter. According to Kohlberg, the norms are universal. Care judgements are somehow related to the well-being of 'persons' in relationships. The effect of this is that the problem which is being judged in a particular situation, as it were, is removed from its context, whereas in the caring approach the situation in which the moral problem occurs is represented as completely as possible. This can be illustrated with the help of an example which Gilligan cites. In this example use of alcohol is the issue. Two students notice that a fellow student turns up at a lecture a little tipsy (in a drunken state). In the institute concerned, a school of medicine, drunkenness is a serious offence. The first person wonders whether she should report the offence. Eventually she decides not to do so, because the violator evidently regrets her deed. The second person wants to know, before deciding, whether or not the use of alcohol is a problem for the person in question. She considers reporting her not the right solution. This would obstruct a potential relationship with the person in question, and in this way hinder a way of helping. The first reaction, it will be understood, is typical of thinking in terms of justice, whereas in the second reaction, a perspective of care is expressed (Gilligan 1987 p.24)

14.8.1 Sex-differences in Moral Orientation

Critics have charged that Kohlberg and his colleagues have advanced a biased approach to moral development. Most prominent among such critics has been Carol Gilligan who in her 1982's book, In a Different Voice, suggested that Kohlberg’s approach is biased against females. According to Gilligan, women appear to be deficient in moral development when measured by Kohlberg scale. But she holds that the reason for such deficiency is not that women are really less moral, but they appear to be so because they make moral judgements that are concerned with activity of care which seem to exemplify the third stage of Kohlberg’s sex-stage sequence. According to Gilligan, males score higher on Kohlberg’s test than females because they make more justice oriented judgements. From Gilligan’s perspective examining moral judgements with Kohlberg measures entails a justice bias.

In investigation of women’s moral thinking Gilligan thus identified a new perspective which remained concealed in the theory of Kohlberg. In her words:

"Women’s construction of moral problem as a problem of care and responsibility in relationship rather than as one of rights and rules ties the development of their moral thinking to changes in their understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as conception of morality as justice ties development to the logic of equality and reciprocity. Thus, the logic underlying the ethic of care is a psychological logic of relationships which contrasts with the formal logic that supports the justice approach (1982).

She claims that an ethic based on justice requires the moral agent to be detached, whereas within a care framework, detachment, whether from self or others is morally problematic since it breeds moral blindness and indifference – a failure to discern or respond to need (1987, p.24).

Interestingly, similar sex-differences in conception of morality are apparent in the Gita also. Radha Kristina (1948) writes in this regard: As a rule the particular qualities associated with Bhakti, love and devotion, mercy and tenderness are to be found more in woman than in man.
humility, obedience, readiness to serve, compassion and gentle love, as the devotee longs to surrender, renounce self of will end experience passivity, it is said to be more feminine in character (p.61).

14.9 LET US SUM UP

This unit began with a prologue which portrayed the situation of the Indian society in which we find a contradiction between the values enshrined in our culture and traditions, and the values practised by us in our life. While we preach lofty ideals, our actions betray the basic form of duplicity and hypocrisy. We also saw that one of the reasons for this kind of social degeneration lies in the so-called education which we practise.

Having lost the moral context, education today is relegated to mere literacy, which can sometimes be more dangerous than even illiteracy. The moral context which has been worn out needs to be brought back. With the introduction of National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and its Programme of Action, there is an increased emphasis on introducing moral or value-oriented education, especially at school level. But the way value education, and more so moral education, is being conceptualized and practised is not free from misconceptions and ambiguities. Either moral education is being linked to religious education or it is based on objective theory of values, where values are considered too objective, fixed and unchangeable quality of something. Linking of moral education with religious education or considering values as objective and fixed is unacceptable, because such education would by its very nature be authoritarian, and leaves no room for determining one’s value freely, on one’s own according to the changed social circumstances.

In fact, in our effort to conceptualize morality we try to search for more general principles as the basis of ethical system, which is good in itself. In search for some ultimate value substance we take cognizance of the content of morality and lose sight of its form. The fact remains that moral behaviour has both form and content. Criteria like rationality or intentionality, constitute what we call form of moral behaviour. These concepts are illustrated with the help of concrete examples.

To zero-in on moral education more closely, it has been distinguished from concepts like moral instruction, moral training, conditioning and even indoctrination. Protecting, preserving or promoting autonomy of the individual (learner) is the hallmark of educational process whereas for the other concepts, autonomy is simply irrelevant. Then on the basis of such analysis of the concept of morality and moral education, an attempt has been made to give a profile of a morally-educated person. Slotin’s tale quoted by Hersh et. al. is mentioned as an illustration to show what role “caring”, judging (sizing up the situation) and acting play (performing the act) mean.

Towards the end, a brief sketch of the Ethic of Care and Ethic of Justice (or in other words Kohlberg-Gilligan controversy) has been attempted, so that a holistic view of morality and moral education is obtained.
14.10 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. In our society we face a value crisis resulting in a deep social and spiritual vacuum. Do you agree with this statement? If yes, why?

2. Distinguish between moral education and religious education.

3. Describe the criteria of judging an action to be rational.

4. Describe briefly the personality characteristics of a morally educated person.

5. Describe morality as viewed by Carol Gilligan.

14.11 SUGGESTED READINGS


