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Why be Moral? by Prof. P.K. Mohapatra

‘Why be moral?’ is in some sense an improper question since it questions about something that is normally presupposed. This is because man by nature is a moral being, for unless otherwise constrained men would like to do good to others and refrain from doing harm to anyone. This follows jointly from the nature of man as a rational as well as a spiritual being. By means of rationality we are able to tell right from wrong, and only by spirituality we *identify* with good and right and *alienate* from evil and wrong. Moral motivation is possible through spiritual endeavor.

Besides, the above concept of moral personhood involves an urge for self-transcendence and reciprocal personal stance that is constitutive of persons as rational agents. Kant, for this reason, argued that to act rationally is to act morally. Thus, added to man’s rationality his inherent spirituality leaves us with no alternative to being moral.

The other reason for acting morally is what I would call the primacy of the ethical. Any action or any idea that is ethically good would be good *simpliciter*, but anything good in any other respect, i.e. socially good or politically good or even good from religious point of view cannot sustain itself without being accompanied by ethical goodness.

Key words: rationality, spirituality, moral personhood, reciprocal personal stance self-transcendence, primacy of the ethical.

The inescapable moral nature of being by Prof. Rakesh Chandra

This is an attempt to consider a few related issues concerning our moral nature and philosophizing about it. While it is sometimes argued by powerful influencers like Richard Rorty that the very idea philosophy as something august which can help when problems arise is wrong and any idea of reason and rational superiority is based on the suggestion that they can be demonstrations with proceed from premises accepted by all human being irrespective of historical cultural location. It can still be seen when addressing the question why be moral? He himself takes a rather common sense philosophy position which is to declare the question as pointless. For him the question is to answer why do I have the moral identity that I have? I would like to see this position of Rorty with that of Strawson as he grounds our sense of morality in our reactive attitudes. He argues that the freedom required for morality means nothing more than absence of certain conditions the presence of which would make moral condemnations or punishment inappropriate for example innate incapacity, insanity or extreme forms of psychological disorder. He insists on a common place that we do attach a great deal of importance to the intention and attitude of another human beings towards us and our personal feelings and reactions depend on this. We think of actions of others in terms of goodwill, affection, contempt, motivation and react in terms of gratitude, resentment and forgiveness our general attitude is of taking others as participants not objects needing cure or treatment through psychological or social arrangements. So participant reactive attitude is our natural disposition so to say and Strawson upfront accepts that despite our philosophical attitude to theorize.

“We are not to suppose that we are required to regard ourselves as human being as detached from the reactive attitude which as scientist we study with detachment.”

I take this naturalistic answer to two historical discussions for some engagement. One interesting case is of a very large body of literary and religious discussion on moral conscience from Greeks and Roman, Adam Smith to Freud along with the Kantian idea of Imagined impartial spectator and Gandhi's voice of God in the heart. This discussion sometimes treats conscience as a pathological hostility to the self and sometimes as a guiding moral force. There are questions of treating it as a source of morality as well as it's reliability. The second discussion is of the classical political ethical discussion in which I follow professor R Sundarajan and his keen scholarship on Aristotle where 'poesis', 'Theoria' and 'Praxis' are related to knowing doing and making. In contrast to the excessive relative contextualized self here is an idea of an essentially context transcending self whose constitutive elements are language and ethics. Aristotle mentions political competence as a capacity of human beings to transcend the specific personal and social context and to think in terms of common good. The inter-subjectivity of i-thou and i-we both are possible in Aristotle and Kautilya's Arthshastra. I try to understand Sundarajan's argument how the accessibility of the common good in this picture is by way of discourse. He also builds in the idea of responsiveness and responsibility in the linguistic ethical self and its context transcending capacity. This preserves fellowship historicity and persuasion.

I try to argue that from the common place of our reactive attitude we can move to a more theoretical understanding of a moral self as in escapable as we see ourselves as linguistic and ethical beings.

Keyword: Reactive attitude, Context transcendence, Moral conscience, Political competence, Theoria, Poesis, Praxis.

Escape if you can, but accept you must: Morality is Indispensable by Prof. Radharaman Chakrabarti

1. Though straight and simple, the lead question in this session: WHY BE MORAL? is at the same time complex and challenging. It subsumes a set of issues that are intertwined and could contain the key to a reasoned search for the right answer
2. Some of the conceivable issues can be enlisted *seriatim* as follows:
 - (a) Being moral would depend on some justifiable as well as convincing reason. Tenability of a given reason can possibly persuade persons to take to the path of morality.
 - (b) If reason accounts for moral behaviour, why is it that a moral order also needs some mandatory measures to ensure compliance? Doesn't that show that morals are not necessarily auto enforcing? There can,of course, be a contrary view that being moral could as well be a natural urge spurred by what is called "conscience". But then the expression conscience itself does not convey a concrete picture as to how it works. That needs deeper probe.
 - (c) Further ramifications would crop up if a caveat is raised as to the validity of a given reason as the basis of moral behaviour when substantial changes occur in ground reality. Wouldn't the earlier reason then lose it's force? This calls for serious deliberation.

- (d) The point about change of circumstances becomes particularly pertinent in respect of social morality. Here the attempted answer may get deflected. Still, historical evidence supports the possibility that far reaching reforms born of social upheavals might jolly well make a moral order less flawed and more viable in the long run. Best practices of other cultures, if synthesized, may get the better of moral norms that have become outdated.
- (e) One last point. There could as well be a counter argument that not all societies need to follow the same type of moral order. And there is such a thing as Cultural Relativism which shields a nation's own cultural priorities and resists ingress of a uniform pattern. To the extent this inwardness undermines basic human values, moral pursuits could suffer a proportional setback. As an antidote civilized nations of the West have taken recourse to multiculturalism as official policy towards immigrants from other cultural background. That ensures observance of moral norms by all residents unhindered.
3. The next part of our enquiry would take us back to the issue at 2(b) above which awaits a closer examination. We need to take note of two types of moral codes-viz., Prescriptive and Perceptual. One is sanction driven, the other experiential. It is the latter type which the morally inclined men observe spontaneously. That gives credence to the naturalists who invoke the impact on the whole universe of a cosmic force. In the Upanishadic narration it is identified as *r.tm* (ऋतम्) which is the driving force that maintains the balance of lesser forces, mundane and celestial, so that nothing acts erratically. In case they do, ऋतम् ensures that they fall back in line. Though all this is essentially a category resting on spiritual testimony, its indicators need not be taken as beyond the investigative faculty of the sciences. Modern science has lately developed curiosity in the mystery of the cosmos. Hopefully, that will reinforce the belief that there is something in human gene - in Swamiji's words divinity that is embedded in man's inner spirit. That is what enables some men (not all) to naturally respond to the call of virtues like compassion, fellow feeling, empathy, nonviolence, philanthropy and so on.
4. In lieu of conclusion, it will be perhaps necessary to checklist our findings with regard to the complex set of questions we addressed at the outset as part of the basic question: why be moral?
- (a) Moral conduct is largely, if not wholly, induced by reason.
- (b) Moral order in organised societies may not be uniform or long lasting..Some elements may prove volatile, others that are impaired wait for reforms.
- (c) Social upheavals that facilitate renovation of the moral architecture would also help reengage men in their moral pursuits.
- (d) Moral relativism, if rigidly enforced, can frustrate universally accepted standards of morality. By contrast, multi culturalism seems to be a flexible public policy.
- (e) Upanishadic insights about ऋतम् as the balancing force of the universe, from the tiniest particles to huge stellar bodies, lends credence to the naturalists' view on man's attachment to higher moral virtues.

Second Academic Session Nature and Source of Moral Values

Is a Good God Logically Possible? by Prof. James P. Sterba

I begin with a short history of the discussion of the problem of evil from the famous John Mackie/Alvin Plantinga exchange to the present and explain how I myself was drawn into this discussion because of my long career in moral and political philosophy. I then sketch my argument that the all-good, all-powerful God of traditional theism is logically incompatible with all the evil in the world that is set out in more detail in my book Is a Good God Logically Possible? (Palgrave/Macmillan, 2019 paperback edition). I end by discussing recent responses to that argument right up to April 18, 2022 2AM (EST).

On the origin and nature of Ethics and Ethical Values by Prof. Chhanda Chakraborti

This paper discusses and examines three salient and currently available hypotheses on the origin of ethics. Two of them are well-known: (a) Divine origin of ethics, and (b) Social origin of ethics. The third is a lesser-known, nonetheless a strong and more recent contender: (c) Biological origin of ethics. It then strives to elicit the philosophical implications which each of these positions have for the nature and source of the moral values. The paper is founded on the premise that the question about the nature and source of ethical values is intertwined with the question about the possible origin of ethics itself. What we posit as the origin of ethics also shapes our view on the nature and the source of the moral or ethical values. With a comparative analysis of the three positions, this paper strives to address two questions, which are highly relevant for value researchers and practitioners:

1. Can moral values be taught?
2. Do values die with time, or are they permanent?

Keywords: Values, ethics, origin of ethics, value-education

Third Academic Session Weakness of the Will: Where the Head and the Heart Clash

Possibility of Akratic Collective Agents: Groups, Gangs, and Gatherings by Dr. Bhaskarjit Neog

If we hold, contra Socrates (Plato, *Protagoras*), that an agent can at times freely and intentionally act against her own better judgments, as many have argued, one might wonder whether such a possibility can also be seen in certain well-organized groups or collectives which are capable of performing things on their own, analogous to that of their constituent members. But what is it for a group or collective to display this kind of counter-intuitive state of acting or akrasia in an irreducible and non-distributive way? In this presentation, I plan to explore the possibility of a group moral agent that is susceptible to akratic behaviors or lack of self-control because of its failure to live up to a desired rational unity which it has achieved by channelizing its decisions through cooperation and commitment among the group

members to do things as a group *qua* group. I make a modest attempt of showing this by considering several tempting initial alternatives—i.e., by talking about different forms of non-individual entities. My explanation proceeds from gathering, gangs to groups and corporations. The deliberation is expected to have interesting outcomes not just for understanding group moral phenomena in the face of akrasia as such but also for the individuals who constitute such group phenomena.

The Weakness of Will in a Man's Battle of Life: Some Reactions from the Bhagavad Gita Perspective by Prof. Indrani Sanyal

Aristotelian use of the notion of akrasia, meaning thereby the absence of strength or power to control oneself, led him to characterize a self-controlled person as one 'in such a state as ... to master even those [temptations of a certain kind] by which most people are defeated', and the akratic person as one 'in such a state as to be defeated even by those which most people master.' [1] It has become quite trendy, according to some philosophers, to concede to akratic actions not as a mere possibility but as facts of life. In the Western ethical deliberations, the concept of weakness of will has gained considerable ground. According to Davidson, the weakness of will vindicates the shortcoming of rationality. In Davidsonian technical language, the akratic agent, who acts on the ground of weakness of will, is the violator of 'the principle of continence,' that is the rational requirement 'to perform the action judged best based on all available reasons.' [2] Davidson's account is, to an extent, a reaction to Hare's denial that weakness of will is, strictly speaking, possible.

Aristotelian concept of akrasia as a conflict between reason and desire, was more concerned with character, but gradually, turned out to be more specific as any voluntary action against one's better judgment. Against this background, my objective is to seek some clues from the Dharma-ethical perspective, mainly the Srimadbhagavad Gita text to find out whether it could have set the stage for a possible instance of the weakness of will. Does the Gita deserve any mention as a story of salvaging from the weakness of will in detail? It could have been one of the possibilities for Arjuna to forsake the battleground, taking the refuge on the path of *bhaiksya*, i.e., the subsistence on alms or charity as the *sreya*, i.e., good? This may also need confirmation of whether and how far Arjuna was sanguine concerning an alternative action lying open to him.

The first chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita presents Arjuna as an emotional wreck while seated in a chariot with Krishna as his charioteer amid a fiery battlefield surrounded by the enemies' soldiers at Kurukshetra. A brave warrior like Arjuna became physically down with sweats, trembles, goosebumps, and tormented by burning sensations over his body and dryness of the mouth; mentally, he turned restless and could not stay positioned. He could see evil omens surround him. Arjuna was baffled by the thought that his involvement in the battle would implicate him in vice or *papa* differently. The anxiety that his participation in the act of fighting would also involve him fighting against his senior relatives and preceptors. In a most demanding Kurukshetra battlefield situation that demands his total commitment, he became *svadharmābimukha*, i.e., disrespectful towards performing his own dharma or responsibilities. In that situation, Arjuna's being convinced that fighting against the Kauravas was inevitable for the protection and preservation of dharma, Arjuna could have behaved rashly out of desperation by throwing away his bows and arrows and could have declared his total abstinence from war. Again Arjuna did nothing like this, but could this kind of

counterfactual retrograde step of him be envisaged as an instance possibly of the weakness of will? To conjecture upon a counterfactual situation was not to construct another parallel to the Gita situation. It is, however, one of life's lessons for overcoming the phenomena of the weakness of will. Krishna throughout counseled Arjuna to get up by giving away his weakness of heart (*hr̥daya daurbalyam*), getting rid of his delusion (*kaśmālam*), performing his duties, and giving in never to the renunciation. Of course, that was not the end of Krishna's counseling to Arjuna, and the Gita had continued through eighteen long chapters for rejuvenating Arjuna. Nearing the end of the eighteenth chapter, in the sloka 18/73, Arjuna was found finally to utter without any falter: *naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvat-prasādān mayācyuta sthito 'smi gata-sandehaḥ kariṣye vacanam tava.*

Arjuna's final confession projected him not as one blemished by the weakness of will. In reality, the Gita is not a text that spoke about the weakness of will, but indeed, it may be viewed as a guidebook for suggesting how to transcend the possible weakness of will.

Sites of Disruption: Acting against Reason in Greek Thought by Prof. Amlan Das Gupta

In the 13th chapter of the *Poetics*, Aristotle observes that the best tragedies are constructed on myths relating to a select number of families, such as those of Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes and others "whose lot it has been to experience something terrible - or to perform some terrible action". The causes and nature of these actions and experiences have constitute a major area of critical enquiry since the time of Aristotle. This paper seeks to re-examine two instances of tragic suffering, the *Antigone* of Sophocles and the *Medea* of Euripides in the light of some notions in Greek ethical thought.

Fourth Academic Session The Nature of Moral Judgements and the Status of Moral Principles

Burden of Goodness by Prof. Patitapaban Das

Will you take a sick person to the hospital even though it demands significant time and energy from you? What if that time or energy makes a significant toll on your own course? Will you sacrifice your self-interest to help others? If you do, what is your source of motivation? If you do not, what deters you? Is it really bad to love yourself? Is it always good by doing things for others? All these questions can be presented in a condensed form i.e. why should you be ethical?

Being ethical, in a special sense, is being altruistic i.e. thinking or doing things for others. Thinking or doing things for others requires many a time, self-control and compromise in one's self-gratification. Being altruistic brings very often, pain and hardship for the doer. Many a time, therefore, being good is considered to be burdensome. No wonder, therefore, the contemporary world conceives moral principles boring, impractical, obsolete and obstinate.

Without claiming empirical evidence, informal though, this paper excavates the sources of moral motivation for being good. In a widely circulated book, *How are we to live? Ethics in*

an age of self-interest, Peter Singer presents a vivid reason to be altruistic. By doing good for others, for him supplies necessary meaning to one's life. Taking the clue from the book and many informal postings from the face book, this paper excavates the inherent hollowness in the model of not being good for others. Not being good for others, I claim in this paper, is too burdensome to bear.

Key Words: (Ethical, altruism, moral motivation, moral principles, self-interest)

Naturalism and Normativity in Moral Judgements and Moral Perception by Dr. Manoj Kumar Panda

In contemporary philosophy, one of the most fundamental problems is to get a satisfactory account of the place of values (value-judgements), norms (normativity) and reasons (practical reason) in the natural world i.e. a problem concerning the relation between “normative” and “natural”. Why is it a problem in the first place to situate moral judgements or value-judgements in the natural world? Are values-judgements not about the natural world? The standard story is that when we try to explain values and natural world, it is believed as a truism for many that we need two different kinds of explanations as these two notions fall into two different realms. The explanation that we have of the natural world or nature cannot do justice to the “values” and judgements concerning them and in addition to that the dominating explanation we have of the natural world is the explanation of scientific naturalism which does not even acknowledge anything beyond the physical properties of world and certainly not the values-judgements in the sense we talk about them. Moral judgements on the other hand, are situated in a normative space and to make sense of them is altogether a different kind of intelligibility than that of natural science. This fundamental problem arises, in this context, as many philosophers have expressed, due to natural science's appropriation of nature and its attempt to incorporate each and everything including values and value judgements within its framework. Natural science holds that values or value-judgments can be reduced to concepts and categories of natural science without reminder by equating nature with the realm of natural laws.

Moral judgements are said to be of the nature which are about what ought to be and what ought not to be done in the domain of voluntary human actions. Moral judgments are about certain values or themselves carry certain values. These judgements make sense in the moral domain which are governed by norms and values. These are value judgements negatively in the sense that these are not about facts merely describing what is the case. Rather these are about what ought to be the case keeping in view some kind of values depending on the context of the discourse. On a common assumption, the natural world is governed by the laws of natural science whereas the value judgments are placed in the realm of ought where these judgments are not merely about facts. The question that arises is: are the moral judgements which belong to a different realm not about the natural world? How to bridge the gap between moral judgements and the world about which we possess these moral judgements? If our judgements are based on the perception that we gather from the world, then our judgements cannot be moral unless the perception which justifies the judgement is moral in certain sense. If one of the sources of moral judgements is the perception that we have of the world, then it is not only moral judgements but also our moral perception that belongs to the realm of normativity. Hence, it is important to argue in favour of the view that there can be moral perception in order to have moral judgements about the world. But the problem that we

face here is: perception as understood under the framework of scientific naturalism is the product of the physical contact between visual sense organ and the object. How can perception on such an account belong to the realm of normativity and morality? Once the task of bridging the gap between natural and normative is accomplished or once the relationship between these two realms is understood with a right perspective, we can satisfactorily develop an account of placing moral judgements and moral perception in the natural world. I will try in this paper to resolve the possible tension between “naturalism” and “normativity” concerning moral judgements, moral perception and the relationship between them. The upshot of this attempt is that moral judgements and moral perception can be both natural and normative.

Moral Principles by Prof. Jan Narveson

Moral Principles are, in a fairly recognizable sense, subjective. People have principles about all sorts of things, and one question is: when are those principles to be characterized as *moral* principles? I'll suggest an answer to this latter question. Then the question comes up: does this subjectivity mean that moral principles cannot be true or false, right or wrong? To this there is an important answer. It can be expressed in either of two ways: (a) Yes; and (b) It Doesn't Really Matter! This last idea would be because what really matters is whether there is a plausible intersubjective basis for a given principle. When we think of the matter in that way, we then ask which principles can have the needed intersubjective power. I think there is essentially one answer to that, an answer which has been known, really, for a long time: Do Not Aggress! There is an underlying game-theoretic argument for this. It's a game-changer! In light of this basic principle, all others must be subordinated to it. If they aren't, we can expect trouble.

Fifth Academic Session Moral Dilemma and Human Response

Moral Dilemma & Resolution by Prof. Aditya Kumar Mohanty

Morality is bound up with the notion of 'right' and 'wrong', 'ought' and 'ought-not', 'pleasurable' (*preya*) and 'preferable' (*sreya*). Moral concepts and issues assume significance only in the human domain. 'Reason' and 'free-will' are the privileged possessions of man. 'Reason' is the faculty of discrimination whereas 'free-will' is the ability to choose a course of action from among the plurality of alternatives in spite of constraints or compelling circumstances. Deliberation and choice define the distinctness of 'moral action'

Moral dilemma refers to an existential situation when one encounters alternative courses of action which could be equally right or equally wrong. Dilemma is essentially a state of moral indecision where the agent is not *prima facie* able to exercise his considered choice in favour of one course of action rather than another. Arjuna was overtaken by a moral dilemma, 'to fight or not to fight', when either of the alternatives appeared to be morally repugnant'. Not to fight doesn't amount to non-action because it would have paved the way for the reign of 'Evil'. When action is called for, inaction or non-action becomes an instance of wrong or bad action. One may also find oneself at crossroads in life or dilemmatic situation, in choosing to pursue the career of a teacher or a doctor, when both the courses are equally

laudable and inviting; for one, ‘man-making’ is the mission and for the other, ‘healing’ is the mission. Here comes the role of ‘rational deliberation’. Before opting for a particular course of action what is imperative is to weigh the moral worthiness of different courses of action by the faculty of ‘reason’ and the choice backed by overriding reasons is to be preferred to other alternatives. Now the moot question is: How to decide which course of action is more rational, therefore morally tenable? Often, ‘Reason’ is taken captive by emotions, sentiments, fond beliefs or dogmas unawares, on account of parental upbringing and social intercourse. As a result, that which is considered to be morally worthy by one, may not be accepted by another. Given a dilemmatic situation, the same person may choose different courses of action at different stages of life and different individuals may have reasons to act differently in the same situation. Then, how to morally adjudicate in favour of a moral choice when there are conflict of reasons or equally competing reasons with regard to the choice of other courses of action? Needless to say that ‘reason’ is the universal presence in everyone. That is why ‘reason’ has the persuasive force. But when ‘Reason’, instead of playing a steward, remains subservient to non-rational factors, ‘objectivity’ of moral choice becomes a casualty. When ‘Reason’ is freed from the influence of non-rational factor it is termed ‘Conscience’. ‘Conscience’ is the ‘awakened reason’ or ‘pure reason’, impervious to the influence of non-rational factors, otherwise referred to as the ‘voice of God’ in man, ‘moral will’ or ‘good-will’.

While attempting the resolution of a moral dilemma, certain factors are to be kept uppermost in mind. An action which is envisaged to yield short term ‘good’ is to be eschewed in favor of that which brings enduring good, in the long run and an action which would address the interest of a minority is to be given up in favor of a course of action which seeks to promote ‘collective good’. While exercising moral choice, one has to be conscious such that ‘expediency’ is not prioritized over ‘virtue’ or path of rectitude. It is quite possible that falsehood and dishonesty pay in the short run but they turn out to be self defeating in the long run. One who remains wedded to path of righteousness (*dharma*) remains protected by it (*dharma raksati raksitah*). The *Bhagavad Gita* underlines ‘collective good’ as the sole criteria by which the ethical merit of an action is to be determined. Every action is directed at an immediate goal and there are hierarchy goals. Since ‘collective good’ is the ultimate goal it lends justification to every action, small or big. So, an ethical dilemma has to be resolved not only on the axis of ‘reason’ but by appeal to the notion of ‘highest good’. There are thinkers who do not envisage the possibility of moral dilemma. As ‘moral dilemma’ is marked by conflict of reasons and confusion, it can be resolved on attaining requisite clarity. If ‘rational will’ or ‘moral-will’ is taken as an objective criterion and ‘collective good’ is construed as the ultimate ‘end’, there is no reason why there could be any constraint in choosing a definite course of action rather than another, while in the grip of a moral dilemma.

Ethical Dilemmas in Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa: A Fresh Approach to Some Troubling Episodes by Prof. Robert Goldman

Among their many roles in the formation of the cultures of South and Southeast Asia as poetry, performance, history, romance, religious texts and moral and ethical guides, the great Sanskrit epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, have, for centuries and in numerous later, regional versions, have had and continue to have a powerful influence on people’s concepts of proper conduct, filial piety, spirituality gender and governance, in short *dharma*.

Regarding the original, received versions of these two great works, those of Vyāsa and Vālmīki respectively, it has been commonly observed that the two poems differ in many respects as to the type of ethics practiced, taught and exemplified by the two great Vaiṣṇava *avatāras*, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma who occupy central roles, respectively, in the poems. Thus, while Kṛṣṇa, as the *sūtradhāra*, as it were, of the political and military struggle between the *Mahābhārata*'s rival clans, the sons of Pāṇḍu and those of Dhṛtarāṣṭra argues for a sort of consequentialist ethics, a *realpolitik*, according to which the restitution of the highest *dharma* is to be achieved by any means necessary even if this means subverting some of the culture's most important contingent *dharmas*, namely *kṣatriyadharmā* and *kuladharmā*. In this he is sometimes opposed, but ineffectually so, by the prominent Pāṇḍavas, Arjuna and, most notably Yudhiṣṭhira.

On the other hand, Rāma, the hero of Vālmīki's immortal poem, is the paragon, *par excellence* of a strongly deontological type of ethics in which adherence to the normative rules and codes of both *kṣatriya* and *kula dharma* must, to the greatest extent possible, be strictly adhered to regardless of the consequences.

Keeping this in mind, I will, in this presentation, probe more deeply into the deontological ethics of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, examining the conduct and attitudes of its hero not only in contrast to some of the obvious foils to it in the person of figures such as his brother Lakṣmaṇa, his ally Sugrīva and—most glaringly— his hyperbolically evil antagonist, Rāvaṇa, but also characters less commonly studied such as his father, Daśaratha. I will also look into some of the incidents in Rāma's life in exile and during his celebrated and extremely long reign as an exemplary dharmic king.

Moral Dilemmas : Sources and Ways Out by Prof. Amita Chatterjee

Often moral conflicts arise in our life. However, all conflicts are not moral dilemmas. A genuine moral dilemma arises, says Matilal, when an agent is committed to two or more moral obligations, but circumstances are such that an obligation to do *x* cannot be fulfilled without violating an obligation to do *y*. When grounds of such two obligations are equally cogent and equally strong, it is not possible to make any rational choice between them. If the agent still makes a choice either irrationally or on non-moral grounds, he is bound to feel remorse or guilt for choosing one alternative over the other. Ordinary moral conflicts are like mathematical problems, these can be solved by expert mathematicians, but genuine moral dilemmas remain unresolved. Under the circumstances the question that we cannot avoid is: how should one behave while facing a moral dilemma? Should one choose a course of action arbitrarily or should one prefer inaction or should one act following the dictate of one's conscience without considering its consequences? The answer depends on the source of the dilemma at hand. A dilemma may arise due to conflict between two moral values like truth and non-violence, or maybe between an individual duty and social responsibility, or between two scriptural injunctions, between tradition and reason, or between the dictates of reason and of one's conscience and so on. There is no universal moral rule or even thumb-rule to guide our actions for avoiding conflict in every case. Every agent has to find his/her way out depending on situational constraints. But whatever way one opts for, it should not violate one over-arching moral principle -- it must contribute to the Good (*shubha/ mangala/ hita*) of all.

Revisiting Buddhist Ethics : Ambedkar's Interpretation by Prof. Sabujkoli Sen

Ambedkar throughout his life dreamt of a just society in which an ascending sense of reverence and descending sense of contempt is dissolved into the creation of a just society. According to him, justice is another name of equality, liberty, and fraternity.

Ambedkar stood for a social system in which man's status is based on his merit and achievements and where no one is noble or untouchable because of his birth. Ambedkar being a Mahar had to face great humiliation in his life, however, he attained higher education and after completing his studies launched himself politically fighting for the rights of the depressed classes and against inequality practised in the Hindu society. According to Ambedkar Hinduism stood for non-egalitarian social order as it justified caste system and varna as a divine scheme. It is anti-equality, violent and ritualistic. Ambedkar read both the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, re-interpreted Buddhism and on 14-Oct-1956, a few weeks before his death, converted to Buddhism with a few lakh followers. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism was not impulsive in a sense but an endorsement of a new way of life for the country's dalit community. Considering that the religion of Buddha gives freedom of thought and freedom of self development to all, Ambedkar argues that the rise of Buddhism in India was as significant as the French Revolution. In an All India Radio Broadcast speech on 3-Oct-1954 he declared, "Positively, my social philosophy, may be said to be enshrined in three words: Equality, Liberty and Fraternity. Let no one, however, say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my Master, the Buddha. In his philosophy liberty and equality has a place... He gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty or equality or fraternity which was another name for religion. In this sense Buddhism is a democratic religion and Ambedkar eventually found in this religion the moral values he had tried to promote via political democracy.

Ambedkar wanted to establish that democracy is not an invention of the West, but it is a product of Indian history. Ambedkar called his version of Buddhism Nava-yana or Neo-Buddhism. In his effort to reconstruct Buddhism Ambedkar's interpretation may be seen as a deviation of traditional Buddhism. According to him, several core beliefs and doctrines of the traditional Buddhism such as four noble truths, no-self (anatta), rebirth, Karma, are flawed and pessimistic. These may have been incorporated in the scriptures by wrong-headed buddhist monks. According to Ambedkar, Karma and rebirth are nothing but superstitions. Navva-yana of Ambedkar also abandons institutions of monks, belief in afterlife, samsara, meditation and nirvana.

Ambedkar gave emphasis on morality while reconstructing Buddhism. In most religions, belief in transcendental entities such as God, Atman and other worlds become the basis of morality. Ambedkar says: "Every religion preaches morality but morality is not the root of religion". In his work, 'The Buddha and His Dhamma', he makes morality the root of

religion. In his Dhamma, morality takes the place of God, though there is no concept of God in Buddhism. Morality is the essence of Dhamma.

The philosophers have described this as the Copernican revolution in the relationship between morality and religion. In Ambedkar's reconstruction of Buddhism, morality is placed at the centre and religious beliefs are supposed to revolve around it.

Sri Aurobindo on Ethics and Beyond Ethics by Prof. Amitabha Dasgupta

One of the most baffling and yet a highly significant feature found in Sri Aurobindo's concern for ethics is that it apparently exhibits a peculiar kind of paradox. At one level, no one can fail to notice how ethics and values are overwhelmingly present in Sri Aurobindo's philosophical concern for man and society. At another level, he recognizes ethics to have only limited significance in our life. It has a transitory nature since its importance is felt at a particular stage in the spiritual evolution of mankind. Ethics is thus perceived by him as a mental product conditioned by rational considerations. But once the mind goes beyond the domain of the mental and reaches at the supramental, ethics loses its primacy.

The main objective of this paper is to suggest a reconstruction clearing away the apparently paradoxical view that Sri Aurobindo holds on ethics. His plea for going beyond ethics is based on the consideration that ethics must be based on higher consciousness. A true ethical behavior is possible not by any external sanctions but by internally realizing the ethical values within.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with Sri Aurobindo's preoccupation with ethics in the early nationalist phase of his life. In this phase, he has a clear idea of what constitutes human. We cannot think of being human without its deeply entrenched value permeated nature. In the same way, Sri Aurobindo also has the notion of an ideal society. He has a conception of an ethical polity. Thus in the early nationalist phase, ethics and values along with religion constitute substantial part of Sri Aurobindo's writings.

In the later Pondicherry phase, we find a distinctive change in his thought. From his ethical concern of human, he changed his focus entirely to the spiritual concern of human. The reason for this shift is that the idea of human for Sri Aurobindo does not stop with the idea of moral where how to be moral is viewed as the ultimate objective of human life. Sri Aurobindo emphatically holds the view that since man is essentially a spiritual being morality or to be moral cannot claim to be the culmination of human life.

Considering this shift on the role of ethics at the later period of Sri Aurobindo's life, the questions that may arise are: did Sri Aurobindo become indifferent to ethics? Or, did he abandon ethics? None of these ascriptions are true. The important thing to be noted is that Sri Aurobindo's attitude towards ethics went through a drastic change. This is where Sri Aurobindo goes beyond ethics. But going beyond ethics by no means implies abandoning ethics. It is, on the other hand, subsumed under spirituality. It becomes a part of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the integral philosophy of man. The present paper makes an attempt to reconstruct Sri Aurobindo's idea of ethics within the conceptual manifold of his integral philosophy of man. For this purpose, it takes his later work, *The Human Cycle* for discussion. In this connection, the following three theses of Sri Aurobindo's thought will be highlighted for the explication of his view of ethics.

First: The outer law requires to be replaced by an inner law of the self so that normative/ethical ideals will be part of the self, giving rise to a new realization of what constitutes moral subject.

Second: This new realization reveals the true and deeper nature of the individual which can subsequently be used as a means to the formulation of the principle on which the ideal social order can be founded.

Third: This results into a state of mutual inter-dependence between the individual, the community and humanity.

What is it to be moral? In Search of Rabindranath's Response by Prof. Nirmalya Narayan Chakraborty

In some general sense, following a moral code involves sacrificing immediate gains. A naive egoist could raise a question regarding justification of the immediate loss. Moral philosophers have attempted to respond to the egoist. The present paper is an attempt to decipher Rabindranath's presentation of the problem and his proposed solution to it. One of the most common ideas that has been introduced to respond to the egoist is that of self-interest. Rabindranath introduces two stages of self and relies on man's essential moral nature that consists in his constant attempt to strive at good. The block in our moral path arises due to man's narrow vision that is confined to the immediate present. Man's failure to follow the path of morality is only temporary. The human follies are initial steps to man's attempt to reach a universal self. I would like to construct a philosophy of man that could be viewed as working behind Rabindranath's response to the egoist. Man, in a way, is an item in nature. But he also tries to transcend the limits of nature. The progressive dissociation from the natural makes man what he is. His indomitable spirit to express himself in new and new ways is testimony to his transcendence. This transcendence is inclusive in the sense that the natural in him is not negated, rather gets transformed with a new look.

Seventh Academic Session Ethics in Professions

Philosophy, Morals and Professional Competence by Prof. Atashee Chatterjee Sinha

Philosophy is primarily the study of the first principles, the nature of reality, knowledge and morality. In the moral domain, philosophers provide us several standards and rules of determining what is right, just and good. In recent times many have turned their attention to applied philosophy, practical ethics and that is when philosophical (moral) considerations became more related to our private, social and professional realms. Before we ask the question 'what is the role of moral philosophy and its relation to professional life and professional competence?' we need to understand what is meant by a profession and professional competence. Broadly speaking, any paid work based on special qualifications, training and expertise is a profession. There are various kinds of profession and each of them is associated with a specific set of moral rules, directives or principles. Together they constitute professional ethics. Professional competence comprises of skills, knowledge and

attributes – regarded as ideal for a particular job, and valued in specific professional associations.

Traditionally the role of moral philosophy is to develop concepts and theories that would provide guidelines for our conduct. Unlike the dominant rationalist thinkers, I intend to take a stand where real life complexities, multiple dimensions and different perspectives are more important than abstraction, uniformity and universality. In this paper I intend to focus on the importance of certain moral values, like that of mutual respect, responsibility, and communication as integral part of human lives; by implication they are necessary for every kind of professional life.

Business Ethics Matters by Dr. Anita Shantaram

Business ethics play a significant role in the development of an organisation. Society's shift has made it more important for businesses to monitor their activities and ensure that they are operating businesses ethically. One of the major reasons that ethics has to be embedded into an organizational culture is to preserve the organizations business culture.

The key objective of this paper is to establish that code of ethics be treated as a principle and not a definitive statement for all professions and shall provide guidance on minimum acceptable standards of professional conduct to attain the highest levels of performance across organisations, associations and professions.

At our academy we believe that the code of ethics impacts and promotes ethical behaviour. Thus, EthicsIndia- A Legasis company encourages professionals through its online educational platform to elevate their knowledge regularly. Our corporate training programs, lectures at universities etc, have proved to be immensely educating.

Code of ethics exists for most organisations and for various professions and for some other professions we have voluntary codes. We created voluntary codes for teachers through the Higher Education forum and have also created a voluntary code for the Compliance and Ethics Professionals and are promoting it by getting people to take the pledge.

Although these steps are just a drop in the ocean but through each person's contribution in this space, it can bring about a radical change.

Code of ethics as we know is a living document and we believe it must change and be shaped as different professions continue to evolve and develop. Challenges are prevalent in every field, overcoming them by educating and training is a viable method to move ahead towards our ultimate goal of providing 'conscience' to every profession through code of ethics.

Compassionate Healthcare Systems by Prof. Chirantan Chatterjee

Healthcare globally is riddled with several challenges especially after the pandemic. Among policy discussions on pricing, access, health technology, digitisation, public health spending or universal healthcare insurance, one not so attended issue seems to be around creating compassionate healthcare systems especially in low and middle income countries like India. Using his own research conducted over the last decade, the speaker will deliberate on creating such systems with an eye on patient centricity and focus on vulnerable populations especially after the Covid-19 pandemic.